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My Path to Self-publishing

By Matt McGovern

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Last year, I completed my first novel—a 180-page fictional account of one man's personal journey of discovery in which he contemplates the meaning of life and death. Writing this book was both a therapeutic exercise for me—allowing me to explore my own questions and thoughts on the subject matter—plus a bit of a business venture.

Could I actually publish a book and generate a passive income stream?

Shortly after finishing, I distributed a promo package featuring sample chapters and a synopsis to a hand-picked list of about 10 small to medium-sized publishers who accept non-agented work. I received four nibbles and two of the publishers expressed genuine interest in the manuscript—so much so they requested to review the book in its entirety.

While this was an exciting time for me—this was also when I got my first behind-the-scenes glimpse at the publishing industry.

CH-CH-CHANGES

I received generally strong feedback about my writing and story-telling ability, even praise for the uniqueness of my novel. But at the same time, this "uniqueness" was making it impossible for publishers to categorize my manuscript. They couldn't find a round hole in which to fit this square peg—was this mainstream fiction, spiritual material, speculation, all of the above?

One publisher asked me to consider changes in order to move forward. Another said the changes would be cost-prohibitive so they simply "passed," asking me to keep them in mind with my future efforts . . . and that's when I decided to "pass."

Seems that all those editors admonishing new writers to target a specific genre aren't kidding. If you write a book, they tell us, make sure you'll be able to find a readily-apparent home for it on the shelves of your local book store—or be prepared for a hard sell.

MONEY MATTERS

To make matters worse, when I began to explore the finances of my book being published by a traditional publisher, I really became discouraged. It soon became clear that, unless I had a major bestseller on my hands, I wouldn't be seeing much—if any—profit. Even if it was a moderate success, this is what I was looking at as a "new" author: no advance and only 40% royalties on the wholesale price of the book. If any money was to be made, it would be going to the publisher—not me! So much for dreams of grandeur!

STICKING TO MY STORY

Given the personal nature of my book, I decided I could not and would not change it dramatically to better fit into a marketing "category." By this time, more than two dozen people had already read my manuscript—and I had received universal encouragement from them to get it published so that its

message could be read by others. As expected, my decision to not change slammed the door shut on the publishing interest I had generated, so it was time to consider another path . . . and I landed on the path to self-publishing.

COMING FULL CIRCLE

A decade ago, this path would have been too cost prohibitive for me to even entertain. A decade ago, this path also carried the stigma of "vanity" press and low quality—self-publishing was the apparent bailiwick of those whose works were not good enough for a "real" publisher.

Not so anymore. And interestingly if you turn the clock back a century or so, self-publishing was the norm with most writers—Dickens for example—who published and then peddled their own works. Seems we've come full circle and it's mainly due to the advent of high quality digital printing services, powerful software layout and design applications, and the reach of the World Wide Web. Technology has not only made it possible for authors to design and publish their books more economically, but has also provided a world-wide forum through which they can sell.

DO IT YOURSELF APPROACH

Financially, once production costs are covered, an author (who is also the publisher) who aggressively markets his or her work and creates a "buzz" can actually turn a profit—not to mention the possibility that the self-published work might find its way, deliberately or not, into the hands of agents and other power brokers in the traditional publishing world.

In my case, I was fortunate that I was also able to do all of my own editing, photography, graphic design, layout, pre-press work, and then build a Web site (www.mattmcgovern.com) with a marketing plan to support the book. My only "cost"—other than the time it took to write the book, design it, and develop the Web site—was the actual printing.

Granted, my total do-it-yourself approach may have taken self-publishing to the extreme, and most authors will likely need to outsource editing, book design, and Web design—but the cost of producing a well-designed, digitally-printed book, along with a Web site to support it, still remains in a range that makes self-publishing a viable and attractive option.

IT STILL REQUIRES TALENT . . . AND PERSEVERANCE

Of course, you still need the talent to write the book and a strong desire both to tell your story and to sell it, but self-publishing is a reasonable alternative—for a host of reasons—and it is becoming more and more common.

Self publishing no longer carries the stigma of substandard work. Self publishing seems to have found its own niche—quality works that can't be categorized to fit neatly on a book store shelf, written and published by authors who believe in their message so strongly that they are willing to invest their own time, money and effort into the entire process.

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Matt McGovern combines a rare blend of creative and technical know-how with years of experience and a balanced and purposeful approach to life. He has authored and edited numerous books, e-books

and e-zines. Get "Know-How" his free e-newsletter at [www.700acres.com/pages/ad\\_archive.html](http://www.700acres.com/pages/ad_archive.html) or explore life, death and beyond with his novel, "CURRENTS-Every Life Leaves an Imprint" at [www.MattMcGovern.com/books.html](http://www.MattMcGovern.com/books.html).

**Sick of the Traditional Publishing Path?**

**By Judy Cullins**

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A book coaching client recently emailed me that she was getting sick of traditional publishing because of so many costly requirements and so little payoff. Do you feel the same way?

Fifteen years ago, I worked hard on a 60-page proposal for a top agent and after a year got "approval" to be his client. Then the kicker, he asked for a \$50,000 retainer to get the book marketing because I was an unknown.

Unknown, yes, but not a fool. A marketing maven for 20 years, I sold 20 self-help books at the back of the room for seminars taught at colleges and other talks. Why would I need to go the traditional route of low attendance book signings, travel to less than prominent spots to market the book at a cost that had to be paid back through royalties.

And royalties? Even selling 10,000 books, with the percentages that book stores, distributors, and agents take, what profit comes to the author?

## My Path to Self-publishing

As an author's advocate, I step out of the traditional box and encourage you talented writers to do so too. You can self-publish without spend \$1000's. You can write a saleable short book and it still will have merit and be readily accepted by your appropriate audience. No one today wants to read long books any more unless they are fiction.

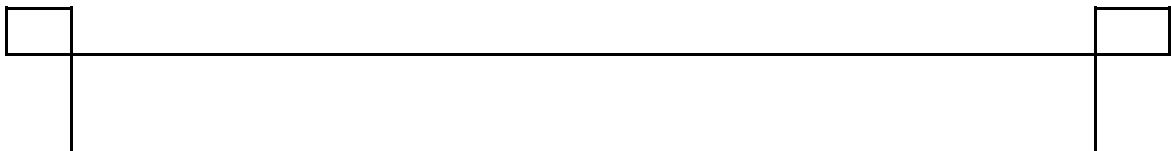
All of this, and you can market and promote from you home office through the Internet. In just 3 1/2 years, online promotion has paid off hugely and brought me over \$3500 a month in sales. Depending on your book and audience, you can too.

Avoid the myths and get real information from a professional book coach of 20 plus years. See the once a month free book and business ezines offered in the signature file below.

Judy Cullins, 20-year book and Internet Marketing Coach, Author of 10 eBooks including "Write your eBook Fast" and "How to Market your Business on the Internet," she offers free help through her 2 monthly ezines, The Book Coach Says...and Business Tip of the Month at <http://www.bookcoaching.com/opt-in.shtml> and over 140 free articles. Email her at <mailto:Judy@bookcoaching.com>.



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