

Self Publishing Traps - 11 Tips to Avoid Them

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Successfully self-publish your book ! Read these eleven tips to avoid self-publishing pitfalls and enhance your chances of success.

Self-publishing Traps – 11 Tips to Avoid Them

Self-publishing used to be the Rodney Dangerfield of book publishing. It didn't get "no respect." Today that's all changed. With originally self-published books like *The Celestine Prophecy*, *Butter Busters*, *The Christmas Box*, and *What Color is Your Parachute?* monopolizing bestseller lists—do-it-yourself publishing is very much in vogue. To be successful, however, it's mandatory that you adhere to certain guidelines. By following the tips below, you'll avoid the pitfalls and enhance your chances of flourishing.

1. Educate Yourself

Self-publishing is a business. Approach it as such. There are informative books on the subject, seminars offered, and associations where you can learn the ropes and network with the more experienced. This can be very lucrative if properly approached. Conversely, you can waste thousands of dollars by blundering along without knowledge or a plan.

2. Study the competition.

Don't add more to a subject that's already glutted. Be sure the topic hasn't been overdone. Just checking a local library or bookstore is not adequate research. Look in *Books in Print Subject Guide* and *Forthcoming Books in Print Subject Guide*. You'll be amazed at how many books there are on the topic. Yours must be better than what's already available. Make it shorter, longer, easier to use, more informative, funnier, richer in content, or better organized. For fiction, try to tie into a hot topic so you have a "hook" for publicity.

3. Write what other people want.

Catering to your personal desires often makes for lackluster books nobody buys. The fact is, few care about your life history or your deep-felt opinions. Personal journals and impassioned tirades are best saved for family and friends, not foisted upon the general public.

4. Think "marketing" from the very beginning.

The time to generate marketing ideas is before you write the book, not after you have 3,000 copies in your garage. Identify and target your market. How can you reach them? Start folders of ideas: what catalogs might be interested, which associations reach your potential readers, what magazines and newsletters are relevant? Can you sell the book as a premium to companies that would give it away as a gift to entice new customers—or use it internally for training? Think about who else reaches your potential customer and how you can partner with them. Do you have contacts who have national name recognition and might write an advance endorsement?

5. Get professional editing.

No, we repeat no, author should edit or proofread his or her own work. You'll miss the forest for the trees, overlooking things that are obvious to you, but unclear to your reader. And it's so easy to pass by the same typo time after time.

6. Create a snappy title.

The right title can make a book, just like an uninspired one can be a death peal. Short is best. While clever is nice, don't sacrifice clarity. For nonfiction, be sure to include a subtitle as it gives you extra mileage in helping readers know what the book is about.

7. Include all the vital components.

Just as a cake falls flat if you don't add the right ingredients, so do books. Yours needs an ISBN, LCCN, EAN Bookland Scanning Symbol, subject categories on the back cover, etc. (If you don't know what these are, refer back to #1!)

8. Have a dynamite cover.

The cover is your book's salesperson in bookstores. Get it designed by a professional who understands cover design . . . not just somebody who does nice logos or pretty brochures. You have enormous competition and a wonderful opportunity to stand out.

9. Make the interior inviting.

Go to a bookstore and study the insides of books. Find one with clean, "user-friendly" pages. Use this as your model. It may not make sense to purchase and learn typesetting software if you're only doing one book, however. In that case, consider hiring an outside vendor.

10. Use a book manufacturer for printing.

Don't expect your corner print shop to have the knowledge or technical capabilities to turn out a quality book. Book manufacturers specialize in this type of printing and can save you enormous grief and considerable money.

11. Publicize, promote, publicize, promote.

Eat, sleep, and talk your book. Nobody cares about it as much as you do. Ongoing, enthusiastic marketing is the real key to success. Never quit. Keep your antenna out for new review opportunities, freelancers who write articles on your topic, etc. We have books that have been in print since 1979 because we're tireless promoters.

Marilyn and Tom Ross are the coauthors of 13 books including the best-selling Complete Guide to Self-Publishing and the award-winning Jump Start Your Book Sales. Through phone consultations and ongoing coaching/mentoring, Marilyn empowers authors and self-publishers to realize their dreams. She can be reached at 720-344-4388 or Sue@SelfPublishingResources.com. Visit <http://www.SelfPublishingResources.com> for free meaty information on writing, self-publishing, and book marketing strategies. © copyright 2005 Marilyn Ross

