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How Three Publishing Myths Kill the Author

By Judy Cullins

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Agents and publishing houses have their best interests at heart, not the author's. Save yourself from headaches, disappointments, and money down the drain. Become your own independent publisher and produce your book faster and cheaper. All you need is a little help from professionals.

Myth: You need an agent or big publishing house to market your book and make big money.

Since big publishers don't look at unknown authors, now is the time to look at what they can do for you. Dan Poynter, self-publishing guru, says that if a publisher can't sell four times as many books as you can, you're better off selling it yourself. Self-publishing first is good because it acts as a test market for your book. If it sells well (over 10,000 in a year), publishers may be interested in your book. Traditional publishers and agents accept only 1-2% of authors' submissions, and even if you are one of the "chosen" you may not make much money after printing, bookstore, distributor, wholesaler and other expenses—probably \$2 on a \$14 book. Yes, you get an advance, but your sales must meet that and more. And after the initial book tour, the trainee marketing person is onto the next new author. Then, your books disappear from the bookstore shelf unless you, personally, devote a lot of time to marketing them.

Book Publishing is a new game today. Think self-publishing where the profits are all yours. Self-publishing is in. Thanks to Dan Poynter of the Self Publishing Manual for giving us permission to do part of the task ourselves. If you self-publish and decide to

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print, you need to print only the copies you need (5–500) with the new technology Print on Demand (POD). No more unsold cartons of books in your closets or garage. You print as you go leaving enough cash flow to market your book splendidly.

Myth: To be a respected author, you must invest thousands of hours of time on your full-length book.

The reality is that people today want concise and useful information. You don't have to write a 200–page book to be a real author. Remember *The One–Minute Manager* and the *One–Minute Salesperson*? Around one hundred pages. People want information

fast and convenient. Create short information products you can sell online, even if you don't have your own Web site.

If you choose to print your book with Print Quantity Needed (PQN), your perfect bound books will look as good as any book on the bookstore shelves.

Myth: Authors must spend a lot of money to publish themselves. The printing costs for 1500 copies of a 160–page book might cost \$3000, about \$2 a unit. Small runs cost even more per unit. That's a lot of cash for anyone to put out all at once, and it's not worth it to many of us to use our home equity or life savings to finance our book. The answer is a small run with Print on Demand (POD) where you can print only 500 for around \$2.40 for 160 pages. Without the high inventory, you can maintain a comfortable cash flow.

You save even more money if you don't print your book. Book publishing is going Internet. You can write small books in less time, market them easily and inexpensively on the Web and reap profits sooner. Try an e–book. It can be downloaded, it takes no printing costs because your buyer prints or downloads it. You don't even have to have the whole book finished to sell it. Just include your table of contents at the end of each chapter and present it as an e–serial book.

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De–bunking Subsidy Publishing Horror Myths

By M. LaVora Perry

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Subsidy publishing companies are those that require an author to pay to produce her or his book. These companies are also known as co-publishers, or pejoratively, "the vanity press."

Some of these companies make unreasonable promises about how their services lead to books becoming instant, phenomenal best-sellers, or engage in other unscrupulous business practices. However, legitimate subsidy publishers do exist.

In this article, I'll explain the 6 factors that led me to choose the subsidy publishing company with which I partnered to publish my children's book, Taneesha's Treasures of the Heart.

First, let me say that whether one self-publishes solo or uses a subsidy publisher, the expense of paying to publish can be high. Publishing print-on-demand (POD) is a form of subsidy publishing that can greatly reduce this expense. However, this article will cover conventional subsidy publishing in which a certain number of books are printed in anticipation of orders being placed.

If you can afford it, and you do your homework and footwork, partnering with a subsidy publisher can have its advantages. In my case, the factors that influenced me to select the company I chose were:

- 1.) I pay a one-time, flat fee that includes free reprints for the duration of my two-year contract, and I will not pay for reprints if I renew my contract. My intention all along was to produce a top-selling book. I invest the book promotion hours and effort it takes to make this happen. As a result, my book was published in June of 2003 and I'm presently into my 3rd free printing; books are being sold both nationwide and internationally.
- 2.) My fee includes worldwide distribution through Baker & Taylor—which means something to those vendors to whom it means something.
- 3.) I don't have to pay for or personally handle warehousing and shipping, or pay additionally for these essentials—no matter how many times my book is reprinted.
- 4.) I own the copyright to my work—not the subsidy publisher.
- 5.) The company's finished products have a professional appearance in terms of paper and bookcover

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stock and print quality.

6.) I didn't want to wait until a traditional publisher picked up Taneesha's Treasures of the Heart; the story was unconventional enough that I believed I had to make substantial sales before traditional publishers realized there was a market for this type of book.

Now that Taneesha's Treasures of the Heart is in print, my co-publisher has provided me with a significant additional reason to be glad about my decision to use their services: As I continue to learn more about the publishing business and approach them to revisit certain terms of my contract, they have been flexible about doing so.

I would never tell anyone that they should stay away from every subsidy publisher, no more than I would dissuade someone from totally self-publishing, publishing POD or seeking a traditional publisher. Rather, because I realize that so much of what I've learned and achieved in relation to my book is the result of people sharing their expertise with me, my approach to disseminating information is to provide balanced assessments of what the reality of publishing is so that writers can make well-informed decisions about how they want to proceed with their work.

In 1995 M. LaVora Perry became the first African-American staff greeting card writer in the world's largest publicly-owned greeting card company--American Greetings (AG). She is the author of the critically-acclaimed children's book, Taneesha's Treasures of the Heart. Sign up for her email free newsletter at www.fortunechildbooks.com. Email her at lavora@fortunechildbooks.com



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