



Publishing Nonfiction Books on Spirituality

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MODULE 4 SELF (OR INDEPENDENT) PUBLISHING

Introduction to Self-Publishing

The following document is part of a five module series on publishing nonfiction books in the category of spirituality, metaphysics, occult, and New Age. Module 4 is on self-publishing. The previous module instructions were audio lectures, downloadable MP4 files you can listen to. However, prior to putting together Module 4, my laptop broke, and to record those audio lectures, I was using a recorder app on that laptop. I don't know how to record audio files with my desktop computer. Thus, in lieu of audio MP4 files, Module 4 instruction will be provided by the script or transcript I would have read off of to produce said audio files.

Since the following text was intended to be notes I read off of to create audio lectures, the tone may be informal and the sentence structure imperfect. Please forgive and acknowledge that you are reading what should have been transcript notes for an audio lecture.

- 01 Introduction to Self-Publishing
- 02 Why Self-Publish Your Book
- 03 Publishing Tarot and Oracle Decks
- 04 Understanding ISBNs, Bar Codes, and LOC Listings
- 05 Why You Need a Copyeditor
- 06 Where to Go From Here

BEGIN AUDIO LECTURE TRANSCRIPT:

So what is self-publishing?

Self-publishing, or independent publishing, is when the author of a book oversees and has full jurisdiction over all aspects of publication, from copyediting to book and cover design, formatting galleys, printing, distribution, and all aspects of marketing, sales, and promotion. Self-publishing also includes paying a service to help you do all that, in other words paying for book publication.

Self-publishing means you are not just an author, but you are also a business. So once you've finished writing your book, you need to take off the writer hat and put on your entrepreneur hat because that's what you are now from this point on, an entrepreneur.

Even if you insist that you did not write your book for money, and I'm very sure you haven't, you *did* write it so that your words might have a positive impact somewhere in this world. To give your book its best possible shot at making that positive impact, you do need to promote your book so that it can get on the radar of those who might be best served by reading your book. So don't just think of marketing and promotions as being profit-driven; it's also impact-driven. And since you are doing all this without a traditional publisher, you're an entrepreneur.

That's why you need to think like an entrepreneur, not like a writer. That will be the critical key to success. If you continue to think like a writer after your book has been completed, you won't be able to fully optimize your sales potential or optimize your book's public impact. From this point on, everything you write isn't for literary merit; it's for getting the word out about your book, far and wide.

I read a statistic somewhere once, and of course I can't back this number up because by now I've long since forgotten where that statistic came from or even if it's accurate (but my personality is one that likes to remember numbers...) that you can make the assumption that 20% of the people who have been exposed to information about your book for at least 10 minutes are likely to buy your book. What does that tell you? Two things. One: the more interviews and book reviews out there about your book the better. Two: The harder you work at gaining public exposure for your book, the greater the number of buyers. Both points are no-brainers and part of the common sense consciousness. I know, you don't need a statistic to tell you either of those two points. Yet it's worth emphasizing and if a statistic like 20% of people exposed to your book for 10 minutes or longer will buy your book is going to get the PR cogs in your brain rolling, then so be it.

If 100 people on YouTube watch a 20 minute author interview with you about your book and have gained at least 10 minutes of exposure to information about your book, then out of those 100, 20 will buy your book. You can earn 20 sales from that author interview.

Take a moment to think about that.

I'm serious. Don't brush me aside and say this is common sense. Deconstruct that point of common sense, understand the numbers, and figure out how you can get the numbers to work in your favor, toward concrete sales. Common sense is meaningless if you don't know how to put it to good use.

If for every bit of media exposure you get that's 10 minutes or longer, whether it's a 10-minute video or something that takes 10 minutes for a reader to read (and the reader wants to spend all 10 minutes reading! That's another important point!), and each bit of media exposure gains 100 views or reads, and keep in mind that's a very conservative estimate, and you put out into the public forum 10 bits of such media exposure, so a total of 10 interviews, book reviews, or informative videos following these parameters, then... are you with me so far? Then you can earn 200 sales from the work you put into all that.

