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From Idea to Published Book ... How to Self-Publish the Easy Way!

By Edward B. Toupin

From Idea to Published Book ... How to Self-Publish the Easy Way!

by: **Edward B. Toupin**

I've been involved in publishing for over a decade now as an author, editor, and project manager; however, it wasn't until just a few years ago that I decided to move into self-publishing. Indeed, my first few projects involved consulting for others and, now, I am involved in my own, personal projects. It has taken a while for me to come back around to my own works, but in the process I learned how to minimize time and expenses in producing a book and getting it to market.

This short article will not try to explain every aspect of book publishing in detail, but it will brush on a few of the important topics. I have a few other book projects in the making that will detail the book self-publishing process; however, in the mean time, this should give you a good basis of understanding.

---- The Idea ----

The most difficult part of creating your manuscript is deciding on the topic. We all have ideas. It's part of our being. Ideas pop in and out of our heads all day long; however, we usually dismiss many of them as useless or too simple to be of use. You would be surprised at how many people want "simple" and easy-to-understand information! Readers want books that teach, inform, and entertain.

When you sit down and really think about all you've learned throughout your life, you'll be amazed at how much you really know! Your life experiences alone could fill a library! Even if you feel that you don't have any knowledge that would be of interest to anyone, you can start small. Research a market that interests you, find your competition, learn all that you can about a specific subject, and then write about it. Your ideas are important, as your knowledge and point-of-view are unique and of interest to others.

---- Planning the Product ----

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I always suggest keeping your book concise and informative. This provides a small footprint, yet it also allows your readers to purchase your book at a reasonable price. Keep it around 100 pages, which, once in book format, equals about 50, two-sided pages.

The core content of the manuscript consists of a title page, copyright, table of contents, figure and table references, acknowledgements, forwards, content, appendices, index, and back page. This list is the basic minimum requirements to support the information necessary to present your book and its content. Of course, you can add other items such as a glossary and a preface, but such inclusions are at your discretion.

It is best to produce your book in the standard 5.5" by 8.5" format in both print and PDF. I always suggest PDF to my publishing clients because it is one of the few cross-platform (i.e., Mac, PC, PDA, and UNIX-based machines) document distribution products available today and it is the most popular.

---- The Manuscript ----

Once you've focused on an idea, you'll have to create an outline or table of contents to define the content. The best way I've found to do this is to break the idea down into blocks of contiguous information ---- similar to assembling a pyramid. Step through your idea and ensure that you are building from, for example, the most general information to the most specific information. Check the outline several times, and have a friend review it, to ensure that gaps are filled in appropriately.

You can actually over-rewrite your work to the point of frustration and burn-out. Ensure that you've planned and researched appropriately to provide a solid foundation. In this way you can develop a first draft and then perform substantive and grammar edits. Then, perform a technical edit and a second draft. Once the second draft is complete, move into a final copy edit then, once you produce galleys or a sample version of the finished book, perform a proof read. Don't rework any of the core steps of document development, but ensure that each step is completed with quality in mind. This ensures a solid product in a short amount of time. If you would like to update or add to the information in your first release, provide a follow-up revision.

---- ISBN and Copyright ----

Once you've started your manuscript, order your group of ISBNs. You can sign up for your ISBNs at for about \$240 for 10 ISBNs. However, additional fees can be imposed based on

express orders. This is why I say, order the ISBNs while you're writing the manuscript so that you can afford to wait the 10 days for standard, free, delivery.

You will have to convert your ISBN numbers to EAN barcodes to apply to the back page of your book. The barcode must consist of the ISBN you assigned to the book as well as the coded pricing of the book. You can have a vendor generate the barcodes for between \$3 (

) and \$20 per barcode or you can download and use the

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Barcode Maker (<http://hem.passagen.se/sams/barcode.htm>) to generate your own barcodes. For the price, it will pay for itself in just a few ISBNs for your books.

Once you have assigned one of your ISBNs to a book, you can register it in Books In Print (

). This is how booksellers are able to access your information and sell

your book through their outlets. Additionally, you'll want to register your manuscript-in-progress with the Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication (<http://cip.loc.gov/cip/ecipp14.html>). This registers your book for access by libraries and government archives. You will be e-mailed the "CIP data" to be printed on the copyright page following the heading "Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data".

To protect your work and ideas, copyrighting your book is a simple and inexpensive process. There are actually several different methods of protecting your work including government and commercial organizations. The primary sites are the government copyright office (

)

and WriteSafe (

).

---- Production ----

There are many different ways to produce your books; however, costs range from a \$1,000 initial setup plus the purchase of a few hundred copies down to no setup fees and pay-as-you-go. The final choice is yours, but my direction involved a local printing company and a pay-as-you-go scheme. With this

approach, reduced initial costs are reflected back to the readers and your profit potential is seen immediately.

Three places that I've experimented with to print some of my books include Kinko's (

), InstantPublisher (<http://instantpublisher.com/pricing.htm>), and Mimeo (

). Of course, use these for starters to experiment with your books. Eventually,

you'll find the right bindery for your needs. You can locate many publishers via Google.com or AllTheWeb.com using keywords such as "online printing", "book printing", and "print on demand", but once you get some experience behind you, the choice will be much easier.

