

How to Get Published: the Legal Publishing Process Explained

Abstract: They say that everyone has a book in them. But how do lawyers and other legal professionals go about getting published? How does the publishing process work and what are the benefits of being published? This article by **Sian O'Neill** of Globe Law and Business outlines the benefits of being published and how the process works, including generating new ideas, approaching a publisher and the publishing proposal, as well as the production process and what authors can expect in terms of marketing.

Keywords: legal publishers; publishing; legal publishing

INTRODUCTION

Lawyers and other legal professionals often enter the profession with a love of words, so it's no surprise that many might be interested in writing a book. But how do you go about getting published? How does the process work and what are the benefits of being published in the first place?

WHY GET PUBLISHED?

Lawyers and their colleagues often have extremely busy schedules and taking on a new commitment outside of the many tasks already on their long list of things to do needs careful consideration. There are many benefits, however, to being published for both the individual author and their firm. Examples include:

- Being associated with a high-quality product produced by a reputable publisher who has approved the book proposal on the basis of its merits.
- Becoming known as a subject expert in your field.
- Being part of a team effort. Writing, editing or contributing to a book is about teamwork. Books can take well over a year or more to publish so it is an opportunity to get to know your peers and other notable contacts in your area.
- Writing or contributing to a book can help solidify your knowledge of a particular subject.
- A published book can get noticed by senior management and lead to new work, not only for you but for your colleagues.
- Perhaps most importantly, a high-quality published book is a highly effective business development tool. We have been fortunate enough at Globe Law and Business to have heard first-hand from many authors

how a published book has significantly contributed to the development of their practice and career.

THE PUBLISHING PROCESS

HOW IDEAS ARE GENERATED

So, what are the first steps when thinking about getting published with a professional publisher (note that the process will differ for trade publishing, which focuses on general interest books, both fiction and non-fiction) and how are new title ideas generated? New title ideas can come from a variety of sources. Often, authors identify a need that is not currently met by existing publications. Bjarne Tellmann, GC at Haleon (formerly at GSK) and author of *Building an Outstanding Legal Team*, mentioned in his launch speeches (there were several!) that the book he wrote was the one he wished he'd had when he started out as GC, i.e. he identified a gap in the market for something he would have found helpful himself.

On other occasions, contacts might be approached by publishers for a discussion on the interest or suitability of a potential new title idea. At any one time, publishers are likely to have several potential new ideas under consideration and greatly appreciate the opportunity to hear the views of those with first-hand experience of the topic.

Perhaps there are hot topics in your field on which you or your colleagues would like to be seen as thought leaders. There are likely to be recurring themes, for example, in conferences and seminars. It's worth doing a search first to double check that there are no existing publications on the topic (competing titles aren't necessarily a bad thing although it's important, of course, to ensure that your work would be sufficiently differentiated).

If you'd like to test the water with a potential new idea, you might first consider writing an article for a journal or magazine before embarking on a larger project.

APPROACHING A PUBLISHER

A first step once you have a new title idea is to identify a suitable potential publisher. There are several legal publishers, from the larger well-known players to smaller, independent publishing houses each with their own distinctive benefits and ways of working. Some will specialise in certain practice areas, so it is advisable to look through their website and peruse the portfolio of titles to establish whether they cover the subject area of your proposal. Occasionally, a publisher might consider a proposal in a related area where they haven't a developed portfolio, which we did with the esteemed Mr Justice Max Barrett on *The Art and Craft of Judgment Writing* and the follow-up volume, *Great Legal Writing*, based on the strength of the publishing proposals received from the author. It's probably advisable to approach one preferred publisher first.

Whilst publishers do receive unsolicited manuscripts, they generally prefer to be involved from the outset of an idea so that they can influence how the idea and overall structure is developed. One suggestion would be to send an email to the appropriate commissioning editor contact at the publisher with an outline of your idea. If the commissioning editor is interested, they are likely to suggest a call or request a few further details over email. The next step would be to draw up a draft table of contents, to include the list of chapter headings and potential authors. This usually doesn't need to be final at this stage. You will need to know, though, whether the book will be sole- or co-authored or whether it will be an edited volume with you as 'Consulting Editor' (or equivalent role) and featuring chapters by different authors.

Once the commissioning contact is happy with the table of contents, they will usually request that you fill in a proposal document which is then adapted for internal discussion and presentation at the publishers.

