

## What does it mean to Self-Publish?

by Kimberley Brooks

“What does it mean to self-publish?” I am often asked. To self-publish means to be the sole person responsible for making sure everything gets done that is necessary to make typed pages on a computer turn into an actual book. The person who self-publishes is the publisher. The publisher seeks out and hires an editor, book cover designer, interior layout designer, and a printer. The publisher is the chief investor and major risk-taker, and it can be costly.

When people ask me how much it costs to self-publish, I compare it to purchasing a car, because there is really no set price for it; it is based on how much you are willing to pay for certain things.

For instance, one of the first things you want to do once you complete your manuscript is hire an editor. A professional editor may charge \$3 - \$5 per page, while “Sally the Sunday school teacher” may do it for \$1 a page. However, I would strongly suggest that you hire a *professional* because a book with a lot of typos and grammatical errors is a major turn-off.

My philosophy is, if you're going to do something big, make sure it gets done right. Don't settle for less because you're trying to save a penny, because in the end the final product, the book, is a representation of who you are and what you stand for.

While the book is being edited, use this time to find a book cover designer. An attractive, eye-catching book cover that commands attention normally results in a book sale. An unattractive, boring book cover is just asking to be left alone on the shelf (if it ever makes it to a shelf). For these reasons I would suggest hiring, once again, a *professional* graphic artist or book cover designer to design the cover of your book.

Along with the book cover designer, you need an interior layout designer. An interior layout designer takes the typed pages and lays them out as they would appear inside a book. A lot of times the book cover designer also does interior layout design and can give you a good deal for both. Also, there is computer software on the market that can instruct you how to layout the book, if you're willing to take the time to learn how to do it yourself.

Lastly, you will need to hire a printer who will then take your laid out pages and book cover and turn them into an actual book. I would suggest you receive estimates from at least five printing companies who manufacture books only and choose the most reasonably priced one.

And *Viola!* There you have it, a self-published book!

Actually, there are a lot more things involved in self-publishing.

As a self-published author, you are your own publishing company. You initially have to register your business name and apply for a sales tax license. You have to purchase an ISBN number (which is the set of numbers on top on the bar code on the back of any book -each book has its own ISBN), obtain a bar code, copyright, and Library of Congress Control Number.

As the publisher, you are solely responsible for marketing and acquiring distribution.

While writing your book, develop your marketing plan. Determine your market: who, or what demographic will buy your book (for instance, my book, "He's Fine...But is He Saved?" though it is written for all to enjoy, who will mainly buy my book? -single women). Once you determine your market, figure out creative ways to sell to them. Think of places they shop and where they would go to purchase your book. Along with bookstores nationwide, I have had beauty salons sell my book, because who frequents those -women!

I would also suggest that a self-published author hire a publicist. A publicist helps promote your book by writing and placing news releases, scheduling and organizing media appearances and interviews, among other things to help publicize and sell your book. A good publicist has a lot of resources and shares them in order to get you noticed in the industry.

Though it can cost thousands of dollars, there are major benefits of self-publishing. Some include going to print sooner (some publishing companies may take a year and a half to two years to publish your book, whereas it took only seven months to publish mine), tax benefits, and making the most profit. Publishing companies normally offer a royalty check plus 6-10% of net sales whereas, when you self-publish, you receive 100% profit from direct sales or 35-40% if you obtain a distributor whose booksellers can get your book into major bookstore chains.

While there are many benefits to self-publishing, it isn't for everyone.

Writing is an art; self-publishing is a business. It requires organization, self-motivation, a willingness to invest in oneself, risk-taking, drive and determination, help from mentors, people skills, passion, and much prayer. If you possess these characteristics and are willing to work hard to accomplish your goals, definitely consider self-publishing. Though there is a lot that goes into it, it is not difficult, and it is not an impossible task.

Once you decide to self-publish, do it whole-heartedly and give it your all. Not a single day goes by that I don't do *something* that pertains to my book. It is my extended arm -my baby- and it is up to me, the publisher, to make sure that it receives the proper attention and care necessary so that it can have as much exposure as possible.

**Recommended Reading:**

The Self-Publishing Manual by Dan Poynter

Christian Writer's Market Guide by Sally Stuart