

# Self-Publishing Your Book — The Ultimate Do-It-Yourself Project

— Wendy Y. Tucker —

Do you have a book in you? We all have life experiences worthy of recording in a book. How then will you bring your message to its appropriate audience? Really, there are only two choices—either find a publisher or publish your book yourself. Here are 5 reasons you *shouldn't* self-publish:

- You only want to make 5-10% of the proceeds the book generates in the form of an author royalty.
- You enjoy editors telling you to basically rewrite your entire manuscript in their preferred style, ultimately changing the intended meaning of everything you want to say.
- You enjoy waiting 1-½ to 2 years for your book to be in print. You're in no hurry.
- You've spent months or even years writing and researching your book and now want to relinquish your rights to it (such as copyrights, serial rights, foreign rights).
- You are sadistic and enjoy rejection from literary agents and publishers.

Joking aside, by self-publishing you:

- May make more money.
- Will retain control over your work.
- Can deliver your book to the public faster.
- Retain all legal ownership rights to your book.
- Maintain the ultimate decision determining whether or not your book is published.

## Make More Money

Publishing industry profit margins are quite narrow. Industry statistics indicate that a profitable book will create a 10% profit for the publisher. Add that to your 10% author royalty and you've doubled your profit. Also, because you will have control over costs, as a self-publisher you may be able to reduce them to a level that creates an even higher profit margin.

## Retain Control Over Your Work

Editing and proofreading are crucial to producing a quality book. It is highly recommended that an author have professional, outside help perform editing and proofreading services. It is all too easy for an author to overlook the errors within his or her own work. However, by maintaining control over the editing and proofreading process, you have the ultimate say over what stays in and what goes out, ensuring that what you wish to convey to your audience is what's actually published.

## Get Your Book to the Public Faster

The publishing industry typically works on an 18-month or longer cycle from the time of accepting a manuscript to the release of a new book. By self-publishing, you can bring your work to the public within 2 to 9 months after completing your manuscript, significantly reducing the time from pen to print.

### **Retain All Legal Ownership Rights**

If your work is published by a traditional publishing company, there is a great chance that the publisher will require the ownership of most, if not all, of the legal rights to it. These rights include electronic, serial, foreign, and copyrights. By self-publishing, you retain all rights to your work unless, of course, you choose to sell them.

Suppose your novel can be converted to a screenplay for the next multi-billion dollar movie? When the production companies are ready to buy, if you own the film rights to your work, you get the money. If you don't, your publishing company does.

### **Maintain the Ultimate Decision Determining Whether or Not Your Book is Published**

Perhaps you are a humanitarian of sorts, desiring to disseminate your message to save the world and not necessarily to make a profit? However, the 35 publishing companies you've approached are uninterested in your work because they DO want to make a profit. Then, self-publishing may be the only avenue available to bring your work to the world. Also, many traditional publishers won't work with writers not represented by a literary agent, and many agents won't work with authors who haven't been published before. It's a catch-22.

So, where do you start? First, do your homework! Read as many books on the subject of self-publishing as you need to feel comfortable with the steps involved in starting such a major project. Several great books on self-publishing and related subjects are:

- *The Complete Guide to Self-Publishing* by Tom and Marian Ross
- *A Simple Guide to Self-Publishing* by Mark Ortman
- *1001 Ways to Market Your Books* by John Kremer
- *Publishing Basics: A Guide for the Small Press and Independent Self-Publisher* by Robert Bowie Johnson, Jr.
- *Book Printing and Self-Publishing* by Gorham Printing

Two great web sites are:

- **[publishing.about.com](http://publishing.about.com)**, part of the About.com web portal
- **[www.bookmarket.com](http://www.bookmarket.com)**, maintained by John Kremer (author of *1001 Ways to Market Your Books*) and considered to be one of the nation's foremost authorities on book marketing

Secondly, decide who will print your book early in the process. By determining who will print your books, you ensure that you will create files or a physical document that the printer can turn into a great looking book by meeting the printer's technical specifications. Different printers use different software and hardware for printing. Suppose you type your manuscript in *WordPerfect* with 1" margins all around with a document size of 8-½ x 11". Then, while shopping around for a printer, you find that most want ¾" margins all around, will only accept PDF or Postscript files, and that it's much cheaper to print on 5-½ x 8-½" paper. You are then stuck with the task of reformatting your entire document.

Finally, decide what you can and will do, and what you can't or won't do. If you are able and willing to do your own typesetting, then by all means save the money and do it yourself. However, if you dislike computers and dread the thought of learning yet another complex software application, contract the task out for someone else to do it.

Self-publishing is not for everyone. It requires a significant investment in both time and money. Yet it brings a sense of great accomplishment and is highly rewarding. Best wishes on your self-publishing journey!

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