THE PUBLISHING PROPOSAL

The publishing proposal is a key part of the professional publishing process. The commissioning contact is likely to request your assistance in filling out a publishing proposal form. This can be around two to four pages and your commissioning contact should walk you through what is expected. You are likely to already have a good amount of the information needed already, such as the background to the project and why it is timely, an overview of what the book includes and the table of contents.

KEY FEATURES OF THE PUBLISHING PROPOSAL

There are certain key sections of the publishing proposal form which a commissioning editor will be looking out for. One will be the key features and benefits of the book – specifically, what the book contains and how a customer will find it useful. What is helpful here are a

few examples, such as 'by reading x, a reader will learn / be able to do y'.

Another key section of the proposal form is the target market, i.e. who the book will be aimed at. It is tempting as an author to think that a book could potentially appeal to many markets such as practising lawyers and accountants or a general interest reader. However, a publisher is likely to have certain core markets, such as lawyers in private practice, and it is best to have enquired about that on your initial call with the publisher as they are not likely to be able or want to serve multiple markets.

Publishers also very much value an author or consulting editor's views on how to reach the target market or 'routes to market'. Although publishers will have their own marketing plans for every new title, it is extremely helpful when authors and their firms are happy to proactively help on marketing such as by emailing their contacts or holding events. This used to be more of a feature within trade publishing and the larger publishing houses but it is now more of an established need with professional publishers too. We at Globe Law and Business seek to involve authors and their firms at the outset of a publishing proposal to maximise the business development opportunities from the published book. Examples of routes to market include:

- Suggestions for potential reviewers of the book
- Other press activity, such as an excerpt or author interview
- Suggestions for endorsers
- A launch / panel event or webinar hosted by the author / firm (some firms consider launch events in different cities where appropriate)
- A mailer to contacts about the book
- Speaking opportunities where the book could be promoted
- Internal promotion to other offices within the firm
- A LinkedIn promotion, such as a short video
- Book adoption on a recognised course (for example, where the author lectures on the subject)

The proposal document will include a likely delivery date. It is best to suggest a date which you think is realistic given your other commitments. Publishers can – and do – accommodate delays on schedules all the time, but it is helpful to try to gauge when might be a realistic deadline from the outset and also to keep in touch with the publisher if that deadline is not likely to be met.

Once the proposal has been finalised, it is adapted by the publisher to their own format before being discussed internally and presented for approval. If the proposal is given the green light, an Author Agreement will be drawn up and sent over for your review. The individual terms will depend on the publisher and the book proposal.

THE CONTRACT IS AGREED!

So, your proposal has been approved and the contract agreed. Hurrah! You are a signed author. Now, the writing begins. The publisher should send you editorial guidelines and an outline of the production process. Different publishers have different publishing schedules (with the larger publishers usually having longer production schedules).

One key point to note at the writing stage is that of permissions. It is very important for authors to ensure that they have sought any necessary permissions for any diagrams or longer text material that could be copyrighted elsewhere. It's best to get this under way as early as possible to ensure that there are no delays further down the line. Your publishing contact will be able to advise on any queries you may have.

Your publisher may request to look at a completed chapter once ready so that they can deal with anything that might crop up at this stage and identify a possible editor. For sole- or co-authored books, publishers generally prefer to receive the complete manuscript when ready rather than individual chapters.

Your publishing contact is likely to check in at various junctures as you are writing and particularly as the deadline approaches. If you feel the deadline is not likely to be met, it's advisable to give your publishing contact a heads-up in advance so that they can agree a revised deadline and adjust their schedules accordingly. Don't be afraid to get in touch along the way if you have any other queries in relation to content such as regarding a potential new chapter or legal developments which will affect the book.

THE PRODUCTION PROCESS

Once you have submitted your manuscript to the publisher, the hard task of writing will be out of the way. What can you expect in terms of next steps? Your publishing contact will review the manuscript and let you know if they have any content-related queries. Where a book is an edited volume, the publisher is likely to defer to the consulting editor on the substantive review of individual chapters.

Once your commissioning contact has reviewed the manuscript and has no further queries, it will be handed over to production where you will be assigned an editor for your manuscript. Editorial processes differ between publishers. At Globe Law and Business, each manuscript is reviewed by our managing editor, Lauren Simpson, and then goes through a full edit by a professional copy editor and is then typeset before being proofed in its entirety and sent to press. Authors generally have a chance at proof stage to make any minor amendments they require. This is a useful point at which to update your content for developments where necessary (particularly relevant with legal publishing) although publishers will generally request that amendments are kept to a minimum at this stage.

