

SELF-PUBLISHING ESSENTIALS

Publish Don't Perish

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YOU'VE DECIDED TO SELF-PUBLISH. Now what? How do you get from manuscript to marketplace? Do you need an editor? Designer? How will you find a quality printer with competitive pricing? How will you get your book into retailers' systems? How can people buy your book once it's been printed? How do you know you're not getting ripped off?

You could figure out all of these steps yourself and pay various service providers a separate fee. Maybe you've even hired a publishing consultant to help you figure it all out, which is another added cost. Apart from the fact that this piecemeal method will drive you crazy—and make you wonder why you ever wrote a book in the first place—it will cost you a lot of money. Instead, if you engage a professional publishing services company who can create a customized plan that includes everything from editing through to book fulfillment, you will not only save yourself time and money, but your book will look and feel like a traditionally published book—something of which you can be proud.

The advantages of using a publishing services provider versus figuring it all out by yourself and paying more than you need to are many.

- Quality and cost control
- Cohesive editing, printing, and design solutions
- Traditional publishing expertise
- Dedicated team working on your book
- Custom solutions
- Marketing and distribution
- Ongoing personal attention

If you try to hire an editor, designer, printer, handle your own copyright and ISBN applications, figure out all the key marketing steps, and set up fulfillment and distribution all by yourself, *you're paying more than you need to, and managing more than you want to.*

To find out how to make your publishing experience a cost-effective and relatively painless process, and to learn about how the services offered by a self-publishing company can benefit you, read on.

THE NUTS AND BOLTS

How Your Manuscript Becomes a Book

Editing

Just because your Aunt Martha loves crime thrillers, that doesn't make her the ideal editor for your mystery novel. And the fact that you were able to dig up and convince your old high school English teacher to read it and she thought it was "good" doesn't mean the reading public will agree. You should have a real editor who will ensure that your book is ready for publication. An editor will look at your work subjectively, tighten it up, correct errors, and make suggestions for improvement. A professional edit is essential. You could hire an editor on your own: many freelance editors are out there looking for work. But this could be a time consuming (and frustrating) effort on your part.

Using a self-publishing company's editor

If you use a self-publishing company, they will assign you an editor who is likely to be best suited to the material. The guesswork and hassle are removed, not to mention the fact that you would be paying more if you hired one on your own.

ISBN, Barcode, LCCN, and Copyright

Getting an International Standard Book Number (ISBN) is absolutely necessary in any publishing endeavor if you want your book to be available and in retailer's databases. If you pursued this on your own, it's an extra step. A self-publishing company will simply assign one of their ISBNs to your book. They will also provide a barcode, which goes on the back of the book.

The purpose of a Library of Congress Card Number (LCCN) is to make sure libraries know how to properly categorize and shelve your book. In some cases libraries will not order material without an LCCN. When using a self-publishing company, they should provide this along with the ISBN.

If you want to protect your work and register it with the Library of Congress, you need to fill out and send the copyright forms along with a finished copy of your book—yet another step in a long checklist of items to take care of. A self-publishing company should include this as a part of their service to you.

Cover and Interior Page Layout Design (formatting) One of the first signs of a badly conceived self-published book is the cover. The second is the interior layout, where a 12pt Times font is used, and was created in word processing program instead of page design software (such as InDesign or QuarkXPress). Many authors shouldn't be expected to know how an actual book is created and produced, yet they mistakenly bungle their way through the process, believing that if they have a computer and a printer, that's all there is to it! If you don't want your book to scream "SELF-PUBLISHED" then hire professionals in typesetting and graphic design who know what they're doing. You should be able to work through the concepts in your book and have them realized through visuals: good designers are well versed and experienced in this process and will be able to work with your ideas.

About hiring freelancers

If you go out and try to find freelancers who offer graphics services, you won't necessarily find ones with actual book experience. Books are their own unique category in the design world, and many designers in the traditional publishing work on nothing but books. Also, freelancers can charge exorbitant rates. By going with a self-publishing company you not only have people who will work with you one-on-one to help make your book a reality, you are getting professional advice and guidance.

