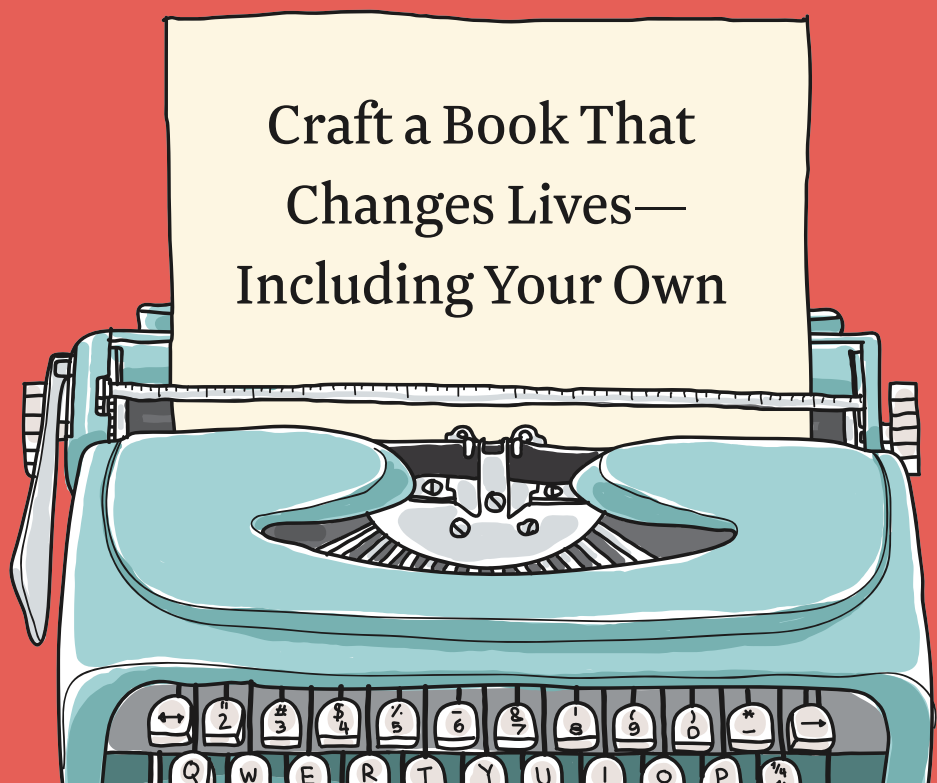


“An essential resource to help you produce the works
you were put on Earth to bring forth.”

STEVEN PRESSFIELD, bestselling author of *The War of Art*

A J HARPER

Write a Must-Read



Craft a Book That
Changes Lives—
Including Your Own

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Bonus—A No-BS Crash Course in Publishing

THIS BOOK IS not about getting published, but . . .

I hadn't intended to write a chapter on the business of publishing. Then I sent out a pre-questionnaire to my advance readers and nearly all noted they hoped my book would help them figure out how to navigate the publishing world. I sighed dramatically and all but stomped my feet like a child. *But that's not the point of this book!*

Except, hang on, Anjanette.

Your Ideal Readers want it. And a book is not about something. A book is *for* someone. This book is for them and they want to know how publishing works.

And you do teach this topic in your book workshop. You teach it because you want your authors to be informed so they can make better decisions. So they're not taken for a ride. So they know how to vet opportunities.

And you know good and well, Anjanette, that if they don't know what's up, if they remain in the dark about how publishing works and *why* it works that way, they may easily find themselves on a path that will hurt their chances to write and publish a must-read book. Or

maybe kill their fire for their book, so they let it sit in boxes in their garage while tumbleweeds roll across their Amazon book listing.

Huh. I guess I better write the chapter.

“I DIDN’T know what I didn’t know.” This is what I hear from students and other folks who show up to events where I share publishing knowledge. When we don’t know what we don’t know, we rely on experts, right? We trust them to tell us what we need to know to make decisions, and they will handle the “inside baseball” stuff. That’s why they’re certified, degreed, and so on. That’s why we pay them the big bucks—so we can exhale about all the ins and outs of this and that and get on with our lives.

