

Touchstone Communications Book Publish Guide

Subsidy and Self Publishing Options

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Pathways to Publishing

Introduction

Perhaps you have tried the publishers and agents route and are disappointed. Don't feel badly. Most successful writers have been rejected over and over again. They just persevere.

So, you've come to one of the most important booklet sections. You're either disgusted with all the rejections, anticipating rejections, deciding you don't want to spend the time and money to go through the process and save some anguish.

So you're now considering what I'd call CUSTOM PUBLISHING, or GOING IT ON YOUR OWN.

This is a viable alternative for two reasons. Not only does it save the anxiety, money and time of pursuing agents and publishers; but it can get you the foot in the door you want. If you can make successful run at publishing on your own, you have some proof that your work is worth the risk, and you can approach agents and publishers with a track record. That is quite significant.

Imagine someone coming to you and saying, "Trust me, I can make you money with my writing." but who has nothing but an unproven manuscript; vs. "Look at what I've managed to do on my own so far." showing you a successful track record of publishing and selling. As a publisher who would you pick to work with?

Here's where that PERSISTENCE comes in.

Many successful writers self-published first. Many successful writers are still self-publishing.

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A Very Short List:

- The Elements of Style William Strunk
- Fugitive Pieces Lord Byron
- How to Form Your Own Corporation
for Under \$50 Ted Nicholas
- How to See Europe on
\$5. a Day Arthur Frommer
- Huckleberry Finn Mark Twain
- The Jungle Upton Sinclair
- Lady Chatterly's Lover D. H. Lawrence
- Leaves of Grass. Walt Whitman
- Looking Out for #1 Robert Ringer
- The One-Minute Manager . . . Johnson & Blanchard
- Poor Richard's Almanack . . . Benjamin Franklin
- Roberts' Rules of Order. Henry M. Robert
- Tarzan series (1931-1948) . . . Edgar Rice Burroughs
- A Week on the Concord and
Merrimack Rivers Henry Thoreau
- So how do we go about this? How do we start?

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You still have choices to make:

Subsidy (Vanity) Presses vs. Custom Publishing:

SUBSIDY (Vanity) PUBLISHERS

Definition:

Any publishing company which requires the author to pay for the editing and reproduction of their book.

Note:

If you research the internet, you'll find many. They'll all tell you why they are different and better than the others. They'll all persuade you that you are the publisher and in total control of your work. Some even imply that they study the manuscripts and only accept the professional ones. But all we've researched so far implies that even these, when tested, will accept and print any manuscript given them, good or bad, edited or not.

Consequently, book buyers and distributors know who these companies are, and look at their books differently than standard published works. This is not to say that you should be embarrassed that you've paid to have your book published. This only means that you have enough faith in the quality of your work that you're willing to market it yourself until you can prove it's worth a standard publisher taking it over. Or, that you have ways to market and sell your book that doesn't depend on the standard bookstores to sell for you.

When you commission a subsidy publisher to do your book, this by no means eliminates all the work it is necessary for you to

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do to succeed. Most will not edit, or do only spelling and grammar edits for additional monies.

And, some of the control you lose (like using a template for the book cover, as opposed to being able to work out a design specific to you and your project) might be areas where you'd rather not lose control.

Most important, none can do the advertising and marketing necessary to get the word out there and tell the world how important and interesting this book is. That job will be mostly yours, no matter what avenue you manage for getting it printed. I will be mentioning this over and over again, so please don't get angry with me when I do. It's so essential. And I find that more often than not, new authors are unaware that this is part of the job of succeeding as a writer. They are hoping some large publisher will "find" them and so fall in love with their work that they will pick it up and run with it, paying for advertising in the New York Times Book Review, and organizing book signings at all the large bookstores. Dream on!

If the word gets out that your book is good and available, 90% to 100% of that effort will have to be yours. And if you don't believe in the book, its worthiness, its captivating writing, and interesting topic, then you cannot expect anyone else to believe either. Is it worth the work? Then go ahead and make that part of what you'll do for it, and for yourself. Don't abandon the project part way through just because you thought this part would be easy or someone else's job. Take it on happily. For no one can talk about your book with the authority you can. No one can answer the questions, persuade an audience, find the correct venues to present your book. Make up your mind that it's worth it and you can do it!

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If it's worthy, it's worthy of your efforts. If it's not, how can you ask someone else to take and run with it? It's either worthy or its not.

Vanity Publishing Pros:

Much of the small details and decision-making is taken from your shoulders. The ISBN number, listings (at least on the publisher's own web site), and the book is usually through some other venues as well. Even the packaging and shipping to suppliers will be managed. That's worth something. In fact, it's worth the majority of the profit of your book. If you're not concerned, and just want to move on to writing that next book, this may be the best avenue for you.

