

How to Publish a Book the Easiest and Best Way

Contributed by Sid Smith
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How to Publish a Book The Easy and Best Way

{mosgoogle}So you want to know how to publish a book. And, you want to know the best and least expensive way to publish. Cheap publishing and publishing the easy way. Right?

The question I'm asked most often by visitors to this web site is really two questions in one. They want to know the best and cheapest way to publish their book. More often than not the book hasn't even been written, but I'll leave that topic for another discussion.

But for now, let's focus on this question of the best and cheapest way to publish a book. In fact, these are two entirely separate questions. The first question is, "What is the best way to publish my book?" Then, the second question should be, "What is the cheapest way to publish my book?"

See, most people who ask me this question are really just new to the business. It's a perfectly legitimate question, especially if you've slaved over writing your book for two or three months (again, the timeline for writing a quality book is the subject of another essay). So let's take these two questions apart. What is the best way to publish a book?

Write an outstanding, must-read book that is unique, provocative, controversial, a literary masterpiece, or is endorsed by someone like Oprah. No, really. That's the best way to publish a book.

Take for example Joseph Finder, author of the best selling corporate espionage book, *Paranoia*. He'd had moderate success with his previous well-written CIA suspense novels, but didn't hit it big until he inadvertently created an entirely new genre with *Paranoia*. In his words, "All I was doing was trying something new - a thriller with a fresh setting, a fresh cast of characters."

Or, how about Nora Raleigh Baskin, popular author of middle-grade novels such as *In the Company of Crazyies* (HarperCollins). She'd had a knee-high stack of rejection letters until she wrote the book she'd always wanted to write - not because she wanted to be published, but because she wanted to write this particular book. That one book, which she wrote from her heart, got her on the road to a successful writing career.

I receive inquiries from people who have "an idea" for a book, usually based on some life event. Having no experience as a writer, they ask about the best way to get published. My advice is always: "Write the book." If you can't write the book, what makes you think that a publisher is going to pay you to write the book? They won't, unless you're already a well-established expert at something or have a story that has already been in the news.

For example, remember the story about the guy who had to saw his own arm off with a dull knife in order to save his life? Aron Ralston didn't just come up with the idea to write his book *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*. His story was

popularized well before the book was ever written.

Contrast that with the woman who wants to write about her experiences with domestic violence. Unfortunately, this is not an unusual story. As much as I'd like to see an end to this horrible sickness, the story won't necessarily sell books.

And selling books is what it comes down to. Will your book sell? That's the ultimate question you need to answer if you want your book published. The question of the salability of your book applies whether you're self-publishing or attempting to sell your book to a publisher. Either way, it's got to sell or it just won't go anywhere.

That said, let's get back to the original question: What's the best way to publish my book?

Self-Publish or Traditional Publisher?

There's no easy answer to this question, and the answer you get will depend on who you ask. I think a lot of it depends on you, the genre of your book, your experience as a writer and in sales, and your intentions for the book.

Self-publishing is ideal for a business person who wants to use the book as part of his or her overall business strategy. It's a great way to establish yourself as an expert in your field (assuming the book is well-written and informative). The book can be "repurposed" into E-books, teleclasses (telephone conference-call classes), Webinars (seminars held on the phone and Internet), and eventually advanced courses sold for thousands of dollars. Thus, the book itself is printed at a loss and is generally given away to seminar attendees.

Self-publishing is also an option for novelists who really believe in their books, but because they're new can't find a publisher for the book. The key here is that you've at least tried to sell your book to a traditional publisher.

Self-publishing with an aim toward eventual publishing with a major publishing house will require a tremendous amount of energy and perseverance to market and sell your book. If you can show that the book sells, you'll find a publisher. Just putting it on Amazon won't do a thing. You absolutely must work at marketing your book.

There are many self-publishing options, ranging from "free" (Lulu) to several thousand dollars. Perhaps the worst option is to go with what's called "Vanity" press. These are companies who will publish your book for two to ten thousand dollars, print 2500 or more copies, and do a minimal amount of marketing. You're stuck with a garage full of books and an empty wallet. Beware those companies who want to print your book in bulk.

Lulu is the most popular, but has its own costs. Most of the books published on Lulu sell no more than 10 copies - total. The books are amateurish, with home-made covers that look like something the dog chewed. The book print quality is good, but the printing prices are steep. For a fee you can have an ISBN number assigned and the book listed on Amazon.

On the other hand, for just a little more money you can buy your own ISBN number and have your book printed at Lightning Source for far less money per book. You'll make your investment back with less than 100 books printed.

Then, there's everything in-between, including "Print on Demand" book publishers who will create the cover, edit your

book, and format the interior of the book so that it looks professional. Some POD publishers simply publish your book as-is. You provide the cover and the interior formatting.

Just consider that you generally get what you pay for, although some POD publishers will charge you high fees for what loosely resembles a marketing plan. Make sure you compare the options closely.

Traditional Publishing

Expect rejection. Seriously, the vast majority of books submitted to both big and small traditional publishers (publishers who either pay you up front or don't ask for any up-front money from you) are rejected. It's a fact of life simply because they're in it to make money. If they don't think the book will sell, they'll reject it.

The best way to ensure success is to write a beautiful, clever, provocative, inspiring, brilliant book. No, let me take that back. The best way to ensure success is to already be someone popular, well-known, famous, or influential. Think Donald Trump, Bill Clinton, or Paris Hilton (dread the thought).

If you're writing a nonfiction book, it's best to be someone important, have a track record in sales, or have excellent credentials. If you're not any of these, then consider co-authoring your book with someone who fits the above criteria.

Also, for nonfiction or a memoir, do your marketing research beforehand. If you can go into your book proposal or query letter armed with documented proof that people are buying your type of book AND that yours has a interesting and unique twist on a highly relevant topic, then you'll get their attention.

You'll need to write an excellent proposal. I've charged thousands to write nonfiction book proposals (and I have a good track record of success). It takes time to write a compelling lead that draws them into the benefits of publishing your book, and following that with a comprehensive plan for marketing your book. For nonfiction, you should have two solid sample chapters written.

Fiction is another matter. You'll need a great query letter, and you'll need to have your book written. Don't say that "it's almost done," or that "I'm thinking about writing..." Ideally you will have gone through about a dozen drafts of your book before you send it to anyone. Just remember that it's a lot easier to get published once you've been published (and that doesn't include self-published).

Write, publish and market your book on a Shoestring Budget

Sign up for the "Publishing on a Shoestring Budget" E-book series.