Making the cover and interior work together

One of the key advantages to having a self-publishing company work on your design is that the

cover and interior will be cohesive. If you have two separate designers working on the cover and page design, it can make for a very disjointed look, therefore risking the accurate positioning of the book and potentially losing your audience.

Printing

With today's printing technology, using short-run digital methods (often referred to as print on demand or POD) there is no good reason to choose the vanity press/offset printing method. Unfortunately it's still typical for a vanity press to encourage the often vulnerable self-published author to order 5,000 copies (or more!) because the print unit cost is lower at that amount—and yet they still mark up the printing to the author! What's worse is the author has no guaranteed pre-sales to justify such a high print run. How soon can an unknown author with no distribution or marketing support sell 5,000 copies of their book? The end result is usually a huge credit card bill and an enormous pile of books in the garage.

Author Control

Luckily self-published authors now have much more control when it comes to printing. A smart author will be perfectly satisfied with short runs printed to meet actual demand or confirmed publicity (that will create future demand) as opposed to being stuck with thousands of books with no guaranteed buyers. But not all POD printers (or offset printers, for that matter) are the same. As in choosing designers, it's critical to choose a reliable, trusted printer if you want your book to be of good quality and appeal to readers. There are a lot of substandard POD printers out there because it's relatively easy and cheap for them to set up shop. But few have traditional print quality standards when it comes to producing books.

Choosing a Printer Yourself

If you shop for printing on your own, you'll be gathering quotes and sorting out samples. Keep in mind you are likely never to receive a bad sample, and if you actually got one, would you know what to look for? Against the grain binding, no lamination, crooked spine...etc. This can be a very time-consuming effort on your part.

Letting the publisher do the work for you

By using the services of a good self-publishing company, the guesswork is eliminated. Your book will be printed by reliable companies with traditional printing experience and high quality standards. You needn't fuss with quotes and the added headache of trying to figure out just who to trust. Cost to you—the author—should not be inflated. There is no reason why you should pay more than what the publisher pays for printing.

SALES & MARKETING

Making Your Book Available to Readers

Creating Demand for Your Book

A common misconception with self-published authors is that they think their book will be of interest to anyone and everyone. Remember, there is a lot of information and competing media out there. First, it's absolutely critical be clear about just who your audience is, and to define your goals and your measure of success. You should ask yourself many questions:

Why will people want to read my book?

Who are these people?

Are there similar or competing books available?

What will make someone take notice of my book?

How many books do I want to sell?

How can people buy my book?

How do I get my book into bookstores?

How do I get my book on the Internet (such as Amazon.com)?
How do I set up a website for my book and drive traffic to it?
How important are book reviews? How do I get them?

Doing Your Research, Being Realistic

Without a doubt, creating a good publicity plan and generating sales can be the toughest part about self-publishing. Many authors enter an arena where there is much more competition than they had realized—but find this out only after the book is completed and ready to go. It pays to do your market research *early on in the process*, when the book is complete at manuscript stage. Each author is different in their approach, but as long as you're realistic and can do some legwork beforehand, you will have an advantage.

You can find out how to create demand for your book by doing everything yourself, misfiring here, wasting time there. It will be a hit-and-miss process, expensive, and even if you quit your day job there still wouldn't be enough time for it. Or you can use a self-publishing company that can guide you through the process and help you create a customized plan that *works*.

Online Book Marketing

Simply having your book posted on Amazon or on your own website isn't enough to make sales unless you are actually driving people to these sites. Having a search engine optimized website is essential in order to make the most of what the Internet can do for your sales. As an individual you could learn the ins and outs of search engine advertising including choosing your own keywords, but this can be a highly specialized skill for which you may not have time to figure it out. Having a blog and engaging in "social networking" (MySpace, Facebook, etc.) is worth considering for any type of book, whether fiction or nonfiction. By using a publishing company that totally understands your book and your audience, and they can provide online book marketing *in addition to the traditional markets*, you are increasing your chances of exposure across the board.

