

## First Time Self-Publishers: Find a Mentor

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Tuesday, 13 June 2006  
Last Updated Thursday, 22 June 2006

I wish I'd had a mentor when I was going through the process of self-publishing my book. I was, to put it mildly, clueless. There is so much to know, and so little reliable information that it's a wonder I even got my book published. Ready to write your book? Then, you may want to consider having a little help...

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When I say that the information that's out there is unreliable, what I mean is that the world of publishing is a world with multiple realities. Everything is true - and everything is an exaggeration. It sometimes seems as if there is no middle ground in the muddle that has become publishing, and in particular, self publishing.

Everyone - and I mean everyone - has an opinion.

"Self publishing your book is a waste of time and energy."

"Literary agents are all sharks."

"I wouldn't even consider publishing without an agent on my side."

"Publishers only want your money and won't pay you what you're worth."

"I've been a best seller as a self-publisher, and I can't imagine going the traditional publishing route."

Want an opinion? Just ask the question, "What are your thoughts about self publishing?" You'll often get as many different opinions as there are people to ask.

However, one point many people can agree on is the value of having a mentor. A mentor is someone who's been successful at whatever it is you're attempting to do. If you're going to parachute out of a plane for the first time, you hire

someone to teach you the basics. This is your mentor. Business people often have mentors - a senior advisor who's been there and is experienced enough to know what works and what doesn't work.

Choosing your mentor can be a great experience in itself. You'll want to ensure that you mesh with the personality of your mentor. If he's adamant about working 20 hour days and you're more inclined to sit and watch the sunset every evening, your relationship may not work out.

More importantly for a writer and self-publisher, you'll want a mentor who has successfully self-published a book. That is, he or she has published AND sold enough copies to be considered a best selling author. There is no one perfect trick to selling books, and everyone's experience will be unique. But your mentor can offer suggestions and hints that can keep you from spending too much time or money in the wrong places.

For example, on your own you might think that it's a good idea to print and mail 10,000 post cards to every person in your local phone book. Your mentor (if she knows her stuff) might suggest that you spend a little more time targeting your audience to get a better response and save a little money.

Unfortunately, mentoring is not encouraged or taught in school. Few people understand how to do it well. A good mentor won't tell you what to do because you will almost always get different results by doing the same things as your mentor. Instead, your mentor is a guide, offering suggestions, and mostly asking questions so that you can arrive at your own conclusions based on his guidance.

Also, don't be afraid to aim high. Go ahead and ask that highly successful author you met at the last writing conference you attended. The worse thing that could happen is that she'd say no. You may find, though, that she's more than willing to help out another aspiring writer.

It never hurts to ask, but it does hurt to remain in the dark. You can bump into all kinds of mean, nasty, and ugly things that will do more than make you say, "Ouch!"

So, go ahead. Find yourself a good mentor. And good luck with your book.