

SELF-PUBLISH!
A guide to publishing your own work
and
DIGITAL PUBLISHING
One Step Ahead

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First part – Self-publish!

I - Introduction

This guide is aimed at people who would like to see their ideas in print through self-publishing. If for whatever reason you can not or do not want to be published by a traditional publishing house, this handbook will guide you through the process of publishing your own work yourself.

Before going any further there is one thing that you need to know: self-publishing is not that simple. However I can assure you from my own experience that accomplishing such a project is worth the effort and very rewarding. In fact, it is probably a lot more rewarding than having most of the work done for you by a team of specialists. The satisfaction I drew from my own self-publishing accomplishments was worth all the time and hard work that I had put into my projects.

I have self-published four books, all of which received an award and some of which were translated into several languages. Had the process not been enjoyable or had the result not been worth it I would clearly only have self-published once. So if you are at the very beginning of your self-publishing journey, still

asking yourself lots of questions and being unsure of how exactly you will achieve your goals, do keep positive. So long as you have the motivation required, you will succeed!

From the number of people who contacted me after I self-published my first book, it does feel like many people have the same dream: writing a book, and seeing it in print. This is something anyone can achieve provided they are given the right advice and are able to get the knowledge they need. It should also be said from the start that having some money to be used to allow the project to reach its term is necessary. The financial aspects of a self-publishing project are dealt with later on.

The value of this handbook lies in the fact that it will save you from making mistakes that others have made many times before. These mistakes can cost both time and money so being warned of the traps to avoid is a huge step forward.

Gathering a wealth of information and tips, this unpretentious guide will be extremely useful to you before and during the course of your self-publishing project as well as after the publication as your job does not stop on the day the book is published (quite the opposite). Its aim is to

accompany you all the way from the start of your self-publishing project to its end.

There are a lot of reasons why someone might decide to self-publish. They range from being rejected by a traditional publishing house, to the desire to keep full control over the design and all other aspects of the project. In my case, the challenge of carrying out a project from start to finish all by myself in an area that I did not know the first thing about to start with was just too exciting not to take on.

This book may not tell you everything - no book of this size could - but it is a comprehensive enough guide to ensure that your self-publishing venture will be turned into a success to be remembered. I would like to dedicate this book to all the talented aspiring authors around the world.

II - What you will find in this section

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III - Pre-Publication

1. To self-publish or not to self-publish

First of all, what are your options to see your work published? You will find that there are three main ones.

→ The first and obvious way to get published is to do so through what I call a *traditional publishing house*. This is an established, often well-known, third-party publisher. Now, even if this is what you want to do, it is not so easy to achieve. And I guess if you are now reading this self-publishing guide you will have found this out by yourself.

Unless you are famous, you will have to present a rather solid proposal in order to convince the commissioning editor of a traditional publishing house that your project is worth investing in. Publishers are the ones who advance the money and finance the whole project. They take the risks by putting their money at stake and therefore you can expect publishers to be very careful to make sure to limit those risks.

The process by which hopeful authors are selected varies from one publisher to another but all of them will want to know at least your concept,

the synopsis and a sample of the book you have in mind, its genre, the reason why you want to write your book, a short biography and your intended audience. You will most likely have to explain what market you are targeting, why you think your book will sell and what your existing competition is. You may also be asked about your marketing ideas, the expected manuscript size as well as a timeframe for its delivery. This is only an indicative list of the common things a publisher will want to know. Before sending a manuscript you should always find out the publisher's specific requirements. This information is generally available from their website.

The first step is to research the publishers who publish the type of writing you do. Some will be specialized in fiction, others in non-fiction books such as cookery books, gardening books or travel books.

Once you have selected the publishers who may be interested in your work, check out their website and find out their requirements for manuscript submissions. You will generally have to write a covering letter and you will need to send them at least part of your manuscript in addition to other information. Whatever the requirements, you are better off complying with them. Also be sure to

follow the guidelines regarding the physical aspects of the material submitted: generally the manuscript needs to include extra spacing between each line so as to enable the person assessing your work to write notes.

If you are writing fiction, you might like to have your work assessed by a qualified manuscript assessor before presenting a sample to a potential publisher. The report will point out the strengths and weaknesses of your manuscript and offer some ideas for improvement.

One thing that is of great interest to potential authors is the amount of royalties they will get paid (the amount that you will earn on each book sale). This amount varies from one publisher to another however it is rarely over ten per cent of the RRP of a book and often just half this amount. This may not seem like much but the publisher takes care of all of the aspects required to get your book onto the market. Many people are involved in the publication process. All who need to get paid and as a result the industry margins are thin. Since you will not have to pay for anything to produce the book, any money paid to you will be profit made on your book sales. This is very different to the other two options for publishing described over the next pages.

Should a publisher accept the proposal you have submitted, you will be sent a publishing offer which will detail such things as the grant of rights, content, royalty rates you will get paid (for the same book the rates will vary depending, among other things, on who the book is sold to and the territories where it is sold) , the timeframe in which you need to deliver the material, expected publication date, the number of complementary copies you will receive, the time you will be required to spend on promotion work, the amount of advance you will be paid, termination, next work and a number of clauses relating to legal stuff.

