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Writing To
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WRITING
TO GET BUSINESS
with Pat Iyer



C-SUITE
Radio

Writing a book in 8 Hours
Mitchell Levy

An accomplished writer may spend an hour per page on a book. Many busy executives, who don't have that kind of free time or level of accomplishment, choose to hire a skilled ghostwriter. Mitchell Levy offers an abbreviated option, a mini-book consisting mainly of quotes and links to videos and other material. This kind of book can give you the credibility to get speaking engagements, create successful online courses, and other benefits of having a book that's an expanded and interactive business card.

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- Speakers, consultants, and other entrepreneurs need a book that promotes their services.
 - By hiring someone to write your book, you have much more time to promote it.
 - You need to maintain an impressive presence on social media.
 - Getting your books into prospects' hands is more important than selling them.
 - Enhance your credibility with a "credreel."
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Pat: Hi. This is Pat Iyer with Writing to Get Business, and I have with me today, Mitchell Levy, who is somebody I spent some time with, drinking wine with, I believe in Miami, maybe more than a year ago.

Mitchell: Those were the days. [Laughter]

Pat: Yes, in a bar in Miami back when you could be in bars in Miami. Mitchell has a varied experience as an author, as a publisher, as a person who helps authors focus on their credibility and their sources of credibility. I wanted him to come on the show to share some of his expertise with us. Welcome to the show, Mitchell.

Mitchell: Pat, thanks for having me. And yeah, it brings back memories. How cool would it be to sit in a bar and watch people walk around and order from a bartender without a mask on? [Laughter]

Pat: It would be cool, indeed. And I think those days will return, eventually. But unfortunately, not right now.

Mitchell: Yes, they will.

Pat: I want to take you back. I know that you have written many books. How did you first get involved in writing books?

Mitchell: At the moment, I'm at 64. I'm about 70% done with my 65th book. When I wrote my first book, I was working for Sun Microsystems. It was in 1988. I had made that decision that people make sometime in their lives: "Should I buy a house or not?" And the entire world was saying, "Yes, yes, yes." And for some odd reason, when everyone said, "Yes," I thought, "Ah, there's something wrong here."

So, I did a very classic MBA classic spreadsheet analysis of "Renting" versus "Buying." I got to the point where I really loved it, and I said, "Oh, this is pretty cool. Let me write a book about it."

So, then because I had a financial sponsor... I was working for Sun Microsystems. They were paying my bills as an employer. I actually wrote the book and spent oodles and oodles of time... The book got reviews in 500 plus newspapers, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*. And it was absolute spectacular -- and I did lots of speaking about it. But I had the luxury of actually getting money coming in from another source, so I didn't have to make money from that.

And I hadn't realized enough about really what books are and how they work -- in essence, what we're doing here.

But for me, it was beautiful to be able to touch the lives of people, to give them that classic thought process of... in this case, it doesn't make sense to rent or buy. And the answer is, it depends on where you're renting or buying and whether or not if you decided to rent. You could rent and save, right?

But the entire world said, "Mitchell, you're wrong." So, I had a book that said, "No. No, I'm not really wrong. Here's why." Now those are good lessons along the way.

Pat: Did you buy the house?

Mitchell: Yes, we did. [Laughter] I'm in Silicon Valley, so it turned out to be a very good investment.

Pat: Oh, yes. Yes, those little houses in your area are worth millions of dollars or they were at least at one time.

Mitchell: [Laughter] Who knows what they are now?

Pat: All right, so you had a financial sponsor. I love that term for an employer -- somebody who is giving you a paycheck so that you could do this interesting thing on the side. I haven't had a financial sponsor for... Let's see. When was the last time I was an employee? It was 1987 was when I lost my financial sponsorship. My first book came out in 1986, so you and I published within a couple of years of each other -- the first book.

Mitchell: Mm.

Pat: And now you've got this book. You got all these wonderful reviews. You probably worked hard to promote this book. Obviously, you went from one to two because you're up to 65. Did you start writing additional books while you were an employee or at some point... You went into business, I know for sure.