---- Marketing and Distribution ----

Once you assign and register your ISBN for your manuscript, it becomes available to the multitude of

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book stores around the globe including Amazon, Borders, Barnes&Noble, and various other major book sellers. Now that you have your book out there, the trick is to have people purchase the book and have book stores stock copies on their shelves.

To have the book stores purchase in quantity, you'll have to devise a solid marketing plan to their acquisitions personnel. In many cases, book stores will simply sell your book to their customers as it is requested, but if you can get them to buy in bulk, that's greater exposure and sales for you!

You can also license out the content to various professional speakers. Speakers are always looking for ways to provide quality information specific to their presentations. They might use your content in a handout, or perhaps for sale in the back of the room. Locate those speakers that fit within your audience and contact them. Find out their needs for their next presentation and work out a deal for them to resell your books. I've had many speakers use my articles in their presentations and the exposure and feedback has been overwhelming.

Of course, you should always locate affiliates to help sell your books. One way is to offer them a percentage of the gross sales or sell them copies of the books at a discount. Either way, you will have "agents" out pushing your books for you to make money for them, as well as for you.

Always provide a web site that boasts the benefits of your book. Use a book cover maker to create a book image on the web site. One quality book cover creator is called CoverFactory (

) and provides numerous capabilities to generate

professional looking covers for books, software, and services.

Free content is an important way to bring people to your site and let people know about your book. You can provide rewritten excerpts from your book as articles and submit them to various article announcement lists, press release sites, zines, and directories. I've been able to locate and associate with over 1,000 sites and lists that accept and publish my articles. This provides outstanding coverage for my sites, services, and products.

--- Sales and Returns ---

Since you are the publisher, you now have to determine how to handles sales. It's important to define how you will handle direct sales and shipping, bulk sales, and affiliates. You want to ensure that your sales go smoothly as well as provide enough of a margin so that everyone profits.

When collecting funds, it's important to accept credit cards through one of the popular merchant vendors. To minimize expenses and provide a common and secure payment mechanism, I use StormPay (

) and PayPal (

). Since people have their

likes and dislikes of online payment vendors, using both allows many different types of users to submit payments. Of course, you must always determine how to handle returns as part of a quality customer service program.

---- What's next? ----

Obviously, the information provided here is merely an overview of the entire process. However, I am working on a book that provides all of the details of producing your own book under your own imprint. Publishing provides excellent return monetarily as well as through enhanced self-esteem. There is quite a feeling that comes with getting your message out there and having people return positive feedback. Perhaps, once you self-publish a few of your own titles, you can work on publishing other authors and open a full-fledged publishing house. In this day, such a venture is not unheard of!

Edward B. Toupin is an author, publisher, life-strategy coach, counselor, Reiki Master, technical writer, and PhD Candidate living in Las Vegas, NV. Among other things, he authors books, articles, and screenplays on topics ranging from career success through life organization and fulfillment. Check out some of his recent print and electronic books as well as his articles covering various life-changing topics! For more information, and to find out about his upcoming title on book publishing, e-mail Edward at

or visit his site at

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Why Publishers Buy Books: 28 Reasons

By Catherine Franz

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Editors will buy a book for one or more of the following reasons:

1. The author's previous books have sold well
2. They love a book and think it will sell
3. They think a book will sell
4. They love it enough to publish, regardless of its commercial potential
5. It's a book that deserves to be published because of its value to a cause or the country
6. An editor is passionate enough about it to overcome any doubts the house may have about the book
7. A new editor has arrived from another house and its

building a list

8. The publisher has the opportunity to reflag a successful author from another house
9. The book will be the first in a series with strong growth potential
10. The idea for the book is brilliant
11. The idea for the book is timely
12. The writing is superb
13. The title alone will sell books
14. An author's promotion plan guarantees a book's success
15. The author is a media magnet who can guarantee enough publicity to make a book successful
16. The author has a national platform such as a column or a radio or television show that will guarantee continuing exposure for the book
17. The publisher thinks that a book will backlist and become an evergreen (like evergreen tree -- sells for long long time)
18. The book has subsidiary rights potential including book clubs, audio cassettes or foreign, electronic or movie rights
19. The book has adoption potential in schools or universities
20. The house has published similar books with success
21. The book is on a subject that the house has or wants to build a list in
22. Overcome by auction fever, publishers convince themselves that, despite the profit-and-loss statement rated

to determine a book's value, they pay whatever it takes to outbid their rivals.

23. The author wants to switch houses
24. The editor discovers a book on a trip to a book fair and thinks it will sell, or is caught up in the excitement surrounding a book, or wants to justify the trip
25. The publisher is sending the industry the message that because of new management or despite changes in the house, the houses a player
26. The book being sold may not be a big one, but future books will have bestseller potential
27. The author has a personal connection with someone in the house with the power to buy the book
28. Publishing the book will enhance the house's prestige

This is not a definitive list. John Saul, a novelist,

observed if publishers don't want to buy a book, they say "It's been done to death." If they do want to buy that book, they'll say "Always works."

Catherine Franz is a marketing industry veteran, a Certified Business Coach, Certified Teleclass Leader and Trainer, speaker, author, and Master Attraction Practitioner. For marketing, nonfiction writing and deliberately creating ezines and other newsletters, visit: <http://www.AbundanceCenter.com>, <mailto:catherine@abundancecenter.com> or 703-671-5677.

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