If you decide to accept the proposal and sign the publishing contract, congratulations, you will soon be a published author (and you don't need to read on)! However in real life it is very difficult for an unknown first-time author to be offered a publishing contract. There is a lot of competition out there and you might find that publishing your first book through another method is the only way for you to see your work in print.

→ Another option that you might like to explore further, although it is not the object of this book, is the use of a *Print-On-Demand company* (also

referred to as POD company). POD companies offer publishing services and will publish your book, any book, for a fee. They may be a convenient way to publish your work if it is mostly intended for your friends and relatives. Indeed, POD companies often do not use offset printing and instead - as indicated by their name - print your book one at a time whenever an order is made.

You should be aware of the fact that using a POD company will most likely not get your book into the bookshops. This is not a fact that such companies advertise. Indeed, many bookshops will not order books which have been printed by a POD company. Some of the reasons for this are that the quality of the paper and the quality of the printing are often low, the price is often high, and the books are generally non-returnable.

The main appeal of POD companies comes firstly from the fact that they will publish anything you like. Unlike a traditional publisher you do not have to justify anything at all, whether it is the reason why you want to write a book about a particular topic, the size of your intended audience or the quality of your writing. They are not here to judge you as an author but rather to provide you the means to publish a book without having to go

through a traditional publisher or through the self-publishing process on your own. Of course you get nothing for nothing and this involves fees, which may vary from relatively reasonable packages to very hefty sums if you decide to include a lot of “optional” services that are not included in the basic package but are almost necessary such as professional cover design, marketing etc. These companies represent a business worth a lot of money, and clearly aim to sell you as many of their services as possible. In return you will see your book in print indeed, but be aware that you may be disappointed with the result and the amount of money involved. POD companies usually offer high royalty rates, however due to the limitations with the book sales these are often just a lure.

If you do decide to sign-up with a POD company you will most likely be requested to pay a sign-up fee first. This is where a large part of their money is made, along with the other services that they will offer to sell you. They will then guide you through their process and requirements and provide you with documentation to this effect. Unlike when going through a traditional publisher you will be making a number of the choices yourself, eg the format and specifications of the printed book, much in the same way as a self-

publisher would do but with many more limitations. Among other things you will be able to specify whether your book is black and white or full colour; you will be able to choose the format of your book from the range of sizes available (but you will most likely not be able to choose a custom-size for your book); you will have to select a style for the graphic design among the few they offer which will determine the layout of the book, the font and folio used.

The extent (number of pages) of your book is up to you but be aware that the RRP of your book is often dictated by the price set by the POD company. This may not be too much of a limitation in the case of a black and white book but it may be a big hurdle in the case of a full colour book, where the RRP that is imposed might mean that the book will not be competitive at all on the market.

POD companies will generally make the book available on their website. Depending on where they are based they may also sell it from websites such as Amazon.com. As stated above however POD books are difficult, if not impossible, to get into the bookshops. POD companies generally do not have their own distribution network and only take care of the design and printing of the books

they publish. Therefore, you will be solely responsible to find a book distributor, who will probably end up telling you that they will not represent your book to the trade due to the fact that it is a POD book and that the bookshops will not consider stocking it.

If you do not plan to make your book available widely – for example if you intend on printing a dozen copies for family and friends only and therefore do not need country-wide or world-wide distribution – and if you are only after something a little bit better than a few pages stapled together, then using a POD company might be an appropriate solution. Like a traditional publisher, you will not need to be involved in the relatively complex process of producing the book itself. However bear in mind that you may have to pay extra money for things that a traditional publisher would do as a matter of fact, like a custom cover design. Should you wish to sell your book you will also have to arrange the marketing yourself without any help from the POD company (which may well be based far away from where you live).

I would not recommend POD companies as the way to go if you have some serious ambitions for your work. In this case, and assuming that you can not or do not wish to be published by a

traditional publishing house, the last and in my opinion best option that is open to you is simply to do it yourself. In other words, you are about to become a self-published author.

→ The third option is that of *self-publishing your own work*. This is the object of this book. True self-publishing is when the author of a book takes on and pays for all aspects of its publication, including but not limited to its production, distribution, marketing. In other words, you will take care of all the things that a traditional publishing house would normally do for you, if you were only the author.

This does not mean that you literally do everything yourself, but that you will be managing the whole publishing venture, bringing in outside help when required from specific contractors along the way (eg printer, illustrator). You will be running and financing a small business whose goal is to produce and sell a single product: your printed book. In most cases, the business's goal is to make a profit over time even if it is usually not (and should not be) the main reason for self-publishing.

There are many aspects to producing, distributing, marketing and selling a book and this

is the reason why all the following chapters are dedicated to guiding you through the time-consuming but rewarding process of publishing your own work.

If being published by a traditional publishing house is not possible, or you have other reasons not to go through an established publisher (eg preferring to keep control over the content, design and marketing; preferring the challenge of managing the project from the beginning to the end) and if a POD company does not seem to fit your requirements but you do want to see your work in print and available to the wider public then self-publishing is an option you should explore.