Traditional Book Marketing

How does a book get noticed in the "book trade" which is comprised of booksellers, wholesalers, book reviewers? When there are approximately 195,000 books published per year, how do you break through? The first place to start is with a good marketing plan. This should include sample copy review mailing, a sales kit, press kit, one-page sell sheet, bookstore mailing lists, key media or "big mouth" lists (people who will talk up your book) and much more. But if you're doing this on your own, where do you start? Bookstores and Internet retailers like to (and in some cases insist upon) dealing with a distributor when purchasing books to resell. A lone self-published author cannot get into these channels by themselves.

A publishing company can guide you in these efforts. Each author has a different goal, and therefore should be able to customize a PR and marketing effort that is suited to it. A full PR campaign with a dedicated book publicist is expensive, but could be worth it for certain books. At best, most authors should do a combination of the basics (review mailing, sell sheets, press kit) and this doesn't necessarily require the employ of a publicist. A good self-publishing company should be able to provide these services to you at a level that suits your budget and goals.

How to Break Through the System

Often the doors to traditional book channels are closed to individual self-published authors. But if you have a publishing company with access to basic distribution, booksellers, and a full understanding of the pre-publication promotion process, you increase your chances of exposure. There is never any guarantee that a reviewer or bookseller will like your book (or even get to the stage of opening your book) but it's worth having the opportunity to reach them, instead of none at all.

Book Fulfillment

Once your book is completed and back from the printer, how will people be able to buy it? Will you set up your own website with a merchant account? Sell them directly at events or other venues? Walk around from bookstore to bookstore with the hopes that they might stock it? You can handle sales on your own, but you need to be prepared for the work involved. A publishing company will be able to handle sales for you, through a fulfillment system whereby you receive royalties on each sale. They will handle credit card processing, shipping, and inventory. Unless you plan to spend a good deal of time each day monitoring this activity, it's worthwhile (and efficient) to set up a fulfillment system for your book with your publisher.

If you would like to learn more about how working with a self-publishing company can help you make you reach your publishing goals, please feel free to visit our website at www.millcitypress.net. Mill City Press is the only publisher to comply with The Author's Bill of Rights, a document that explains what every smart author should expect from their publishing company.

Good luck in your publishing venture!

Note: This special report was brought to you by SelfPublishEbooks.com. Although I did not write this report, when I first talked to Mark Levine (CEO of Mill City Press) on the phone, I asked him if there was a way to let my readers know about his company's services. As a self published author myself, I will never forget how hard it was to learn all the software packages and file all the paperwork necessary to get my book published. I am delighted to be able to pay it forward and recommend a company that will provide all the services you need for one reasonable price, while you retain your copyright and keep all the profits. I wish Mill City Press had been around when I self published my first book.

| ITEM | PIECEMEAL: Doing each step on your own | SELF-PUBLISHING COMPANY SERVICES: Hiring a team of professionals |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| Editing | Author needs to look for and “test drive” several before finding a good fit; rates will vary | Author only pays for the type of editing needed, and will be matched with a professional editor who is best suited to the material |
| Design | Freelancers rates will vary but tend to be high, and many do not specialize in books which involves a particular design expertise | Work is done by book designers and typesetters who are part of the design and production team |
| Printing | You need to find a quality, reliable printer without knowing what to look for. Printer will mark up the unit cost of books anywhere from (percentages here) | At cost printing; you shouldn't have to pay more than what the publisher pays |
| Publishing | Disordered execution without a critical eye on the overall process | Staff with traditional publishing experience oversee and manage the whole publishing process to ensure quality and the desired outcome of the author |
| Online Marketing | Author needs to tackle the highly specialized task of search engine optimization and other online marketing techniques | Skilled, experienced Internet marketing staff to create an effective campaign for your book |
| Traditional Book Marketing | Author needs to learn how to navigate the book trade and without knowing how it works | Publisher will be connected to multiple opportunities to market to the book trade including distribution, pre-publication promotion, book reviews, and more |
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