The Outcome Outline Worksheet

**Excerpted from *Blueprint for a Nonfiction Book: Plan and Pitch Your Big Idea* by Jennie Nash**

Having a strong structure and a good Table of Contents is only the start of writing a great book. The contents of your book also need to flow from beginning to end and draw the reader in. This is a concept known as narrative drive. It’s the thing that keeps the reader engaged enough to keep turning pages. If there is no narrative drive, your book runs the risk of just being a bunch of interesting ideas jammed together—and that is a recipe for losing your reader.

To build narrative drive, you name the point or outcome of each chapter and the outcome you intend the reader to experience, and then you state how that outcome directly leads into the next chapter’s point. The Outcome Outline tracks and tests the interior logic of your book. Think of it like a breakdown of the overall transformation journey.

There are three columns in an Outcome Outline:

* Column 1: Point. This describes the point of the chapter. You can use the one sentence you wrote in the TOC exercise or revise it to be even more specific.
* Column 2: Outcome. What is the outcome of this chapter? What will your reader know or feel or be doing by the end of the chapter? Think both externally and internally like you did when working on the transformation journey as a whole.

Note that sometimes the outcome of a chapter might be similar to the ones around it. If a reader is building their confidence as they read forward in your book, the outcome could be “the reader feels a sense of increased confidence” in several chapters. In this case, you need to make sure that the chapters are different enough to warrant taking up precious real estate in your book. Are they making different enough points about confidence? Are they moving the reader forward in their transformation?

* Column 3: “Because of that.” This is where you link one chapter to the next. “Because of that” is language taken from fiction. We use it to describe a cause-and- effect trajectory of a character’s actions: “Because the protagonist did X, Y happens.”  For nonfiction, the progression is: “Because the reader now knows X, they can now learn about Y.” Locking chapters together in this way guarantees that each chapter drives to the next one, and that together they drive toward the overall point of the book.

THE OUTCOME OUTLINE

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | POINT | OUTCOME | BECAUSE OF THAT… |
| **CH.** | **Why is this chapter here? What is the experience of the reader in this chapter?** | **What will the reader know or feel or be doing by the end of the chapter? Where are they on the journey?** | **How is this chapter connected to the next one? What is the idea that moves the reader from this chapter to the next?** |
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