Vanity Publishing Cons:

If their ISBN number is supplied - this company will be listed as your publisher everywhere the book is listed. So, not only will it not be a SELF-published book, but the publisher's name and address, on the title page of the book will be a known subsidy press. Many book purchasers recognize these names, and it immediately is apparent that you paid to publish this book. No shame in that. It just is apparent you did not go through the process of publishing acceptance.

Vanity presses all ask for their set-up (printing - if a quantity of books is included) money up front. You'll have no "wiggle room" to negotiate a re-do if there is anything wrong. But in these trying financial times, I don't imagine you'll be able to convince any of them to bill you.

Vanity Publishing Bewares:

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Check your contract. No matter what a sales person tells you, the contract is the final word. Do you have the rights for subsequent sales? Movies? Large print books? etc.

Is there a cost to transfer your book to a new publisher?

Is this an exclusive?

PRINT ON DEMAND (POD):

Definition:

POD publishers are still subsidy (vanity) publishers. They are just using a specific process to reproduce books. It's a totally risk-free set up for them.

Print on Demand is a term for books which are reproduced from elaborate copying machinery. It has a computer which takes in your text and cover information (for a fee), and then your book can be reproduced one at a time on this machine. It prints each page, the cover, and perfect binds them together.

Many of your subsidy publishers are POD publishers. They may explain that in their literature, or not. Rest assured, if they are not reproducing at least 500 or more books all at once, this is probably the process which will be used.

Offset (and web) printing, which used to be the ONLY process used to reproduce books, is only feasible in larger quantities. Even 500 is often considered a "short run," and many printers will not go that low. As we explained before, even the smaller publishers usually consider

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2000 a minimal run length for books they decide to handle.

There are those who say they can tell the difference - that the quality (especially of the cover) is noticeable. But others argue not. If you are negotiating with a POD subsidy publisher ask if they could send you some samples of books they've done. Then study them carefully. If you're happy with the quality, maybe they'll do fine for you.

Print On Demand (POD) Pros:

You never have to handle a book. They'll do it all for you. Some authors, after running through their own first printing, realize that sales have fallen off and another large quantity "batch" probably will not sell well. If they THEN to go a POD publisher, books can still be made available to the public, small commissions can still be made, but the expsnese and risks are not so great.

Print On Demand (POD) Cons:

The book prices are usually high, as one book is done at a time. If competitors' books sell for less, this might be enough to steer them away from your book.

You'll have to purchase books for yourself from the POD publisher at their higher rates. (They may offer you a small discount when you buy your books, but the price will still be higher than a print run book.) And even if you decide you can sell a bigger batch, say at a conference or presentation you are planning, your per-book price will remain the same. There's no quantity discount available.

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Your big book distributors, which enable you to offer your book at the large chain bookstores require a “buy back” provision. This means that if they purchase books to offer to bookstores, and they are handled or damaged in any way, the publisher will buy them back - no questions asked. POD publishers will not do that. When they produce a book, they want it gone. They are not in to storage, retrieval, and all that entails. So your book can not be listed with Ingram or Baker and Taylor, or other book distributors.

Print On Demand (POD) Bewares:

If they own the ISBN, in order to move the book to another publisher (or do it yourself) you’ll have to begin all over again, with a new ISBN and setup. They’ll say the text materials is yours, but if they did any layout or design, they’ll claim that and you’ll either pay them to release it to you, or you’ll have to begin again setting up a book to reproduce elsewhere, brand new cover and all.

OR

Orchestrating the PROJECT YOURSELF (Self-publishing or Custom Publishing.)

SELF PUBLISHING:

Definition:

SELF-PUBLISHERS are their own publishing company and reproduce, copyright, list with wholesalers, set for sale on the internet,

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send out promotional materials, take orders, ship books, and keep the records. They own their own ISBN number(s), and consequently are listed as a publisher with Bowker, the ONLY company which sells the ISBNs.

You can do it all yourself, becoming your own publisher. You can establish your own publishing company, or we'll serve that purpose for you.

As it makes no difference to us (Touchstone Communications) we're not pushing to take over any parts of the process. We'll just explain it all and you can take the information and run with it yourself. We are available to consult (offer advice and support and suggestions) we can do some of the groundwork, and we can find you the best reproduction prices from our connections, or help you find a printer of your own who fits the bill for your project. We can prepare your manuscript for any reproduction process, of you can do that yourself.

When you do it yourself, are all the steps are laid out here in our subsequent booklet sections for you. Or we offer one-on-one help with any or all parts of the process. We cannot do it all for you, but we can do much that would unburden you to finish the job of writing and editing the project, and you keep total control.

You can tackle any parts of the project you'd like to save money. And you can have us guide and help you with any other parts you'd rather no have to spend the time and effort on all alone.

Also, it's sometimes just good to have someone just to ask a question.

