

Some Words of Advice On Book Design for Self Publishers

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Want to successfully self-publish your book? Don't underestimate the importance of book design. Find out what self-publishers need to know on this important topic.

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Every day books are submitted to us at Ink Tree Ltd. for assessment. We hear from so many authors and/or self publishers who are hopeful that their books will be attractive to volume buyers. Every day we must disappoint most of those hopeful people. Declining books is a very difficult task because we know that books are like babies to their authors. The writers have spent many hours creating and nurturing their ideas, putting their words on paper for the entire world to see. It is so hard to be the guys who have to say, "Sorry".

By far the most common reason for rejection is that the books have been designed by "publishing services", which may or may not be part of print-on-demand companies. Now, there is nothing wrong with print-on-demand companies as such. Their mandate is to accept the files that you present to them and to output a printed volume. That is what you pay them to do. The danger to the self publisher is that the quality of design will most likely not have a professional, book store-quality appearance. Print-on-demand companies produce a standard book format which is evident in the books cookie-cutter appearances, and that look is recognizable by book buyers and media persons at a glance. If you plan to sell your book during personal speaking engagements, or perhaps on your website, the book's appearance may not be an issue. But, if you plan to sell thousands of copies, the book's first impression is crucial to media persons and to book buyers.

First impressions count. Do people judge a book by its cover? Absolutely. A book must draw the reader in: first by the unique, relevant title and the front cover design, then by the sales pitch on the back cover, and lastly by the quality of the contents. These criteria instantly attract or repel professionals in the book trade, so your book has only seconds in which to succeed or to fail. Because you are not there to explain or to sell your book, it must stand alone. It must say, "Buy me. Your life will be better if you read what I have to say". If it doesn't – it's done. It's just that simple.

Our goal is to help you to sell thousands of copies of your book but if you want large numbers of people to buy your book, our advice is this: design and edit your book yourself. We don't mean that literally. We mean that you must hire a professional book designer who understands what a great cover looks like, who can help you choose a great title, and who has the talent for setting up the book's pages so that a booklover actually enjoys the experience of reading your book. You also need a professional editor who is experienced at improving your writing without changing your voice or the meaning of your words. This is a great talent, indeed. It is a task that you absolutely cannot do yourself. What you mean to say and what the reader "hears" may not be the same thing because your brain will fill in or gloss over mistakes since you know what you mean to say.

To conclude these few words of advice, please take charge of your own book. It may be tempting to accept what appears to be the easy way of self publishing a book, but the success of your book depends on its appearance. Try this exercise: go to a large bookstore and look closely at books. Take note of what the large publishing houses are producing. These are your competitors. Make yours different -- and better.

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