Here’s the problem with that approach in authorship: many so-called experts leave out important information that would help you make a better decision. And by experts I’m referring to some book coaches, book programs, ghostwriters, editors, book launch coordinators, “publishers,” and publishers (you’ll know the difference by the end of this chapter). I’ve worked with many authors who, even after they’ve been published, had very little understanding of the industry. And because they missed out on some basic info, they also missed out on opportunities to get a better deal, to save money, to make more money, to get the word out about their book, and to sell more books.

Some so-called experts are only knowledgeable about one aspect of publishing. You’d be hard-pressed to find a traditional publishing professional who knows enough about self-publishing to guide you. On the flip side, self-publishing “experts” tend to toss out traditional publishing as if choosing that path is ridiculous and no one should consider it—even when they tout their self-published authors who went on to get traditional deals as major success stories for their programs. You can’t have it both ways, people! The reality is, self-publishing “experts” don’t often know that much about the traditional side of the industry.

I get it—traditional publishers are not in the coaching or educating business. When you sign with them, you are on a need-to-know basis. Self-publishing “experts” either don’t know much about the

path they diss on or they don't want *you* to know about it because you might question their own methods. For example, a big reason they pooh-pooh traditional publishing is because it takes "so long" to get a book to market. They don't tell you why it takes a long time, and how that benefits you, or what you miss out on because you choose to self-publish. (I will. Don't worry.)

And quite a few so-called experts aren't even experts in *one* thing. Because it's so easy these days, it's common for people to self-publish a book and then decide they are an expert in that area. After just one book, they start teaching classes and coaching. But they don't know much beyond their own experience. Certainly, their experience has value. But at the same time, they don't know what they don't know.

Michael Port once gave me a major compliment that I've never forgotten. In the introduction to this book, I mentioned that I met Michael for the first time when he and Mike Michalowicz asked me to help coach authors at their author retreat in Maryland.

After the first full day, Michael said, "I've known a lot of ghostwriters, but I've never known one who knows the [publishing] business like AJ does."

Mike agreed.

I blushed because I don't take compliments well. At the break, I wrote down Michael's words so I would never forget them. And when I got home from the event, I called my mom to tell her what he said. Why was this compliment so important to me? Because I busted my ass to earn it.

Here's how it started. About three years into my ghostwriting career, I worked with a client who would later become a dear friend. As most of my clients did, Andy came to me through referral. He had a deadline to meet, and his previous ghostwriter had just given him a draft that sounded nothing like him.

When I read the manuscript, it was clear we had to start over, so I advised Andy to ask his publisher for an extension.

"I can do that?" he asked. "Won't they cancel my contract?"

"Not necessarily," I said. "It never hurts to ask, and they want your book to be worth reading, so it's in their best interest to give you

the extension. If they agree, get it in writing so you're not in breach of contract."

This conversation sparked other questions throughout the year or so we worked together. Andy would ask me about this or that, and I'd do my best to answer. This was the first time I realized that, through experience, I'd accumulated enough knowledge to be considered an expert in my own right. Except I knew better. I knew that my expertise was limited to my experience.

It was when Andy, a marketing expert, failed to sell many books that I decided I had to learn about the entire industry, not just my corner of it—and that included book marketing. If I really wanted to help Andy and authors like him, I had to educate myself. So I did. That year, I attended my first BookExpo, which, before COVID-19 killed it, was once the largest publishing industry event in North America. My lanyard around my neck, I sat in the back rows of panel discussions I thought my authors might learn from and took copious notes. I walked several football fields of the convention floor, meeting with vendors I thought my authors might benefit from knowing. I loaded up on brochures and other stuff my authors might want.

That began my self-directed education. I soaked up everything I could, attended conferences and book events large and small, and learned the ins and outs of every publishing path: self-publishing, traditional publishing, and hybrid publishing. I'm still doing that, because there's always more to learn.

Since that first BookExpo, I've had many roles in this world: ghost-writer, co-writer, developmental editor, managing editor, substantive editor, acquisitions editor, traditional publisher, project coordinator, book coach, teacher. I'm probably leaving something out. I've written and edited nonfiction for solo authors and for book collections. I've edited novels and short stories—contemporary fiction, mostly, but also literary fiction, and some fantasy and sci-fi. I've made magic for a lot of people and let a few people down because I couldn't finish their projects. I've worked with well-intentioned and flawed people, salt-of-the-earth people, and dishonest people. I've seen crappy books hit

the bestseller lists and brilliant books languish in cardboard boxes. I've seen the rise of unknown authors to respectable successes and a precious few to major, world-bending successes. I've seen many more authors' dreams dashed because of this or that reason—often, because they are unwilling to put in the work to get the word out about their books, but just as often because they didn't understand how publishing works. They didn't do the work or they couldn't advocate for themselves because they didn't know what they didn't know.

