



Introduction

Over the years, I've been asked the same questions dozens of times. How did you get into self-publishing? How did you move from owning an employment agency to being one of thousands of publishers listed in *Literary Market Place*?

For the record, here's how all that took place. In the beginning, I owned and operated an employment service for household and childcare help. I quickly discovered that out of every one hundred calls from potential clients, only about five could afford the agency fees. That presented me with both a dilemma and an opportunity.

Of course, it was unrealistic to think I could help everyone. Although I was running a business and needed to make a profit to stay in business, I wanted to help as many people as I could—including the ninety-five percent who weren't able to budget enough money to use my company's services. So I came up with the idea of putting together a do-it-yourself kit for hiring household help.

Little did I realize that in the process of creating that first kit, I'd get hooked on publishing—to the extent of eventually selling the employment agency and moving into publishing full-time. The interesting thing was that as a publisher, I also heard more cries for help than I could fill.

My first publication, *OPTIONS: A Directory of Child and Senior Services in Phoenix, Tucson, Flagstaff, and Yuma, Arizona*,

accomplished a great deal, both for people seeking household help and for me personally. It helped many families—and it brought a considerable amount of attention (and subsequently, new business) to my firm.

The agency subsidized my first publication, but I was on a very tight budget. I hired a public relations firm, headed by Toni Mattison, to help with publicity for my agency. It was one of the biggest financial risks I'd ever taken (or so it seemed at the time) and probably succeeded only because Toni was willing to work within my budget.

During our initial meeting, Toni asked many questions about my agency. She had a story set in her mind, but before leaving, I mentioned that I was putting together a kit for hiring and training household help.

"That's it," she said happily. "That's the angle we needed."

I had no idea that my first publication would lead to such a tremendous amount of local publicity—publicity that led to more potential clients and eventually to increased business. The kit created several new arenas for my agency and established me as an expert on hiring household help. It also created an increased public awareness of my agency.

Not surprisingly, several people who had purchased the kit came to my door, saying, "There's too much here that has to be done, so I'm going to let you do the job."

My experience with that kit illustrates one of the reasons for self-publishing. If you own a business and want to build that business, you have a solid basis for offering information the public needs, whether it's in the form of how-to guides, manuals, or study guide outlines for developing new skills. Once you put that information in book form, your book will often yield returns far beyond your expectations, including a pronounced increase in your credibility as an expert in your particular field.

In a nutshell, that's the story of my journey from employment agency owner to self-publisher—and to my present activity, publishing.

Of all the reasons a person might have for self-publishing, I think the two most important are *control and timing*. As the

publisher, everything about your book is under your control and you have the final say in every aspect of it, including its presentation to your target audience. You can also get your information out to the public much faster as a self-publisher, which can be critical in today's rapidly changing world. You don't have to spend months querying agents and publishers or waiting, sometimes *years*, for a publisher to finally get your book into print. That can be a huge advantage.

However, you also need to understand that self-publishing your book will require a major commitment in terms of thought, energy, time, and funds. It's not an easy process, but it can have tremendous rewards if you approach it in a logical, professional manner. That's why I wrote this book—to help you maximize your efforts and minimize your mistakes.

Of course, there are other excellent guides, too, and I'd like to pay tribute to a couple of authors—Dan Poynter and John Kremer—who have written about the subject and have helped me up some steep learning curves over the years.

Expectations

What are the odds that your book will be successful? The biggest mistake novice writers make is assuming their book is going to be an instant blockbuster. Unfortunately, the odds of that happening are heavily stacked against you. If you look at bestselling author lists, you'll rarely see a first-time author or unknown person among those names. As a newcomer, it's important to be realistic in your expectations—especially if you're publishing your very first book.

Major publishers seldom succeed with just one book. They need a catalog of books to stay in business, and as a self-publisher, your catalog list will generally be very short—consisting of only your first book. As a self-publisher, you'll also be responsible for your book's promotion, marketing, and advertising, all of which will eat into your profits. So don't expect to make a lot of money on your first book—that can lead to frustration and disappointment.

It may sound harsh, but if you're going to be a successful

self-publisher, you have to enter the field with not only great information, but also with realistic expectations—and I haven't stayed in business all these years by offering my clients false hopes. Honesty is another critical factor in your ultimate success.

As I wrote this book, I found that I'm constantly discovering new ideas on how to promote and market books. This book is essentially a journal of what I've learned on a daily basis over the past twenty-plus years. I'll sometimes be referring to other leaders in various fields, because I've benefited from their advice and I want to give them due credit for the help I received from their efforts.

As a self-publisher, you're going to be wearing many hats, and in order to be successful while wearing any of those hats, you'll need to know where to find expert help. No one knows everything, and it's often much less expensive to seek out wise counsel than to make serious mistakes. In the end, their help will allow you to create the best possible book—which should always be your ultimate goal.

I wish you the very best in your efforts to become a successful self-publisher. The good news is that you've already taken the first important step—you're reading this book! Now let's explore all the aspects of how to make your self-publishing ventures all they can be.