Mitchell: Yeah. So, during the dot-com days... I left Sun Microsystems in '97. I became a strategic consultant, helping companies figure out what ecommerce was. I can't remember where in the evolution but I think either my second or third book was with a traditional publisher.

So it was with new writers. New Writers' Press, which was a Prentice-Hall imprint. And that was that classic approach where it's a thousand hours of time and they put it out there.

And the book came out about three months before the dot bomb crash. I needed another year to make that one really apply to the crisis because...it was called *Evolve or Die* which was a beautiful, beautiful focus for a book.

In 2005, I started a publishing company. I published over 850 books between then and 2017. And that's when I started doing a lot of writing because I always thought the goal of the publishing company was to make my job, if I was the customer, easier. And my job was, "How can I write books quicker?" You know, I got processes. I got approaches in place.

And I, actually, Pat, got to the point where I have figured out how to write a book in eight hours. Now this is a social-media-enabled eBook which you could turn into a physical book. But how to write that in eight hours?

And at the end of 2016, I did Kickstarter. And that Kickstarter hit 250% of goal. Now you make kickstarters or crowdfunding campaigns work by taking a product or service, and you offer it at a discount. 20 people paid us that when they wrote their book in eight hours... when they wrote their book, we'd publish it.

So I'm going to fast forward a year -- 2017. At the end of 2017, I did a TED talk. And that was a beautiful time because it got me offers. We go through life with a certain perceived set of notions. And when you're doing something like a TED talk, the focus is, "Can you create an idea worth sharing?" It can't be my business idea, or it can't be something that's commercially viable for Mitchell Levy and what I do. It has to be something that everyone wants.

And so as I was thinking about the world in a different way, I looked at the results from the Kickstarter. We had 20 people pay us, and when they wrote their book in eight hours, we'd publish it.

Normally, I go through the process with somebody, "Hey, can you guess how many people wrote?" I'm just going to put up my numbers. Two people in one year wrote their book. So obviously, that bothered me--

Two people spent eight hours to write their book. So, what happened, I went to five people who paid, and I said, "Listen, how about I write it for you. Let me do an interview. Let me put the process in place and let me figure out how we could write it for you." One person said "Yes." Now, typically, what I do is I say, "Three people out of 20 wrote their book." We just happened to write the third one. And the interesting part is--

First of all, that bothered me. That means 17 people couldn't find eight hours in a 12-month period to do something they paid for that would be beneficial for them.

Now I'm going to make it worse, and this is what made me decide that my business was not going to be the traditional publisher. I went to

my friends in the online learning space, I went to my friends in the internet marketing space, and they said essentially the same thing. They said, “Mitchell, do you realize that three out of 20 is a 15% utilization rate?” And that's fantastic. And Pat, I'm telling you that--

I'm like, “Okay, this is not...” I don't want to be in a business to sell things people pay for but don't use. So what I ended up doing is I swapped more for my business into, “We are a done-for-you book writing service.” So I created a writing school. Now we've had 50 graduates for the writing school.

And now what we do is something completely different and that is, generally, the person who's my client -- busy, successful professionals who are looking for more credibility with a book... Because that's what you use a book for. You're writing to get business. Your tagline is so beautiful. So, “Looking to get credibility with a book and have no time.”

And the answer today is four months from the time we start, after doing a three-hour interview to really pull the genius from their head, we go straight and publish, distribute it, made them Amazon best-selling authors, and they spent 10 hours or less.

This is not the same stuff you do, right? I have clients who want... They want books that are 25-50,000 words. The books that we do are somewhere around 8-10,000 words. And it's just different. Can I share... Is this podcast only or visual?

Pat: This is a video.

Mitchell: Awesome. I knew we were videoing. I just didn't know if we were doing both.

So often, what happens in our books is... I'm a big fan. I just want to show the difference between what you guys do and what we do.

So, we have color on the inside. We have QR codes that point to videos where the author is talking about the book. But because most people are not reading books, they're either listening to them, this asset is intended to help you be more credible. This ****asset****? intent is to show that you're an expert in your space.

So, what we do is we pull together 140 AHA messages. And so, what happens is if you read any one of these things... This is sort of like, in the old days, the CliffNotes. It's the summary of what's inside your head. It is that thing that says, "Hey, I am an expert at this."