As a self-published author, your royalties earned per copy sold is higher than traditionally published authors, so let's say you earn \$10 on every \$20 book sold. Selling those 200 copies by putting out just 10 interviews, book reviews, or videos will at the very least, based on the given statistic, guarantee \$4,000 in gross sales and \$2,000 netted in your pocket. And that is about the most conservative, low-balled estimate you can calculate.

What if you worked harder at PR and for the 10 interviews, book reviews, articles, essays, or informative videos about your book, each one gains you on average 500 views or reads. That means you'll get 1,000 sales and if you earn \$10 per book sold, that's \$10,000.

See why I like math? Math helps you understand common sense. Science enables intuition to be more useful.

All right. I think you get my point. Plus, we'll revisit marketing, PR, and how to promote your book in Module 5. For now, let's move on. Let's talk about *how* to self-publish.

To self-publish, you first need to decide whether your book will be available as a digital e-book only, such as a Kindle book, available in print, hardcover or paperback, or both. These days, most self-published authors will make available a print paperback because it's more economical and a Kindle e-book that customers can purchase through Amazon.

Digital books need to be formatted in such a way that the chapter headings and any subheadings that appear in a table of contents are hyperlinked so a reader can navigate between the chapters and section headings. The template manuscript file I provide for free download with this course has chapter and section headings readily formatted, so if you don't know how to automatically generate a Table of Contents with your word processor, then follow the template I provide.

As for print books, there are three main ways authors can self-publish.

First, you can go with a vanity press. A vanity press is a business that makes money off authors by publishing a book for them, for pay. You order the printed copies of the book in bulk from the vanity press and then, essentially, sell the book from the trunk of your car. The key trait of vanity presses is that they're expensive and chances are high you're overpaying for the services. You're paying somebody else a lot of money to do simple things you could easily do yourself if you

follow this free course. Also, typically the name of the vanity press is listed as the publisher of your book. So to the uninitiated, it *may* look like your book was traditionally published, but let's be clear. This is self-publishing. Vanity presses are self-publishing.

In case you didn't pick up on it yet, I have a pretty bad bias against vanity presses. But hey, like, that's just my opinion man. If you have loads of cash to blow, hell, go with the vanity press! If you don't have loads of cash to blow, then a vanity press is really, dare I say it, a bad idea. In fact, I think a vanity press is such a bad idea, I'm not even going to provide you with any instruction on how to go that route. Module 4 won't cover vanity press publishing. You're on your own if you want to go that route.

The second method to self-publishing is by way of a printing press. A printing press is in the business of printing stuff. They'll take orders to print your bookmarks, business cards, custom designed binders, and, for some of these printers, will print and bind your books, hardcover or paperback. There's a slight distinction between the vanity press and printing press. The vanity press's name will typically be listed as the publisher of your book. A printing press will not. A printing press is hands-off and is literally just being paid to print, bind, and produce copies of your book based on your order. You remain the publisher. You do everything that relates to *publishing*. The printing press just *prints* your order of books. They print whatever you tell them to print and then deliver it to you.

The vanity press is in the sole business of conning, sorry I mean getting authors to submit a manuscript to them and they'll do all the work of turning it into a book for you. Oftentimes this vanity press will then outsource the printing job to a contractor, and charge *you* a premium for that print job. A printing press is that contractor who does the printing job, and so when you go with a printing press, you're skipping the middle man that is the vanity press and going straight to the printer service to produce your books.

Going with a printing press requires an overhead, so you'll want to budget a couple thousand dollars to do this. You can go with a local printing press, which may cost a bit more than outsourcing overseas, but not only are you probably supporting an awesome local small mom and pop shop, but it's also going to be a lot easier to pick up the completed order of printed books. Outsourcing overseas, such as finding a printer service in China, will be cheaper, for sure, there's no question, but then there are issues of quality control, shipping costs, and import-export hurdles. With a Chinese printing press, you can find them on Alibaba, which is one source, and to vet them, just ask for a customer list to get a sense of folks they've worked with in the past, and look those customer names up, reach out to them, and ask them about their experiences with that factory.

