

Right Before You Write: The Groundbreaking Planning Process Used To Win More Than \$385 Million In Competitive Grant Awards

Jonathan O'Brien

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In the current economic climate, philanthropic funds have become more scarce—and more sought after. This makes the release of Jonathan O'Brien's *Right Before You Write* particularly well timed. For less than \$20, O'Brien offers knowledge that has earned more than 385 million dollars for nonprofits.

The book is practical. But even if weren't for O'Brien's strong sense of pragmatism, *Right Before You Write* is a worthy read. It incites a belly laugh. It triggers one's creative process. It's reading that requires a pen in hand. Readers might find themselves jotting the beginnings of a proposal. Or maybe a screenplay. After all, O'Brien proposes that the two genres have much in common.

If it's generally true that how-to books on writing have a tendency to take themselves too seriously, O'Brien presents a refreshing about-face in this respect. "Bullshit inspired me to write this book," is the author's opening sentence—his point being that you can't make a poorly planned program sound good, no matter how extensive your vocabulary is.

Don't misinterpret the title of *Right Before You Write*: the author isn't saying that writing is formed in the head and then transcribed on the page. Rather, the title is supposed to emphasize the importance of program planning. It follows that this is a book not just for grant writers, but for anyone involved with program design and needs assessment in a nonprofit organization.

The book is part of O'Brien's line of instructional offerings, including grant and screenwriting classes. Sandy Point Ink LLC is an independent publishing company formed by him and his wife, Charlotte, in 2007. A tiny press notwithstanding, O'Brien is on his way to having armfuls of prizes: *Right Before You Write* was a silver winner of the Axiom Business Book Awards 2009 in the General Business/Economics Category and a bronze winner of the 2009 IPPY Awards in the Writing/Publishing Category.

Despite the protestations of the "contractually obligated about the 'author' page," which argues that O'Brien is "uniquely unqualified" to write this book, the book is a success. *Right Before You Write* has something to say and says it well. Candid, jocular, and self-effacing, O'Brien supplies the ideal—professional content delivered in a playful style. This book is as amusing as it is helpful, and when you're working hard to find funds, a smile can come in handy.

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