

Introduction to Your Self-Publishing Business

Day 1: The Abstract—Is Self-Publishing For YOU?

Part 1: Overview

There are many things to consider when you embark on self-publishing. Some of the initial questions you should ask yourself as you formulate your plan include:

- Do you want to publish in print, digital, audio and/or foreign translations?
- How many books do you plan to publish?
- Do you want your writing to provide your primary income?
- Do you already have a readership, or will you need to build sales from the ground up?
- Do you write under your legal name or a pseudonym? Will you publish under your legal name or a publishing company name?
- How important is the privacy of your real name?
- Have you ever run your own business before?
- How much money can you risk investing in your publishing business?
- How much do you need to learn before you start self-publishing?

Which of these following publisher tasks will you do yourself versus which will you hire out?

- editing and proofreading
- producing cover art
- writing teaser or back cover copy (commonly called “back cover blurb”)
- requesting quotes from big-name authors and/or reviewers
- crafting the author bio
- selecting excerpt(s) from other book(s) by the same author or different author
- registering copyright
- purchasing ISBN
- sending out copies for review
- final layout and production of the physical book or digital book files
- arranging distribution of the book
- setting the price of the book
- arranging all promotion for the book’s release

Part 2: Setting Up Your Business

Your publishing business can take any of these forms. The key is that money should flow through your publishing business to you the author (just like real publishing). Be aware of these because as your business grows, you may want to change the structure. Important first questions to ask:

- What will you call your publishing business?
- Do you write under a pseudonym?
- How important is it to keep your legal name private?

Your publishing business can be:

Sole proprietorship

Limited Liability Company

Either of the above can be used with pseudonyms or DBA's.

Yes, you'll want to talk with an accountant.

You may need/want to register your business name with your state or county.

You may need to open a business banking account.

Part 3: Understanding Copyright and ISBNs

U.S. Copyright Office has a great list of circulars online. The basics are all covered in Copyright Basics: <http://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ01.pdf>

Two parts of process:

1. Registration of Copyright

To register your copyright start here: <http://www.copyright.gov/eco/>

The link worth your first-born: <http://www.copyright.gov/eco/eco-tutorial.pdf>

2. Mandatory Deposit: required for all print books published in the U.S. Two copies should be deposited with Library of Congress. Generally, registration of copyright includes this step.

ISBN = International Standard Book Number. An ISBN is a universally accepted number that defines a book as a unique product in the marketplace. Its purpose is to identify not only a book title, but the specific edition for inventorying, buying, and retailing purposes. Currently, ISBNs are 13 digits in length, although there are also 10-digit versions used in the marketplace.

The Bowker site for purchasing U.S. ISBNs is called My Identifiers:

<https://www.myidentifiers.com>

Also, be sure to check out their ISBN FAQs: <https://www.myidentifiers.com/help/isbn>

ISBNs are represented by bar codes on print books. These bar codes work with store, library and distribution scanning systems. You do not need to BUY these bar codes. There are places to acquire them for free, and some printers generate them automatically when they print your book.

Lesson 4: Time –vs – Money – vs – Control Considerations

Weigh the following as you consider how to spend your time and money:

1. Are you artistic and informed regarding the specific elements that make an eye-catching cover?
2. Do you understand the different ebook file formats and how to make them?
3. Are you a fast learner?
4. Are you skilled in graphics and technology?
5. Are you a patient person?
6. Are you organized?
7. Do you manage your time efficiently?
8. Are you a control freak?

Chances are, you'll want to hire one or more freelancers to help you produce your book.

Working with Freelancers: <http://www.authorems.com/working-with-freelancers>

- Seek personal recommendations
- Schedule them in advance
- Build style sheet and cover art info sheet: set expectations
- Remember: YOU are the client/or the boss

Day 2: The Concrete (Nitty Gritty) of Getting It Done

Part 5: Building Your Book and Preparing Your Files

These are the key file formats used for self-published books:

- ePub is the “standard” digital format used on most e-reader devices, including Nook, Kobo, Android, iBooks and Sony devices
- mobi is Amazon’s proprietary format used with Kindle devices. Amazon uses 3 languages for their files: mobi, KF8 and .azw.
- PDF is what you’ll need to upload to CreateSpace or Lightning Source for a print book interior

Most of the retailers will allow you to upload a Word .doc file, but each retailer wants something slightly different.

You’ll need to build the entire book, including front and end matter. Your print version and your digital version can be set up differently. More details and a list of what to include here:

<http://www.authorems.com/self-publishing/elements-of-a-book/>

Your digital books should contain a Table of Contents and, ideally, a Navigation Control.

Metadata is all the information about your book. Create a basic form for yourself to collect this info so you can be consistent at Bowker, retailers, and inside your book files.

Part 6: Distributing Your Book

Remember yesterday we discussed Time vs Control vs Money? Consider these variables as you begin laying out your distribution plan:

- Which is more important to you—getting your book into more readers’ hands or making more money?
- How much will your book need to earn before it starts making a profit for you?
- How technically savvy are you?
- Are you willing to make the time to upload and manage all your books on all retailers, or would you be willing to pay someone a small percentage to do that for you?
- How important is it for you to be “in control” of your books?
- How important is cash flow and how often you’re paid?

Set up your publisher accounts in advance—this takes some time, and some retailers have to approve you or test deposit money into your account before you can upload books. Also, retailers are beginning to offer pre-order as a tool for indie authors. When your book is ready, you'll need time to upload the book and all the metadata about the book onto each retailer.

- Amazon – Kindle Direct Publishing
- B&N – NookPress
- Apple – iTunes Connect
- Kobo – Kobo Writing Life
- Google Play – Google Play Partners
- Smashwords
- CreateSpace (if you're producing print books)

Part 7: Planning It All

Calendars and budgets aren't for sissies. They're for entrepreneurs. For each book you plan to publish, you'll need to plan for (see list of publisher tasks on pg 1 of this handout):

- Writing Time
- Revision Time
- Editing Time
- Proofreading Time
- Cover Art Time
- Pre-Release Marketing (setting up book reviews, blog tour, ad space)
- Formatting Time
- Uploading to the Retailers
- Updating your social media profiles and website

Create a simple budget and track your expenses for each book. It's important to understand how many books you'll need to sell to break even on your investment. Remember, often what you save in money costs you valuable time. As you publish your first few books, work to find a balance.

Part 8: Ongoing Management of Your Career

- Monitor your book sales within reason
- Track your royalty payments—not all retailers provide 1099s
- If sales take off, talk with your accountant about Self-Employment tax
- If sales are slow, consider making changes to your book
 - Cover
 - Description
 - Metadata
 - Price
- Monitor piracy
- ***Write the next book!***

Questions? Feel free to email me: amy@amyatwell.com