I get frantically upset when trying to understand some process,

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and I cannot get anyone to talk to me. Most often one simple question holds up my entire project and I cannot get an answer. So I sit at the computer and steam - working through web pages - or sitting on the phone punching in numbers. It's so frustrating!

Here we will talk with you. You can email us for an answer. If we cannot answer, we'll begin researching to find an answer for you.

You can call - the current phone number is 607-437-0000, and since we are Verizon-wireless, if you are also, that call is free for you. Our first encounter can be free, to give you time to decide if you'd like our help.

So check out our self-publishing booklets:

Project Planning

Reproduction

Details to Plan

Finding the Money

Listing & Marketing

Internet Marketing

Currently (it's April 2009) each booklet is still being refined and edited. As we are still putting them together, they are FREE to peruse on our web site as much as you like. You could even email us a comment or suggestion - or criticism - and we'll take that in to consideration as we refine the booklets.

Once they are complete, we will offer them as eBooks and printed booklets from our web site, at minimal cost. And we are committed to

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refining and updating them continually as this field of publishing is changing so rapidly now. Between the digital revolution, and the tight economic times, new information can be immediately available here.

The booklets will be updated as soon as we see the need. We'll put the updated dates on the booklets, so you have some idea how old the information is.

We realize that as excellent as so many books on self-publishing are - they quickly become outdated as the world of publishing changes. So our goal is to offer a place where the latest information is available.

Self Publishing Pros:

You needn't do all that research, send out all those query letters and suffer all those rejections. You can get published right away.

The cover design, the exact layout and thrust of your writing will not be changed. No one will ask you to turn it around and change anything.

The best part? All of the extra money, after preparation, printing and shipping will be yours. There are no middle-men to take their chunk of the proceeds.

Self Publishing Cons:

You need to consider all the details, some which are managed by the subsidy-publishing companies (but not all):

Copyright, Listing with book sellers, taking orders and shipping

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books out.

It's a risk deciding how many books to print and have on hand. (Although with subsidy publishers, after the first few free books, if you want any for yourself, you'll have to buy them anyway.)

Self Publishing Bewares:

There are lots of ways to spend your money offering the promise of good thing to come. There are contests you can enter (figure about \$80 per entry) in the hopes of winning a competition and some money. There are publicists who will design your literature and perhaps send it off to some standard book advertising places (This doesn't mean it will get printed. They're just sent out for acceptance - no promises.) There are book shows and conferences offering to "display" your book for a fee.

My advice would be, unless you are familiar with this organization, trust that it's got some promise for you, and you've gotten some positive feedback from other authors you respect, don't throw your money away.

If you are a good writer, you should be able to put together good literature to sell your book. Again (you'll get tired of us saying it!), we CAN help - while we'll cannot do it all for you, we do put together a "suggested" postcard, brochure, and promotional literature when clients ask and the only charge is our time, which is minimal. We don't push our services, figuring you'll want to do as much yourself as possible, both for the experience and the savings. We help when asked. We charge only for our time.

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Then you can get the product printed yourself, or we'll give you our best prices for reproduction and you can decide. You're never stuck with us, but encouraged to do as much as you want for yourself.

CUSTOM PUBLISHING:

Definition:

When the author takes control of his book project, but requires assistance for some part of the publishing process.

The difference (as I see and define it) is that you pay for the help, as you get it, so that no royalties or percentages of the job are taken from the book proceeds at the end.

We consult for \$50 an hour, do graphic design for \$40 an hour, and straight typing for \$25.00 an hour. We can find you an editor, an artist, a printer, or web developer. All the work is "pay as you go," so you can start and stop as you wish, and do whatever parts of the project you'd like.

Custom Publishing Pros:

All the work is "pay as you go," so you can start and stop as you wish, and do whatever parts of the project you'd like. No royalties or percentages of the job are taken from the book proceeds at the end. So you can see a better return on your investment of time and money for yourself.

You are still a totally free agent, so can have your book listed for sale on Amazon, with wholesalers like Ingram and Baker and Taylor,

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or send out postcards to your own mailing list. There is no “package” price which has you paying for services you don’t really need, nor restrictions you must adhere to.

Custom Publishing Cons:

Publishing and marketing any book takes dedication and work. While a consultant - project manager - book coach - whatever you wish to call us, can help a lot in the process, the final thrust has to come from you.

Remember how we said that you cannot expect anyone else to go to bat to sell your book if first you aren’t willing to do that yourself. Well, that’s true here. The most rewards are available here - but also some dedication and work also.

Custom Publishing Bewares:

No matter how much coaching, advice and support you get, the final responsibilities, for proofing, paying and selling are yours. Don’t be fooled by someone promising you big sales for their consulting work. Consulting, coaching, etc. is just that, not selling your books for you.

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