

Why Does This Publisher Suggest You Avoid POD?

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We interviewed one of the largest and most successful print on demand (POD) publishers and were quite surprised by what they had to say. Did we hear them right? Authors should avoid using print on demand services? Hmm... Read more to see what they really had to say.

Arbor Books

Arbor Books takes a different approach from every other print on demand company: they tell authors that in most cases POD is not the way to go.

If you manage to get past their discouraging, but bluntly practical remarks, they offer a variety of services such as editing, formatting and marketing. Despite the promotion challenges that POD publishers and authors face, Arbor Books has in the past managed to mount some high-quality publicity campaigns and can boast a relative amount of success for their authors.

Of course, there are reasons for their success - and in their case, success comes at a price.

The future of POD

Our first surprise was their belief about the future of print on demand publishing. Joel Hochman of Arbor books says that "POD will come under real threat from electronic publishing or eBooks. Just as the iPod is sweeping through the music industry. I think the days of POD are numbered."

Does this mean that they're getting ready to close up shop and go to work for FedEx/Kinko's? Hardly. But they do spell out their opinion of print on demand quite clearly. For example, Hochman said this about the advantages and disadvantages of POD:

{quotes}The advantage is that people with no money can get their feet wet with little startup capital.{/quotes}

"The disadvantages are many: bookstores refuse to carry 98% of POD books and most reviewers ignore POD titles. The profit margin is not great the way POD plans are set up, and for most serious people looking to market and distribute their

books, POD is not the way to go. Most clients would be better working with an experienced book packager and going with traditional self-publishing and printing."

Are you serious about writing and publishing a book?

Wow!

They're saying that if you want to succeed as a self-publisher, you should avoid using a print on demand publisher. Instead, spend your money on "traditional" self-publishing and printing, which means using an offset printer to print 2500-5000 books at a time. Generally, the cost per book for a standard paperback will be near \$1 per book, versus between \$2.50 and \$6 (or more) per book through print on demand publishers.

[Ed.

note: be careful when reading any POD publisher's pricing structure. When they say that the author pays for the printing costs, they mean their printing costs, not yours. A book that costs them \$3.00 to print may cost you \$6.00 or more after their markup. Be sure to check with your publisher on these details, since most POD publishers use Lightning Source to print their books.]

Their

advice for a first-time author about using POD: "Avoid it. There are better options. It is important not to be under funded when planning on a self-publishing venture."

Here's

where we get to the heart of the matter, and is perhaps the key differentiation between Arbor and other POD publishers. Arbor books' focus is on Marketing and not strictly on publishing.

Many POD

publishers will print anything for anyone. Arbor, on the other hand works with only about 35% of the clients who contact them. The reason is simple: they want to work only with serious writers who see this as a business and not a hobby.

Marketing

to Arbor is everything, which is why it will cost you \$5,000 or more to for a comprehensive package.

Although

they handle all types of books, they're clearly not for everyone. Their mission is to "turn clients into savvy businesspeople capable of fully marketing and selling their books through stores, libraries, the Internet and direct sale."

They work with their clients to appear on shows such as "The View," "Good Morning America," "O'Reilly," ABC, FOX and CBS news and many other venues.

{quotes align=right}Recently one of our clients was acquired by Simon & Shuster who advanced her \$30,000. Her original self-published book sold 5,000 copies. That was enough to get a mainstream publisher interested in her. A recent pet food book we worked on sold 80,000 copies and has a marketing deal with a major pet food company. Another title received a Top 10 Books of the Year Award from the Los Angeles times.{/quotes}

The upside of working with Arbor is that you'll have a better chance of selling your books. They recommend that you have your book professionally edited, and they won't print a book with a poorly designed cover. The downside for many first-time authors is the cost.

As with most print on demand publishers, you can expect the process to take between two and three months from start to finish. Some POD publishers are faster, but perhaps not as thorough.

With Arbor as your print on demand publisher, the question isn't whether or not you want to publish - it's whether or not you're serious about marketing your book. Hochman adds: "We offer this service only for people who have no other financial option. Our clients are reviewed by major newspapers and television programs. We are head and shoulders above anyone else offering self-publishing services. Marketing is the key. Custom packages, original hooks. Staying away from cookie-cutter strategies."

Does Arbor have the formula for self-publishing success?

What's your story?

Let the debate begin...