I loathe laundry lists of accomplishments, so I shared all that begrudgingly. I had to do it, though, because you need a sense of the depth and breadth of my experience so you know who you're dealing with. You can weigh my advice against that experience and then take it all with a grain of salt and do your own homework. Because I don't want you to think I'm *the* go-to expert and then never find out for yourself what would be best for you. I want you to ask questions. I want you to consider your options. I want you to stick up for yourself and ask for more and better, and you can't get more and better if you don't know what to ask in the first place.

Basically, I want you to stop listening to assholes (sorry, Mom) and amateurs, and to do that, you need knowledge.

You're about to get a crash course in publishing, AJ style.

How to Choose a Publishing Path

To get your book to market, you have three primary paths: traditional, self-publishing, and hybrid. I use the word “primary” because you have options on each of these paths. For example, traditional publishing is not just the Big Five; there are thousands of publishers from small boutique presses, mid-tier presses, and yes, the biggies. If you want to self-publish, you could take the DIY approach, or hire a company that offers a package to do it for you (yes, that's still self-publishing), or some combo of both. Hybrid publishers can be as different as apples and oranges when it comes to what they offer authors.

Here's a breakdown of the three primary publishing paths.

- 1 Traditional.** A traditional publisher acquires publication rights to your book, which means they have the exclusive right to publish your book in most or all formats (print, ebook, audiobook) for a specified period, which could be anywhere from five years to forever. They also get a whole bunch of other rights, but *not* the copyright to your work. That's yours. Contracts can differ widely, so you need an agent and/or an intellectual property attorney to review yours with you so you understand it.

In exchange for publication rights, traditional publishers agree to pay you a royalty, which is a percentage of monies earned on your book. Royalties differ based on the format (again: print, ebook, audiobook). Sometimes you will also get an “advance” when you sign your contract, which is an advance on royalties paid in three or four installments over a period of one to two years. You will have to earn out this advance before you see another dime from your publisher. So, if you get a \$40,000 advance, you'll get \$10,000 at signing, \$10,000 when your book goes into production, \$10,000 upon publication, and \$10,000 about a year later. When you sell enough books to cover that \$40,000, you'll start to see royalty checks quarterly or biannually.

Traditional publishers do not charge you for anything. Nothing. Zip. If any publisher asks you for a dime, they are not a traditional publisher and may be misrepresenting their company.

Most but not all traditional publishers follow a rigorous process designed to ensure they publish the best book possible. (More about that process below.)

Many traditional publishers have trade distribution. What does this mean and why does this matter? Trade distributors work to get your book on the library, bookstore, and big box store shelves, featured in book clubs and subscription boxes, and to public schools, colleges, and universities. You'll often hear so-called publishers say they have “global distribution,” which only means they are fulfilling demand. If you want a sales team trying to *create* demand with retailers and bulk book buyers, you need trade distribution. The Big Five have their own distribution machine. Smaller publishers

have trade distribution contracts with distributors like IPG (Independent Publishers Group).

- 2 **Self.** The self-publishing path simply means you cover 100 percent of the cost of getting your book to market, from book development to printing. You may opt to manage the entire process and build your own team. Or you may want to hire a company that will help you—in which case you may not earn 100 percent of the net revenue.

Important note: If you don't have a deal with a traditional or a selective hybrid publisher, you are self-publishing your book. I want to make that clear because so many authors *think* they have a publisher when they really hired a company to help them self-publish their book. If you want to go this route, no problem; I simply want you to go into it fully aware. For example, most self-publishing packages do not include developmental or substantive editing (which is generally lumped together as “developmental editing”), and I've yet to come across a company that offers these packages *and* trade distribution. Also, because you may think you have a publisher, you may not think twice about letting them take a cut of your royalties or exclusive rights to this or that. Please read the fine print on any terms, and hire an attorney to review contracts.

- 3 **Hybrid.** Think of hybrid publishers as a mix of traditional and self-publishing. Here you have the standards and distribution options of traditional, for which you are making a monetary investment. Legit hybrid publishers are selective about the books they acquire. They also pay more in royalties than a traditional publisher.