Depending on the nature of the book and content, we like to involve authors / editors on layout. For example, on *Legal Practice in the Digital Age*, the innovative authors, David Jackson, Paul Caddy and Tony Randle, wanted to incorporate certain design features to help bring the material alive and enhance the cutting-edge nature of the topic. Together with our designer, Richard Proctor (or RP as he is known), we came up with a series of icons which featured throughout the book and which help the reader navigate through the content.

As an author or consulting editor, you are also likely to be sent a draft cover for approval. Cover designs (and book titles) can be a point of discussion with authors although publishers will usually have their reasons why certain designs or book titles will or will not work based on their previous experience. We have really enjoyed experimenting with some novel cover designs recently such as for *The Modern In-house Lawyer* by Ciarán Fenton (see below). This was an example of pushing our boundaries on design, but with a nod to our original look and feel.

THE BOOK IS OUT!

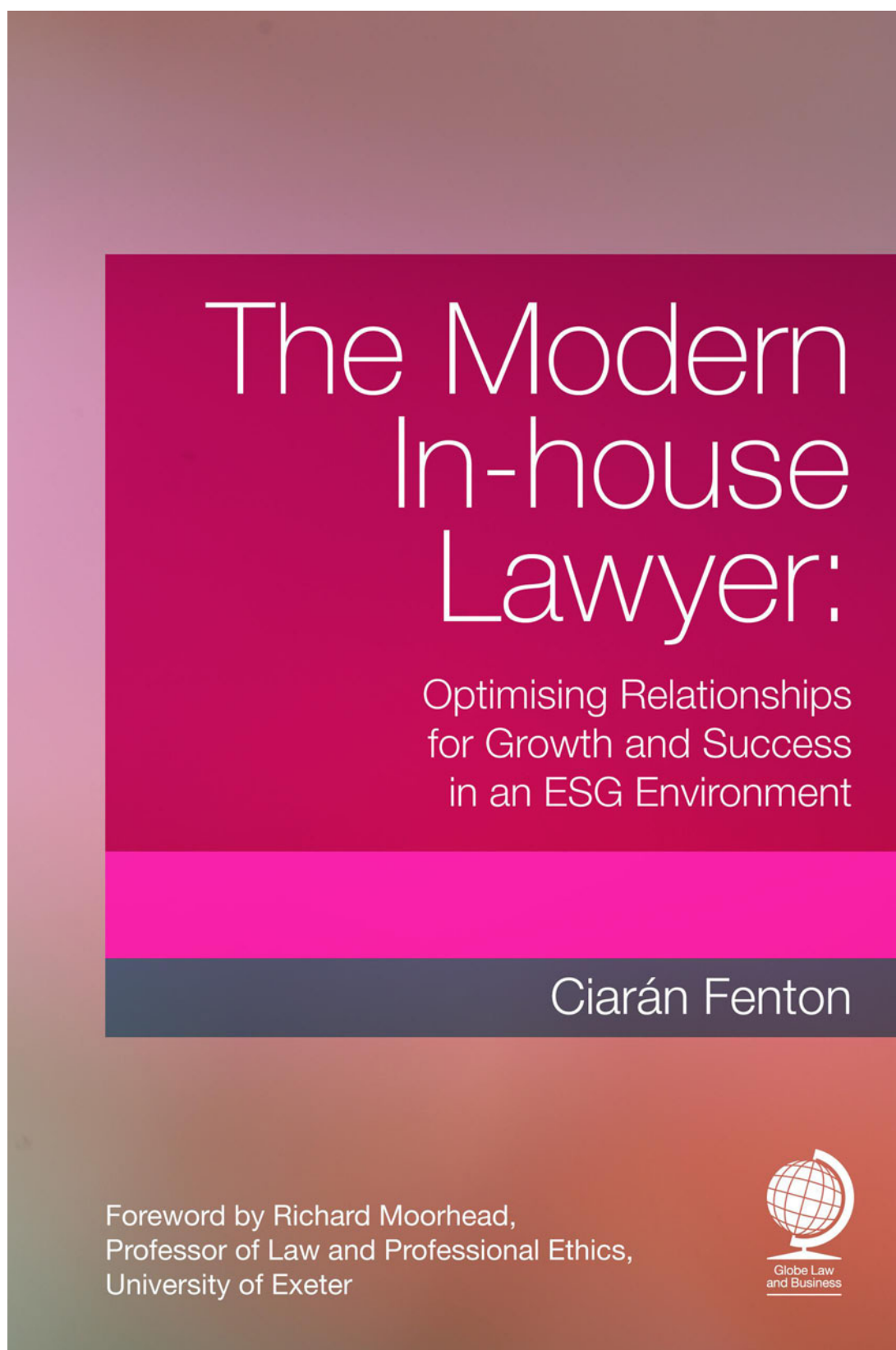
Your publishing contact will keep you posted once the book has gone to press and when it is likely to publish. Publication day is an exciting day all round! For an author, opening the box with your newly minted author copies can involve a mixture of trepidation and excitement but it is a wonderful thing, and we love to see pictures of our authors with their book hot off the press.