And so part of it is a 140-day editorial calendar because you could hold up your video camera, we then do message talk about it for two to three minutes, and now you've got your video for the day. This frees you up for what you really want to do with the book, to use it to open up the door so that people can actually buy your product or buy your service. And actually, to me, that's what books are.

I think you asked me a question; then I went through the entire evolution to the end, so sorry. [Laughter]

Pat: Well, you used a phrase earlier, and I think it'll become clearer as people saw the book. Was it "Social-media enabled book"? And is that tying in with the QR codes? Is that what you mean, or did you have some other concept?

Mitchell: Oh, so I have a platform called AHAThat. So it's just ahathat.com. It has close to a million users. It has close to 55,000 AHA messages. So if you went to ahathat.com and you just signed up for an account -- it's free to use, free to share -- you have 55,000 messages of other authors you could check. I call that "spreading credust." It is my credust spreader.

So, you're getting other people's content that they've written down in AHA format and you're sharing it on Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook. And there's an automated tool where you could automatically share it.

So, what happens is the social media-enabled eBook or what's called an "AHA book," is comprised of 140 AHA messages that are sitting on that platform. The physical books that we deliver... and whether it's physical and... Actually, Kindle isn't physical. But we do books in Kindle and Audible as well as paperback hardcover.

And those books, the social media-enabled eBook is instead of like... In the old days where you pick up a book and it's this long and you read through the content of the book and you say, "Okay, let me put a highlighter here. Oh wait, I want to share this on social media," and then you retype it in, right? And there's nothing wrong with that

approach. And particularly, academically, it makes sense. And depending on the audience you're going after, a style of book like this make sense.

For the audiences that we're working with, those that are attracted to what we do, what they want is to demonstrate that they have expertise at solving a particular pain point their client, their prospect has.

And so what happens is we've already taken the content and put it into shareable format. And so the AHA message that sits inside the book is also available on the AHAThat platform. So, it's easily shareable.

The QR code, each book has somewhere between eight to 10 videos where the author is talking about that content because, you know, the... A book is a two-dimensional object. And I want the person who is the author--

If the goal of the book is to allow them to be seen and to be heard and to be felt in such a way where I might want to hire that person either for speaking or consulting, well, then you want to share them in multiple formats. That's why we incorporate video and social and all the other things that we include. Did that answer your question?

Pat: It did.

Mitchell: Okay, good. [Laughter]

Pat: It did, yeah. It gave me some ideas, for sure. I have put together 52 writing tips in a book but they're more of the length of blog posts as opposed to what you're describing. The 140 makes me think about the 140 characters that Twitter used to allocate to us and now has been doubled in size.

Mitchell: And by the way, that's originally the concept. So, the evolution of my publishing company was, first, it was 25,000-word books that people would come to us with. Then it was a book series called "42 Rules," and that was comprised of 40 to 500-word articles. And we've had 25 to 30 books in that series. And then the "Think AHA" series was 140... essentially, Twitter-sized quotes.

I just did 140 by 140. So, 140 AHA messages because we had 140 characters. And now there's 288. So, some of the AHA messages are bigger than they were in the past.

Pat: Right. [Laughter] Well, just tell Twitter not to make any more changes because... and that would throw off your business model. Then you'd have to have 300 or--

Mitchell: [Laughter]

Pat: Let's see, 280... That would be 560, would be double if they double it again.

Mitchell: Yeah. It's all about paper, right, at the end of the day. This is a typical-sized book for us. I like 120 pages. I just like the spine size. For this particular book, same style.

What ended up happening, Pat, is we added the author himself... It's a great book, by the way. I'll share it with you in a second. Well the author himself had an eBook. So this is Lee Smith. It's called *Hire Smarter...* Wait. *Hire Smarter, Sell More!* Sorry. [Laughter] I couldn't read an average. And it's great content, and this would normally be the size of the book. The rest of this, the author had an existing eBook already done.

And so I think part of what happens when you do your ghost writing... part of what happens when we're doing our ghost writing is...