Your challenge will be vetting hybrid publishers, because anyone can use that term to describe their business. In my experience, most are offering self-publishing packages and *not* giving authors what they need to create and distribute a must-read book—or royalties commensurate with their investment. Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA) has a list of hybrid publishing standards I recommend you download and keep handy during your vetting process.

When my students and clients ask me how to choose a publishing path, they usually start with, “I know I can’t get a deal, so . . .” It’s true that traditional publishers and some hybrid publishers are selective, but that doesn’t mean that you should assume your title won’t be acquired by one. Please think it through rather than make assumptions about what’s possible for you. Sure, you may end up self-publishing anyway, but all sorts of publishers look for all sorts of authors, and I wouldn’t write off the other paths before you’ve considered whether they will meet your needs.

Before you rule traditional out, consider your priorities first.

- **Timing.** Most authors are surprised how long it takes traditional publishers to release a book. And, not understanding why that’s the case, they may end up believing “experts” who tell them the extended timeline is “ridiculous” and “unnecessary.” (It’s not. Read the rest of this chapter to find out why.) Top-tier hybrid publishers follow the same timeline as traditional publishers. This is because they both offer trade distribution. If you just started writing your book and you need it out in the next year, self-publishing is your only option. I really hope you won’t rush to publish, but still, if you think you have no other option, you’re going to have to go the solo route.
- **Expense.** If you have limited financial resources, your best bet is to try to get a traditional deal. This is the only option that will cost you zero dollars, aside from whatever you decide to spend on your own marketing efforts. Traditional publishing will take longer and is not a sure thing, but the work you do to try to get the deal—the book proposal and building your author platform—is never a wasted effort; it will help you sell more books. Of the other two paths, self-publishing is generally less expensive than hybrid publishing.
- **Revenue.** This is a tricky one, because while with self-publishing you’ll earn 100 percent of the net revenue, you may sell more books with a publisher that has trade distribution. If you sell the

same number of books, you'll make the least amount in royalties from a traditional publisher, significantly more with a top-tier hybrid publisher, and the most from self-publishing.

- **Control.** Contrary to popular belief, you do not give up total control when you sign with a traditional publisher. In most cases, you have input on and can veto your title and subtitle. Your publisher has final say on cover, but they will ask your opinion. If you really hate the cover, you may have to hire a designer to show them what you want. You will have zero control over your release date, pricing, and how your book is positioned to sales teams. You *should* have final say over editorial disputes, but your publisher can opt not to release your book if they feel it will do them harm. For example, if you launch into a racist rant and they ask you to remove it, they can yank your book and cancel your contract if you refuse to comply. For the most part, though, they will listen to you if you push back about an editorial note. (The Feedback Protocol comes in really handy in these instances.) Ask your attorney to review your contract to ensure your publisher does *not* control any future writing about your idea, frameworks, and so on. If having control is a top priority for you, then go with hybrid or self-publishing.
- **Credibility.** When I first started in publishing in 2005, traditional publishing was the only “credible” path. My ghostwriting clients who chose to self-publish did everything they could to hide that fact. It was still considered a “vanity” option, far from legit, and most authors found it difficult to get books on shelves and media attention. That changed rapidly, especially after some notable big-name authors decided to go that route. Because self-publishing does not hold itself to traditional publishing’s standards, and because distribution is typically print-on-demand, it can be difficult to get big media attention. Likewise, some stores, big book clubs, and subscription models prefer not to order self-published books. Further, if you are an academic or a high-profile corporate leader, self-publishing is still a no-no, but some hybrid publishers may be a viable option.

- **Distribution.** As noted above, there's a big difference between "global distribution" and trade distribution. If you want the power of a sales team behind you and no barriers to getting your book on bookstore and library shelves, then you need trade distribution, which means traditional or top-tier hybrid are your two options. (And make sure you confirm that *your* book will have trade distribution; not all books get the same treatment.)

If you self-publish, you can still get access to wholesale distributors that specialize in serving your market if you apply to be a vendor. And if that doesn't work out, bookstores and libraries can still order your book. This is usually done through Ingram Content Group, one of the largest distributors in the world. They have a self-publishing and a small publisher portal. Note that you can get this service on your own for less than fifty dollars, so don't let anyone dazzle you with their "global distribution" claims. It will take you about thirty minutes to load your files and about three days to three weeks (depending on the retailer) to start seeing your book available for sale.

