

How to Price Your Book to Make It Sell

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Choosing the right price for your book is an important decision for a self-publisher. To make it into the top ten percent of books sold, your book must be of superior quality and it must be priced neither too high nor too low for your market.

How to Price Your Book to Make It Sell

Just like any other consumer item, books must compete for buyers' dollars. That is why quality and value are so important in a book. There is a great deal of competition out there. In North America, upwards of 150,000 titles are published each year. To make it into the top ten percent of books sold, your book must be of superior quality and it must be priced neither too high nor too low for your market.

If the price is too high, the book will simply not sell. There are other similar books written about the same or similar subject matter that are a "better buy". If the price is too low, readers perceive your book as being of inferior quality, and perhaps lacking in content.

So how do you arrive at a price for your book? Begin by doing some research. Go to a large bookstore, find the section that displays your book's genre and analyze the books there.

Find the most expensive books, the least expensive books, and several in between. What do they have in common? Are the most expensive books the largest? Do they have hard covers or soft covers? Do they have the most pages, the most photos or illustrations, the best quality paper, the most attractive graphic design, the most professional editing, and the most famous or expert authors? What about the least expensive books? Are they the opposite of the most costly group? What about the median group – what are their commonalities?

Choose the books that appeal most to you. Make a list of the features you want for your own book. Knowing the specifications that you want in your book will help you to obtain printing quotes. Printing will be your biggest publishing expense if you plan on a sizeable print run.

Keep in mind that your book must be priced correctly for your particular market. There is a maximum price that the public will pay for each genre of book, and there is a lower price limit at which they believe that your book has no value. The customers will ultimately decide if your book is priced reasonably or unreasonably, so think long and hard about the price point.

The printing cost is the base from which you determine what to charge for your book, once you have decided the price range that your book will fall into. Some publishers work on an eight to one ratio, i.e., the retail price is eight times the production expense of the book. You need a large enough mark-up to cover the following costs:

- Production – 12%
- Bookstore discount – 40%
- Distribution fee – 15%

- Publicity and marketing – 25%

Example for a book priced at \$20.00 retail:

- Production – \$2.50 (x 8 = \$20.00)
- Bookstore – \$8.00
- Distribution fee – \$3.00
- Publicity and marketing – \$5.00

You must allow a sufficient percentage of the retail price to cover the promotion of your book. You can have the best book in the world at the most bang-on price, but if no one knows about it no one will buy it. The lack of planning for publicity and marketing funds in the business plan is the reason that many small publishers have thousands of books in the basement and no money in the bank. Don't make the same mistake. Allow for the cost of sending out hundreds of review copies.

You may want to charge more than \$20.00 for the book if the market will bear the higher cost because you will also be seeking non-traditional markets for your book. Some of those buyers require an 80% discount from retail. That means you need enough of a cushion to make a profit after you cover the print cost. However, don't panic about the discount if the buyer is willing to purchase thousands of books on non-returnable terms. At that point you will likely do a special print run, and if the order is large enough the printing will be at a lower cost than your initial smaller print run anyway.

Know that when you publish a book, you are no longer an author – you are a publisher. You are in the business of selling books. Price your book well and sell it wherever you can as often as you can. The sales will be for a very wide variety of discounts. Analyze each opportunity well and sell, sell, sell...

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