

What is Book-Market Fit?

- Intro
- Differing Definitions
- You've written something readers want
- When readers want to buy your book
- When readers finish your book
- Readers organically share your book
- Some define BMF as being fanatical buying, others as enough buying to support your growth, but you can choose your own standard for *how much* buying is required for BMF
- The Importance of Book-Market-Fit

- The relevance of the market to readership, sales
- BMF earns you more reviews, increased word-of-mouth
- How to Reach Book-Market-Fit
- Start with your book's purpose
- Startups focus on problems, while books focus on purpose
- Your purpose needs to be right before you can reach BMF
- The purpose of your book should be so important that people would read a half-baked version
- Purpose means: What does this do for the reader? What's this book about?
- Understand your market (primary and secondary research)
- Set up a Feedback Loop (writing, beta reading, editing)
- How you can edit to reach Book-Market-Fit
- Reworking sections and chapters for improved

alignment with revealed marketplace or demographic needs and opportunities

- (stay focused on purpose of your book and its primary plot elements rather than the exact implementation?)
- After Achieving BMF
- Time to grow (scale, hire, optimize)

Content

In the startup world, there is the oft-mentioned concept of “product-market-fit” (PMF). For many, it’s considered the holy grail of startup building because that is your key to sales and growth. Once you have achieved PMF, your product will be sellable and sustainable. Your product will have been iterated and improved to the point of matching customer needs one-to-one.

Any product which has PMF will be able to support itself because PMF takes into account all factors relating to the market, including pricing (and thus profitability).

As writers, we're faced with the same daunting task. How do we write books that really fit our market? Otherwise, we're writing for a small or dispersed crowd, and our books will have little marketability.

Selling books is definitely about more than just marketing and distribution. First, it's important to find "book-market-fit" (BMF). Once you have discovered BMF, readers will be buying wherever you're selling. This article is all about what BMF is and how to reach it.

Differing Definitions

Book-Market-Fit is a new concept and thus has various definitions. It's

up to you to decide which definition is best for your book, but they're all perfectly valid.

Defining BMF:

- You've written something readers want
- When readers want to buy your book
- When readers finish your book
- Readers organically share your book

Every writer has the right to set their own standard for what BMF really is. Do readers want to buy your book fanatically, and it's practically flying off the shelves? Or do you want to sell 0.5% - 2% of your website visitors? Both are solid standards for BMF. The point is that the market wants your book, regardless of its "best-selling" status.

The Importance of Book-Market-Fit

BMF is so critical because it has a direct correlation to your most important metrics. Consider how relevant the market is to your readership and sales. BMF will determine how widely your book is read among that audience. That's why BMF is so important.

By assuring that you have BMF, you will ultimately receive more reviews on your book and much more word-of-mouth growth. These are significant drivers of book sales and thus offer a compound benefit if you reach BMF.

How to Reach Book-Market-Fit

If you do the hard work of taking your work from an early manuscript to a polished book, you should also make sure to do the work of finding book-market-fit. In the tech startup world, companies are tasked with finding a “problem space” where they can work and build solutions in. This would be any pain or problem that a customer has today. If the first iteration of your product doesn’t have product-market-fit, then you innovate and “pivot” until you reach PMF. This means staying focused on the same general pains or problems but simply finding new solutions that customers prefer.

A similar model can be made for the book writing and publishing world. However, rather than a “problem space”, authors should seek a “purpose space” for their book. A purpose stays the same regardless of what changes are made during editing and beta reading, while the

implementation details are flexible to the needs of your readers.

If you have defined a purpose and determined it to be substantial and worthwhile, then seek after it. The best books are born out of a compelling purpose, not just marketing engines and author renown (although marketing engines and author renown are great promotional strategies). In fact, if your purpose is indeed great, then readers will be happy to read a half-baked version of it.

Reaching BMF is not only about defining your purpose, though. It's about understanding your market. How can this be done? Many authors use their intuition. They read others' books, absorb media, engage with real people, and use their common sense to gain an understanding of their market. For many authors, this has worked.

However, if you're treating your writing like a startup, there's more you can do.

First, talk with readers. It's really that simple. Reach out to them via email, social media, or in person. Ask them what they have been reading and are looking to read in the near future. Try to get a sense of where people's purchasing decisions are going. Ask them more questions so you can gain a more holistic picture for your potential readers. If you do this, you're already engaging in "primary research".

Primary research is all about direct outreach with your audience to gather quantitative and qualitative data. Beyond contacting them directly, it's also common practice to send surveys. So definitely consider creating reader surveys as well.

In addition to your primary research, definitely make time to do your secondary research. This research involves using Google and other research tools to find data and information about your market. There are all sorts of interesting data points relating to people's personal lives, work lives, bills, and interests. Behavioral, demographic, psychographic, geographic, and even cultural factors are worth looking into and deriving insights from.

Once you have your ideal purpose and have satisfactorily researched your market, you are much closer to reaching book-market-fit. However, there's a process involved with getting there after you have completed these prerequisites.

The next important step to finding BMF is setting up a "feedback loop". A feedback loop is essentially a

model where you finish a portion or all of your writing, share it with one or many readers, collect feedback, and iterate on the supplied writing. Setting up a loop rather than a one-time arrangement allows you to refine your work over time rather than in one go.

When setting up a feedback loop, you may find it advantageous to split your book up by chapter, so you can get feedback on each chapter as you go. You may even decide to do this publicly or with multiple readers. Choose the setup that works for you.

Once you have your feedback loop ready, you'll be set to refine your work. Refining your work is the actual editing that must be done during this stage. Be prepared for market needs and desires to be revealed in your feedback and to adjust your story to fit the reader

better. Stay focused on your purpose and even major plot elements but be willing to change other components of your book.

If you do all this deftly, you will find BMF. People will want to buy your book, and they will share it with others. That's really what we want, right?

After Achieving BMF

Once you have achieved book-market-fit, a number of new initiatives can be brought to fruition. For startups, this would be considered the “time to scale”. This is the time to make strategic hires, optimize various metrics, and scale up the marketing engine. The same is true for writers.

With BMF, you should begin thinking about scalable marketing strategies rather than small-scale tactics. This

includes content marketing, influencer marketing, and even advertising. We will discuss each of these marketing strategies in future posts.

"