Now that you have the basics about each publishing path, which one will serve your needs best?

An Overview of the Publishing Process

When I started in this industry, self-publishing had really taken off. Once expensive, print-on-demand publishing and online retailers like Amazon made DIYing it more affordable through platforms like the now defunct CreateSpace and through democratized distribution. This lower cost of entry eventually led more people to self-publish, including notable thought leaders, which also boosted the credibility of self-published titles. That's the cool part. The not-so-cool part is that many people who supported authors who chose this path touted the ability to publish fast and on your own terms, and in doing so, tossed out or ignored many of the quality controls traditional publishers require. This is *not* a good thing.

What follows is an overview of the traditional publishing process. We start with this understanding because if we don't, you won't know which quality control you're tossing out. You may want it. I sincerely hope you'll want it. I mean, you're going to the considerable trouble to write a must-read, a book people will treasure and talk about. Don't you think it deserves all the quality controls?

In Chapter 9, I gave you a quick primer on the editing process. You may want to go back and look at that section again before you read on. Also, the following overview does not include all the internal processes a publisher manages—only those that I don't want you to skip if you choose a different path.

Traditional Publishing Process

- 1 Write a book proposal and query letter.** To pitch your book to prospective agents, you'll need a strong proposal that includes an overview of your idea, why readers need it, and why you are the perfect person to write it; a deep dive into your target market (Ideal Reader + stats about that audience); a bio about you tailored to your book; a competitive title analysis; your marketing/launch plan; an outline with chapter descriptions; and one to two sample chapters. The query letter is a very short email that includes one paragraph about your book and your market and one paragraph about you.

Writing a book proposal is a clarifying process that will help you at every stage of authorship, even if you never land an agent. The work is never wasted. For the best advice on book proposals and query letters, check out Jane Friedman.

- 2 Find prospective agents.** The best way to find an agent is to ask other authors who they love to work with, and ask them for an introduction. (Do this *only* after you have a draft proposal and query letter.) If you don't know any other authors, turn to the acknowledgments page in the books you love and look for a shout-out to whoever reps that author. Then do your homework. Is that agent open to submissions? If so, what are their requirements? Be

sure to follow their guidelines *to the letter*. Also note that agents sometimes have short windows when they are open to submissions; one of the best ways to find out about that is by following them on Twitter.

(Some mid-tier and small presses accept unsolicited submissions. They may not even require a full proposal; read their guidelines carefully.)

- 3 **Pitch proposal to agents.** Following their guidelines, pitch your book to agents. This process can take a few months. Be prepared to get critical feedback from them and to revise your proposal further. You may also get different advice from different agents. Rely on author referrals, the agent's track record, and then finally your gut instincts about working with that person. You want someone who will hustle for your book and advocate for you, so again, do your homework!
- 4 **Agent pitches proposal to acquisition editors.** Once your proposal has been revised to suit their needs, agents will then pitch your book to editors they know are looking for books like yours. This is also called "going out on sub," as in submission. Be sure to ask for copies of pitches. It's your right to ask for that.
- 5 **Acquiring editor pitches to publisher.** Some editors have the power to acquire titles without further approval, but many pitch the titles they want to their publisher, along with other editors who are vying for the same slots.
- 6 **Publisher acquires your book.** When a publisher wants your book, they will make an offer through your agent. If it's accepted, they will follow up with a contract. You'll receive the first installment of your advance shortly thereafter.
- 7 **Write the rest of your book.** Because you are writing a nonfiction book, you can wait to write the remaining chapters of your book until you have a deal in place. (Fiction and memoir authors must complete their entire manuscript before pitching agents.) Note

that this is when publishers start to position your book for the sales team. Yes, that early.

- 8 Developmental/substantive edits.** Your developmental or substantive editor (who may have one of various titles) will set an editorial schedule. They may have structural notes for you right from the start, or they may only give you guidance when they've seen a few chapters. After you complete your first draft, you will typically get two rounds of developmental/substantive edits. Sometimes more work is needed on specific chapters.
- 9 Copy edit.** When substantive edits are complete, the next step is copy edit. This is officially the start of production and triggers an advance payment. You will have one to two rounds of copy edits.
- 10 Typeset.** During the copy edit process, you will receive interior page design samples for your review and approval. After the copy edit, the designer will typeset your book.
- 11 Proofread.** You will receive a typeset proof of your book, usually in PDF format. Some publishers still send “pass pages,” short for “first-pass pages,” which is basically just a print-out of the proof. (If you don't get a print-out, do it yourself. It's important to review a hard copy.) During this time, a proofreader will also review your proof to catch any remaining errors. You may have one to two rounds of proofreading before your final signoff.
- 12 Publish.** At least five months later, probably longer, your publisher will release your book.

