

Book Marketing Tips - Is Your Book Dead Before it's Even Published?

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Is your book dead before it's even published? If you're not paying attention to book marketing, book cover design, or having your book edited by a professional, then you're likely to count yourself amongst the majority of people who never sell more than 50 books. Is this you? We hope not...

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Most authors don't think about book marketing until well after their book is published. If they go with a traditional publisher, they'll often make the mistake of assuming that the publisher will "do all the marketing." If they self-publish, as an increasing number of people are doing, they hardly think about book marketing at all.

In 2005, around 172,000 books were published with an ISBN number, according to Bowker, which compiles publishing statistics. An ISBN number will get you into Books in Print, and allows your book to be distributed to bookstores and online sites like Amazon and Barnes & Noble. According to some sources, nearly one quarter of these books were printed by Print on Demand (POD) companies.

{sidebar id=12}I'd estimate that number to be much higher, as many small publishers are having their books printed by Lightning Source, which also provides printing for many of the larger POD companies.

Additionally, Lulu Press, who publishes over 1500 books per week, says that only about 5% of their books get an ISBN number. That's another 80,000 or so books circulating in the market each year, although most of Lulu's books are only sold through Lulu Press on their web site.

The definition of "Best Seller" has changed

It only takes 300 book sales to get on Lulu's all-time top 100 bestsellers list. 300 books! For some people, that can be attained simply by selling books to their extended family. While AuthorHouse, iUniverse, Xlibris, and other big players in the POD market might print more books with ISBN numbers, their sales records aren't much better.

Some sources estimate that the average book sells no more than 150 copies, and other sources put that number at below fifty copies. In many cases, authors end up losing money on their books, which is why Lulu Press is so popular. At Lulu, you can upload your book interior and cover (you do all the design work), and have a book on your doorstep within days - all for the "cost of printing" (which is highly inflated, by the way).

The services and prices of POD companies vary widely, which is why we're in the final stages of creating a comprehensive guide on self-publishing. It can be a confusing morass of information and data, with many unsubstantiated claims. The truth shall be revealed.

Will you be one of the majority?

Will your book be dead before it hits the streets? If you have any intention of selling more than 50 books, then you'll have to invest time - and money - into the production and marketing of your book. Here are the basic steps you'll have to consider:

1. Write a great book that's got an audience.

One of the biggest mistakes people make is to assume that people will read their book just because it's "good." People will read a book if it is either applicable to their lives (non-fiction), or if it really is a damned good book (fiction). Even then, you'll have to market your book. "How to sell a book" or "How to market a book" are two of the top questions we get, and search engine analysis shows that these are frequent search terms. If you haven't written your book with an audience in mind, then you're down to three legs on your four-legged marketing stool.

2. Spend some money on book cover design and book editing.

The second leg of book marketing is the interior and exterior design of the book. People do judge a book by its cover, so if you're not spending some money on getting an outstanding cover, you're losing sales. Then, people will open the book and read the intro or first few pages. Is it well-written? Easy to read? Is the interior book design clean, consistent, and well-implemented. I've seen many POD books in which the margins were too small, the fonts poorly chosen, and the images fuzzy. Who's going to buy a book like that?

There are many great book cover designers, including Cathi Stevenson at <http://www.bookcoverexpress.com>. Then for editing, contact Charity at <http://www.mightypenediting.com> for your editing needs. Don't scrimp on the editing because you WILL make mistakes (trust me on this).

3. Choose a good quality publisher.

Lulu Press is great if you just want to print a few books for your friends, or create a low-cost galley to send to editors, agents, or distributors. You'll often be asked to send a "galley" of your book, which is simply a printed copy of your book with a blank cover. Lulu Press is great for creating galleys at minimal cost.

As we'll show you in our comprehensive guide to self-publishing, which POD company you choose depends on your intentions and desires. If you want to have your book professionally edited and the cover professionally designed by your publisher (instead of outsourcing to some unknown person), then companies like Cold Tree Press (<http://www.coldtreepress.com>) might be a good choice. Other companies offer a varied level of marketing packages. Personally, I'd rather stay away from having these publishers market my book, and instead go to a good book marketing expert or media specialist.

4. Take a "no holds barred" approach to book marketing.

If your book is your life, or is a major part of your business marketing plan, then spend some money on publicity and book marketing. Too many people, especially business people, write a book, put a page up on their web site (and on Amazon), and hope that they'll get some sales. Your book is like a 250 page business card, and it should be used accordingly.

If your book is your life story or a novel, you still need to spend some money on marketing, although your approach will be different. Definitely check out a media relations specialist (Marika Flatt) or Book Marketing Specialist (Penny Sansevieri at <http://www.amarketingexpert.com>).

5. Use the Internet to market your book.

The old ways of marketing books, such as book tours, are dead and gone. Sure, you can still do them, but if you really want to sell books, you'll have to go online - and not quietly.

Use techniques such as blogs (blogging), Podcasting, and Videocasting (something like online infomercials). Be sure to check out the advanced book marketing teleseminar series at <http://www.writeandpublishyourbook.com>. You should also learn how to do a Virtual Book tour (a class Penny Sansevieri will be teaching through Write and Publish Your Book).

So, write a great book, find a good book cover designer and book editor, work with a quality publisher, market the heck out of your book, and use the Internet to market your book with podcasts, blogging (an author blog), videocasts, and virtual book tours.

Good luck. Good writing. Good selling.