When I was doing the interview with Lee, he started talking and quoting from the eBook. At one point in time, I said, "You know, I think we should include the eBook in the appendix." He asked, "You could do that?" I said, "Yes."

But what was really fascinating is that conversation I have with the author, it's not about them figuring out how to best present who they were in the past because to me that's not what a book is. With a book that you're using to help get business tomorrow, it's how to present what you've known in the past in a way that people want to use your service or product in the future.

So, what ended up happening before Lee gave us his eBook, he had to rewrite it based on the conversation we did to put the book together because he had a new thinking process of how to approach the audience he was going after.

And to me, the success, when you work with somebody, is not just that single asset, whether it's a book or something else, podcast or another tool to use for credibility. I have a platform for LinkedIn. How do you get a good LinkedIn profile? There are different tools that build credibility. But the result of success of anyone like you and me is that the person we've worked with is actually using the book to close more business. And that to me is, at the end of the day, the most important thing.

Pat: I know we were talking before we started recording about the importance of credibility, and it's an underlying theme. And in many of the interviews that I do, I find that authors know that having a book, no matter how it's published -- and assuming that it's been well-edited and it's got great content -- just puts them ahead of other people who have all that knowledge but haven't put it down on paper. What have you seen happen to the authors who you work with in terms of their credibility as a result of publishing?

Mitchell: Oh, whether it's me or other people, it's all the same. Credibility is an interesting thought and approach. I'm actually interviewing 500 thought leaders on credibility. Technically, we're at 443, 17 this week. By the time people watch this, we'll be at 500.

And what happens is when we get to meet somebody... And we meet them from so many different areas. One of the cool parts about having a book, it's another way to meet somebody. And what authors often think about is, "How many books I can sell."

And so one of the first things that happens when I talk to an author is never about how many books you sell. It's about how many books you get in the hands of your prospects. Now if you actually sell books, and I write nice worldly checks for you, that's even better. But that's irrelevant.

So when you're speaking at an event, when you get back to... like when we're speaking physically in an event, it's about, "How many

books can you hand out?” Now if you could find a sponsor who wants to actually buy books that you could hand out to those in front of you, even better.

Pat: Mm-hmm.

Mitchell: What happens is, and particularly with the AHA books, is those things that people would say all the time -- those catchphrases, those things that capture people's attention.

And I'll share one of mine which is one of my favorites. And this has to do with the thought leaders and also credibility. So, this is from my TED talk. The book is called “BEing Seen and BEing Heard as a Thought Leader.” And I had probably shared this at least 2,000 times. And I typically go to AHA #4. And what it says is, “Good thought leaders are at the top of the mountain. Great thought leaders are at the bottom of the mountain helping others climb up.”

It's somebody else's quote. It's Robert Clancy's quote. So I have in my book where I'm spreading credust on Robert Clancy.

And what we're talking about is servant leadership. I could talk for an hour on servant leadership. But all I have to do is say that one quote, and people get it.

And when I'm talking to somebody who says, “I need to be a thought leader,” I say, “Great. What are you doing at the bottom of the mountain to help others climb up?” And by the way, if they're on top of the mountain and they're barking orders, those are typically authors I don't work with because I want to work with this person who knows their community and wants to help the community be successful.

And so, the benefit of having this asset called a “book” is you now reference that in what you do. As opposed to telling you what happened, I gave you an example. Over 2,000 times, I have used a quote from my book about what I do to increase the credibility of who I am and what I'm doing. And that's what we allow all of our authors do and encourage them to do. And what they find is their quotes--

I had some of my authors who had quotes go viral. I can't promise virality. That's just something that happens. Many of our authors have created videos using their AHA messages.

And so it comes down to, “Are you an expert at what you do?” And the answer is you hold up a book, and it's--

Here's another one we did which was an anthology book, *Turning Ideas Into Impact*. These are 16 Silicon Valley consultants that all contributed to an anthology book. Most of these folks are engineers, as opposed to marketers. And the reason why they're in here is that, other than one of my authors whom I've done six books with, everyone in here was looking for that new piece of credibility that they can then share with their prospects to close more business.