You can see why traditional publishing takes a long time. The first few steps—writing and pitching a book proposal to agents—can take months and may not yield the results you want. That said, each step in the rest of the process, from acquisition to book release, is essential to ensure your book is a must-read. If you choose to self-publish or go with a hybrid, please make sure you adhere to steps 8 through 12 in the process.

One more note about why traditional (and some hybrid) publishing can take a long time. Earlier in this chapter, I explained the importance of trade distribution. I've heard some publishing "experts" diss traditional publishing because it "takes too long," as if that's a choice publishers make rather than a necessity that *benefits* authors. You already understand the benefits of the rigorous editing process, which does take several months. What you may not realize is that trade distribution adds even more time to the schedule. This is because bookstores purchase their books months in advance. The book-of-the-month club makes their selections months in advance. And so on. To ensure your book has a chance with these opportunities, the sales team has to pitch your book months in advance, and to do that, they need a galley.

A galley is a bound and typeset copy of your book. It is often an uncorrected proof, created in the final stage of editing: proofreading. Since the sales teams needs the galley months before publication, you can see why trade distribution takes so long. And you can also see why this long publishing runway benefits you.

What You Lose When You Publish Too Fast

Fast is not better. Fast means you cut corners—in development, in writing, in editing, and in production. It also means you cut corners in marketing, which can lead to heartbreak. That old adage, "Just because you can doesn't mean you should," applies here. Just because you *can* publish faster doesn't mean you should. No matter which path you choose—self, hybrid, or traditional—you can follow the steps required to turn out a must-read book.

In the previous section, I explained that trade distribution needs a galley months before publication to pitch to bookstores and other sales opportunities. You also need a galley to submit to trade review journals for critical review. As I shared in Chapter 9, trade reviews help bookstores and librarians make buying decisions and also give your book credibility. To include a pull quote from your review on your cover and/or inside your book, and to be featured in trade journal articles about the upcoming season, you'll have to submit for review at

least four to six months in advance of your book release. You may also need a galley to secure endorsements and to pitch media, including podcasts, and you may need it months in advance. If you want your book to be included in a gift guide, you'll need that galley months in advance.

Are you getting the “months in advance” theme here?

When you publish too fast, you miss out on so many opportunities to get the word out about your book. A bonus in taking your time with this is, once you have your galley, you can rest easy about your book and focus on your launch. If you are trying to both finish your book and launch it at the same time, you will absolutely cut corners. You may also make yourself sick, because you sure won't get any sleep. It's all energy drinks and fast food for you as you try to meet impossible deadlines.

Don't do that. Just don't.

What You Lose When You Only Sell Your Book on Amazon

I'm old enough to remember a time when Amazon did not exist. Today, if your book isn't on Amazon, *it* may as well not exist. But this behemoth of a retailer is not the only game in town. The problem is, many of us are so accustomed to using them to buy books, we either forget or don't realize that some people, companies, and organizations don't. And some *can't*. Bookstores (that are not Amazon-owned) cannot afford to buy from Amazon because they need deep discounts to make money—just as Amazon does. Bookstores, big box stores like Target and Costco, and online retailers such as Book Depository or Bookshop buy books from distributors—just as Amazon does. Libraries also buy from these distributors, and from others that specialize in the library market. Some reference librarians have a small Amazon budget for books they can't get through distribution, but many do not.

If you decide to self-publish, make sure your book is available everywhere. This goes for ebooks, too. Yes, Kindle corners the market in the US, but not so in other countries. And buying an American book outside of the US is much easier when it's in digital format. So, why cut yourself off from potential buyers by giving Amazon exclusivity?

Sure, you can make a slightly higher royalty and some other perks, but I've found that access to your books in multiple formats is the key to building readership.