Finally, the third way to print paperback or hard copies of your book is print on demand or POD. Print on demand requires little to no overhead costs because the book is printed per order. You prepare the formatted book, upload it to a print on demand service, such as Lulu, and customers can order the printed book from Lulu. Or you can have them order the book from you and as the orders come in, you place those orders with Lulu, and then you ship the book orders out yourself to the customers, if you don't want customers to know you're going with a print on demand publisher. Print on demand services typically let you order copies of your own book at

about \$6 to \$10 per copy. The larger the quantity you order, the lower that price goes down. OR you can set a fixed profit margin, like \$5 per book, and a sales page at Lulu will be automatically generated with the fixed price, and customers can order the book directly from Lulu. Then every quarter, Lulu will mail you your profits check.

If you don't have a lot of money for a printing budget and really want to get your book out, then go the route of POD, or print on demand. It may take longer for readers to get their books, because the book is being printed, made, and shipped per order. In contrast, with a printing press, you've printed the book prior to publication in bulk, so readers get their books after an order as soon as you process the order and ship the book. Much faster.

To decide whether to go the route of POD or printing press, think about your estimated sales. Again, this is why you need to wear a business hat, not writer hat. You need to be damn good at projecting estimated sales for a book like yours. If you think you can sell more than 500 copies in one year's time, then go with the printing press and bulk order for 500 copies, which is the typical MOQ, or minimum order quantity from printing presses. If you *don't* think you can sell more than 500 copies in a year because the subject matter of your book is rather obscure and niche, then go the route of POD. That would be my recommendation.

More negative words about vanity presses... I don't know. I guess I just don't understand the appeal. You don't get any of the street cred that comes with traditional publishing, and most people in the know will see the name of the publisher of your book and know immediately that it's a vanity press. Plus, you're paying a ton of money for it and not necessarily in a way that benefits you financially over printing presses or print-on-demand. So in any rational cost-benefit analysis, my conclusion would be to go with print-on-demand or, if you have the funds for it, a printing press, but never a vanity press. If you care about profit, vanity press doesn't make sense. If you care about glory, vanity press doesn't make sense. No matter what the defined objective, vanity press doesn't make sense. Unless that defined objective is to blow a ton of money just so you can tell everybody you're technically and literally a published author, then fine, in that one instance, you can go with a vanity press.

One final consideration for self-publishing: Who is the publisher? Are you, John Doe, the publisher, as an individual? If yes, then that means you're agreeing to absorb personal liability for anything that goes wrong. Setting up a limited liability company, or LLC, to be your very own publishing house might not be a bad idea, though it will increase your overhead costs and means there's some money you need to set aside just for your business of self-publishing.

But setting up an LLC will separate out your assets and liabilities. For asset protection reasons, this is a pretty big deal. Yet that's not to say you should now immediately go out and register an LLC. It's got to be a cost-benefit analysis tailored to your specific pattern of facts.

If you're going to be self-publishing five tarot or oracle decks and ten books in the foreseeable future, then yeah by hell go and set up an LLC, for sure. But if you're going to be publishing one e-book on Divination Techniques with a Basic Hand-Held Calculator and that's all you ever plan on publishing, then... I don't know if after a rational cost-benefit analysis it would make any sense to set up an LLC. The cost of setting up an LLC will be, okay let's be real here, more than the profits you're likely to earn from your book, and also more than any liabilities you're likely to

incur. Also, running an LLC in some states is low-cost and no big deal, but in other states, like California, it can get kind of ridiculous with the \$800 annual franchise tax that you have to pay. That's why a lot of California businesses actually register their companies in Nevada. So you've really got to assess your situation and unique circumstances and when in doubt, consult with your attorney. And I'm not your attorney. I'm just a girl with a blog chatting about how to self-publish nonfiction books.

END AUDIO LECTURE TRANSCRIPT.

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