Self-publishing used to be considered as bad as vanity publishing, but with so many recent self-publishing successes it is now possible to be a respected self-publisher. Indeed, many large publishers now follow with interest self-published and POD books and may in some cases buy the reprint rights of such books that might fit their publishing program.

Self-publishing a book does not mean in any way that your printed book will be of inferior quality than a traditionally published one. Or that it will not sell. However producing a high-quality,

marketable book on your own does require some skills and effort, as well as a certain amount of money that will vary depending on many factors, for example how many sub-contractors you need, how costly the printing cost per copy is (and how big the print run is), and how much you invest in marketing.

Another thing to bear in mind is that self-publishing your first book may be just what you need to acquire a reasonable level of fame on your local market and therefore attract the interest of a traditional publisher. If you are keen to continue on writing and manage to first pull it off by publishing a successful, highly-sellable, good-quality book on your own that catches on really well chances are that you will soon be offered a publishing deal for your next project.

Landing a good deal with a larger publisher who can push your sales to the next level is something that has happened to many successful authors over the years. I can testify it myself! Of course all this depends on the level of success of your first project, and helping you make it highly successful is what I will focus on in the rest of this book.

Second part – Digital Publishing

I - Introduction

With the current boom in digital media, e-commerce is something that deserves some thought. The best way to make revenue off digital content is the ebook. Therefore if you have in mind to publish a book, digital publishing could be the right option for you.

At this point in time, e-books do not represent a large part of the market for publishers. But this theme has been regularly discussed at book fairs over the recent years and it seems clear that at some point e-books will, if not replace traditional books, at least become significant in terms of publishers' income.

At the Frankfurt Book Fair in October 2009, Juergen Boos, Director of the fair said, "now is the time to seek out new strategies, to scour the market, to engage in international benchmarking". Eighty per cent of publishers embrace the radical change in the media industry associated with digitization as an opportunity, rather than as a crisis. "The industry continues to search for strategies for creating business with digital products. The focus is on business models that

can supplement, and eventually eliminate, the accepted model of exchanging money for printed paper”.

There are two main reasons for publishing digitally. Either you have a book in print and want to make it available to the wider public as an ebook. Or you want to publish a book in ebook form only to save on costs and reach a wider market. In both cases, the following pages will guide you through the DIY process of publishing your own ebook online without requiring costly help from a third-party.

This handbook will make publishing your own ebook easy. By the time your ebook has been published you will have gained an extra income source that requires no more time or effort on your part.

Read on to learn all the tricks and tips that will make ebook publishing a simple, low-cost and straightforward process. Just as with publishing a book in print, your job does not stop on the day the ebook is published. Therefore this book is designed as a complete walk-through from initial concept and considerations to marketing and sales.

II - What you will find in this section

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III – The Digital Publication Process

1. Why digital publishing?

The book industry is on the brink of a long-feared transformation for which few are well prepared. Electronic reading devices are set to enter the mass market. We can expect a surge in sales this Christmas holiday season, helped by lower prices, rising consumer confidence and better distribution outside the United States.

Internet shopping giant Amazon.com is now selling its Kindle wireless electronic reader in more than a hundred countries. The new device is designed to work with the globally popular 3G GSM standard.

The wireless coverage includes some countries where Amazon isn't shipping the Kindle. Amazon - which regards the Kindle as a pivotal growth driver - said over 200,000 English-language books from a host of publishers as well as more than eighty five international and US newspapers and magazines would be available on the international device, which begins shipping in October 2009.

E-readers are expected by some to be the hottest new gadget. It has been estimated that 3 million e-reader devices would be sold in the United States in 2009. That could double in 2010, bringing cumulative sales to 10 million by end-2010. Amazon's Kindle can currently store up to 1,500 books, has a text-to-speech feature, and can read PDF files and allow users to make annotations.

The devices have proven popular with readers and travelers who like the convenience of downloads and avoiding heavy books. For every one hundred customers who buy a book, some forty-eight buy it as an e-book - up from thirty-five just a few months ago.

Time is of the essence. As a general rule, digital products still only comprise a small fraction of sales. Around sixty per cent of publishers estimate that considerably less than ten per cent of their revenue will come from digital sources in 2009. However, they expect this to change in the next two years. The idea that digital content will generate more sales than the traditional book business is also gradually becoming more of a reality. Around fifty per cent of industry experts now see the year 2018 as the turning point.

From the data above, it seems clear that digital publishing is an unavoidable part of the future for the book industry.

Having a printed book is great however sales are generally limited by the number of countries in which the book is available. More often than not, translation deals are difficult to obtain and even getting a book published in its original language on another territory is challenging.

If you have not yet managed to get your book published overseas offering a downloadable version of your book extends your market to the whole world. If you own full copyrights to your book making your book available online as an ebook is the simple solution to reaching a global, worldwide market.

Print publishing is also a costly operation which involves a degree of risk, namely printing a whole lot of copies to find out at the end that the market just isn't there and therefore ending up not selling anywhere near enough copies to pay off production costs. Ebooks are a simple and effective solution in this case too.