If you opt to choose a hybrid publisher or a company that helps you self-publish, make sure print and ebook versions of your book will be available “everywhere books are sold” and “everywhere books are read.”

Market the Hell Out of Your Book

Just as this is not a book about publishing, it is also not a book about marketing. That said, I would be doing you a disservice if I didn't stress the importance of your role in the marketing of your book.

Let's get one thing straight: Marketing your book is *your* responsibility. If you think signing with a traditional publisher means you can sit back and write and they'll take care of finding your readers, someone gave you bad information. What they *will* do is push that trade distribution sales engine behind the scenes so your book is more likely to end up on shelves, but getting readers excited to buy your book is all you. Of course there are exceptions. Publishers will pull out all the stops for some authors. Reality TV stars. Movie stars. Political stars. I'm sure you see the theme by now. If you're already famous, no problem. Your publisher will throw some money at marketing your book. They'll do this because you already have a following. They'll also do this for some successful authors' next books. Not the first one, but those that follow the successful book. Again, publishers will do this because that author already has a following.

That said, some traditional publishers will help you amplify your efforts. In other words, they will help you if you help yourself. So please—help yourself. Help your Ideal Readers find your book.

Let's get another thing straight: You probably don't know enough about marketing to figure out if the hybrid publishing package or self-publishing package book launch add-ons to your contract are worth the money. Again, you don't know what you don't know, so you don't know how to ask the right questions. You put your trust in experts who tell you a press release is going to sell your book (it's not)

and offer you a bunch of other stuff you could handle on your own, and you do this because you want a publisher—even if it’s one that you paid—to handle your marketing for you.

And one more, very important thing I want you to know: You are going to be too tired to market your book. Just expect that. You’re writing a must-read. You’re putting in the time and effort to create something truly life-changing for your reader, and that’s not a walk in the park. You’re also navigating the publishing world, which may as well be Mars and can be frustrating in myriad ways. You’ve pushed yourself to make something out of nothing, and just when you want to take a hiatus from the world, you have to show up and promote that thing. You will be *tired*.

Before I started teaching my workshop, I took Gloria as a private client and shepherded her through the entire process of writing, editing, and publishing her book. The end result: a gem that served her readers perfectly. It had a gorgeous cover that made you want to pick it up and interior page design that inspired you to keep turning the pages. Gloria did everything right—except she dropped the ball on marketing. I had given her all my timelines, resources, and ideas. I met with her and her team to brainstorm more ideas. She had the knowledge and tools she needed to pull it off. And still, she let that book launch with nothing more than an email to her list.

Gloria was tired—too tired to market her book.

The best thing you can do to ensure you don’t bail on your book marketing is to anticipate that you are on your own with this and you will be too exhausted to focus on it when your book is done. The solution? Focus on it *now*. Start planning. Start strategizing. Start talking about it. Start building relationships with people who also serve your readership. Start creating content you may want to use to help spread the word about your book. Start brainstorming bonus offers, media pitches, speech ideas—whatever you think you may want to do to support your book. Just start.

Here’s a little surprise you may have already figured out: if you’ve been following all the “Your Book in the Wild” challenges at the end of each chapter, you have already started marketing your book.

Your Book in the Wild

No matter where you are in the writing, editing, or publishing process, and no matter which publishing path you choose, you are ready to put a book page up on your website. This is important because as you talk about your book, as you take action and share about its development, you will want a way to capture interest from potential readers. I have seen authors who are early in the process share their Reader Statement on social media and get dozens of responses, asking when their book will be available. You need a way to collect those names when they express interest.

What goes on a book page? It can be as simple as the Reader Statement, a picture of you, and a link to sign up for updates about the book and its release. If you want to get fancy, you can add a video about your inspiration for writing the book, but it's not necessary. If you want to reveal your Core Message, you could add it. Or not. The same goes for your Promise. When you have your cover, book summary, trade review pull quotes, endorsements, and retailer buy links, add them. For now, keep it simple.

My students are always surprised when I tell them to create this book page, because they don't think they're ready. They are ready, and so are you. So get that page up this week.

Onward!

CLAIM YOUR REWARD

Writing a book is hard, especially if you're doing this on your own. You deserve a reward as you make progress. When you have your book's release date, go to the Must-Read website (writeamustread.com/rewards) to unlock the ultimate prize. Seriously. Do it.

Write a Must-Read is available now on Amazon. Click here to pre-order!