And so, the answer is, by definition, and you know this as well, that as a business executive, you need to make sure you have credibility. A book is the best vehicle to do that. However, before you do the book, probably the first tip I'm going to say is when somebody googles your name, what do they see? So you have to make sure that first thing they see, whether it's your website, your social media--

And by the way, given that the social media companies are spending hundreds of millions of dollars to associate your name when somebody googles your name with their platform, you can't say to anyone, “Hey, I got a crappy LinkedIn profile. That's okay” because that's not going to work, or “My Facebook is for my friends.”

There's no separation. And so when people see you and find you, what do they see? That's the first impression of credibility.

The next is the book or the podcast or whatever vehicle you have to be sharing in the world demonstrating that you are expert at what you do.

Pat: It's all about putting the pieces together, isn't it? And so much of the knowledge we've gained can be helpful to other people, but it does no good if it's trapped in your head.

Mitchell: [Laughter] Yes. I think that's where what you and I do as ghost writers is important when people say, “I have this knowledge in my head, and I have to write it.” What I'm going to say, Pat, is, you do have this knowledge in your head, and it has to be written. But it doesn't necessarily have to be written by you. As a matter of fact, I would encourage you not to write it.

In life, it's all about time and money. If you have infinite time and no money, you have to write it yourself. If you have ample money and time is tight... get somebody else to write it for you because at the end of the day.

I'll give you my thoughts on time. I'll give you a different example book. I like 120 pages. I just love the spine-size of 120. A 50,000-word book is more like 160-180 pages. I like it when people say, "Oh, I could read that." And the question becomes, if you're going to write a 120-page book, and you do it yourself and you've gotten good at writing, I figured out it's about an hour a page. So that's about 120 hours. If you're going to publish the way that our publishing company does, we spend 200 hours. I'm making sure it's distributed around the world. We maintain it on a continual basis such 320 hours.

So, if you have knowledge inside your head, here's a question I'm going to ask. "Should you spend 320 hours and save some money and take all the time to do it and figure out and learn what does it mean to be a publisher and self-published and all that stuff?"

And I'm not sure how long it takes for you. It's a different model because they get a significantly different book when they work with you, Pat. But with us, it's a 10-hour process. I'd rather you spend 10 hours with us and 310 hours doing two different things. One, market. Now that you have an Amazon best-selling book, which is part of our service, make sure it gets in the hands of the people that could hire you. But the other thing is I would--

The way the world works today, I'd spend the incremental time building an online course. There's a certain price point you can charge for a book. Typically, our paperbacks are 20 bucks. Our hardcovers are \$25. And books don't sell the way they used to. You're not going to make a ton of money based on book sales. Some of our authors do but typically, that's not where you're making money. You're making money on the other stuff -- speaking, consulting.

That said, if you spend your time doing an online course and you charge \$197 or \$297 or \$497 or a thousand bucks for your online course, you don't have to sell a lot of online courses to make up the profit you would have made on books. So with the 310 hours that you

would normally have... the incremental 310 hours you'd spend less, do some marketing. Create your online courses.

And then holistically, there are more ways people see you and experience you before they then also hire you for speaking and consulting. Does that make sense?

Pat: It does. In fact, a couple of months ago, I took my newest book and turned it into an online course and got 16 people enrolled at \$397...

Mitchell: Yee-haw!

Pat: ...compared to what I got from selling the book for \$29.95.

Mitchell: [Laughter] Exactly. How hard would you have had to work to sell the amount of books you needed to make to be able to make the money... you know, the 5k you made with the course, right? And you do the dynamics of time. It's like there's a no-brainer.

And by the way, the other thing that happened, those 16 people that went through your course, they're advocates of yours now, right? They got to experience you. It's a significant win. Nice job, by the way. Pretty cool.

Pat: Thank you. I'm doing the course again with a different audience and we're charging \$497 this time.

Mitchell: That's typically, Pat... that typically what I keep hearing is you either increase your rate or you double your rate. And then at some point in time, when people don't buy anymore, then you lower it again.
[Laughter]

Pat: All the tricks of the trade.

So, what I got out of this, Mitchell, in thinking about what you've covered is that you've shared with us a model of a much shorter, more consumable book than something that's 50-60-70,000 words. It's a model that includes 140 tips or quotes based on interviews that you or your staff do with the author. It helps the author, instead of having to write all that information themselves, to be able to focus on the marketing of the book after the process is over.