Publishers will usually publish the book in a variety of formats. At Globe Law and Business, every book is published in hard copy and e-book versions, and is also featured on our online content platform, Globe Law Online (www.globelawonline.com).

MARKETING

Now that the book is published, it's time for the fun to begin! Your publisher is likely to have sought your input on marketing early in the process so that your insights can help feed into the overall marketing plan. Some examples of how we market each book at Globe Law and Business are as follows.

- As far in advance as possible we upload details of the book to the main bibliographical databases, including Nielsen and Booksonix
- We create a website for every new book featuring a book description, table of contents and sample chapter
- We work with professional booksellers such as Wildy's, Blackwell's and their equivalents around the world
- We partner with Amazon who stock and sell all our titles and feature reviews



A strong cover showcases both the subject and the author – Globe Law and Business is especially proud of this one

- We market the book to a targeted selection of our customers and contacts in a series of campaigns before and after publication
- We send out content-based marketing in the form of newsletters containing, for example, sample material, author interviews, blogs and short video interviews

- We approach journals / magazines / blogs in relation to reviews
- We solicit endorsements to feature in marketing
- We are active on social media, on LinkedIn in particular and Twitter
- We are also happy to help support firm marketing activity such as a launch event, panel event or webinar
- Each book also features on our online platform, Globe Law Online, which is available by subscription and networked across firms, ensuring it is available widely on desktops globally

Professional books can have a shelf life of several years and publishers are likely to welcome suggestions for promotion further down the line after a book has launched. Author activity on marketing can make all the difference to a book's success while also being very beneficial for the individual author and firm. We have examples of books at Globe Law and Business that are still strong performers many years after their initial publication: a testament to the book's content and the author's commitment to continuing promotion.

KEEP IN TOUCH

Publishers also very much appreciate keeping in touch with their authors. The relationship between author and publisher can be a really nice thing; over the decades I have worked in publishing, I can safely count as friends many authors that I started working with over 20 years ago. Once you have published one book, you are likely to be thinking about your next one!

A FINAL WORD

Publishing a book or chapter can seem like a daunting prospect. However, it needn't be and could even end up being one of the most rewarding endeavours you or your colleagues undertake. Publishers are also on hand to help fully support you along the way. There are many benefits for lawyers and others in the legal profession to getting published, particularly in terms of business development opportunities such as becoming known as a subject matter expert, opening doors for potential speaking opportunities and even sealing that deal for new work by presenting the book to clients or potential clients. It's probably more important than ever to stand out from the crowd from a business development point of view and a published book can prove a very effective way to help distinguish you and your firm.

Biography

Sian O'Neill is MD at Globe Law and Business (www.globelawandbusiness.com) and a publishing professional with over 30 years of publishing experience. She founded Globe Law and Business in 2005 as an imprint at Globe Business Media Group. Prior to that, she ran the London office of Kluwer Law International, part of the Wolters Kluwer Group, and commissioned at Sweet & Maxwell. Sian believes that there is a future for high quality, professionally produced books while also embracing digital transformation and specifically with the launch of Globe Law Online (www.globelawonline.com). For authors, she aims to offer a professional service, with a personal touch. Globe Law and Business welcomes potential new title ideas: please do email Sian at sian@globelawandbusiness.com with your idea(s) or for further details and a demo of Globe Law Online.