And I think you've emphasized for us the importance of credibility of sharing your knowledge with others to be a force when it comes to being hired, your visibility as an author which has spread out through social media, through other means, through LinkedIn profiles, through sizzle reels, which we didn't talk about but exists for speakers.

And "sizzle reels," I need to define that because I used that word with my sister, and she said, "Is this a reel that's on fire? Why is it sizzling?" I said, "Okay, let me take a step back -- a promotional video if you're a speaker."

But all of those things come together to help enhance your credibility. And the credibility is the name of the game in terms of being able to influence other people and share the knowledge that you have.

Mitchell: Yeah. I'll do two things quickly. First, I'm not always sure that credibility is necessary... that the end goal of credibility is that you're influencing people. I think the end goal of credibility is that you get to accomplish your goals, which may be influential. It may also just be helping and supporting.

Pat: Mm-hmm.

Mitchell: On the sizzle reel, that's one thing that's uniquely different for me. -- And when I give you the link at the end, people can go and see this. -- The speaker sizzle reel is something that actually sizzles. It's got speakers at different stages, different locations. That's what that's imposed for.

I'm creating a new concept. It's called a "Credreel" -- a credibility sizzle reel. And the credreel allows the human that is part of it, six to eight minutes, it allows them to shine.

And so it's not about sizzling and doing different stages. It's about, "Can you see them? Are they demonstrating in this video that you know, like and trust them?" If you do that in six to eight minutes, and people could see that before they talk to you, that will increase the efficacy of everything you do. And so that's what a credreel or credibility sizzle reel is.

Pat: All right. I appreciate knowing about that variation.

Mitchell: You're welcome.

Pat: What link would you like to share with the people who are watching this podcast or listening to us?

Mitchell: So, it's my name. So, it's mitchelllevy360.com. So, M-I-T-C-H-E-L-L L-E-V-Y 360.com. And there, you can connect on social media that's appropriate. We have a number of different customer videos where you can actually see customer testimonials.

At the moment, the LinkedIn course, which is a one-hour course that will completely let you think about LinkedIn in a different way, that's what pops up first.

And also if this is of interest to you and you want to talk to me, you could schedule time directly on my calendar. So all that, it's just mitchelllevy360.com, and it's all in one place.

Pat: Perfect. Well, Mitchell, thank you so much for being part of this show. And thank you to you who is listening or watching this show. I hope you've gotten some inspiring ideas from our conversation today. It's a new way of thinking about a book that you may not have considered, a different model for a book that might be just what you need for your business and your credibility. Thanks so much.

Mitchell: My pleasure. Thanks, Pat. You are awesome.

Pat: Thank you.

Pat: Hi. This is Pat Iyer with Writing to Get Business and I have just finished a podcast with Kristine Grant, who has an unusual way that she uses her writing skills to get business. -- Kristine, what will our viewer get from listening to your podcast or watching it on our patiyer.com YouTube channel?

Kristine: My hope is that the audience will feel inspired that no matter what sort of emotional baggage they've been carrying around for any sort of issue or dynamic with anyone right now or maybe from childhood or a long time ago, that you will understand there is a way of letting go of that.

You know, I always say, kind of like the airlines, “We all have baggage but only one carry-on is allowed. The rest is just way too costly.”

So, with my service for helping people, to find the words that they really want to say, is the key to a matrix that opens the heart and can heal, mend and up-level or enhance any connection with another.

And what would we be without our connections? No one wants to die alone, seriously. We hold ourselves back. We don't always see ourselves. We don't always understand our predicaments.

So, I help people to glean a bigger, more powerful understanding that actually allows them to enjoy their connections, to wake up with a smile, to sleep better, to stay young because all of that worry and stress and fret is very damaging on many levels.

I hope to, again, inspire through my letter-writing service which is called “Inspired Heart Letters.” Thank you so much. This has been a joy.

Pat: Thank you, Kristine. -- And to you, who's just heard Kristine Grant, be sure to catch her program when it appears on Writing to Get Business.