

POD Presentation

April 17, 2010

Opening:

Deciding to take your manuscript to a “POD Publisher” is so much more than paying the fee. It is the:

- Writing
- Editing
- The Business Plan
- Understanding what a book is
- The Publishing Process
- Selecting the right POD Publisher
- Submitting your work
- Marketing & Promotion
- And Setting up a Web Site

Basically starting a new business venture.

Writing - Just a few Pointers:

I wrote my first manuscript on a manual typewriter and my second on an electric typewriter, both of which gave me a deeper appreciation of what I had created. Imagine if you will, no backspacing, no fixing the word, sentence, or paragraph. Every change, no matter how minor required a complete page do over!

- Every story should have a beginning, middle & end (submission w/ no end)
- Permissions get them or don't use them.
 - Song lyrics submission
 - Chesterfield Query
 - Vietnam Book Permissions
- Title - Search - Be unique
- Make the work the best it can be!
- Don't disrespect your readers, ever.
- Write with marketing in mind!

Editing:

- Editing begins at Home
 - Spell check
 - Read through
 - Outline, Flow, Cast of Characters
 - Reverse Outline.
 - Chapters out of Sequence
- Rework, Rewrite, Rework Rewrite...
- Outside editor (*Pass Sample around*)
 - Costs
 - Value
 - Be able to take criticism
- Don't half step here! No Shortcuts
- Workshops, conferences and writers' groups are all very helpful as is an MFA, but at the end of the day, you need to write.
 - Don't get paralyzed by the process.
 - *Ralph - Tennis Partner*

The Business Plan - and Good God the Budget

In Order to launch a new product (your book) you need some idea of what it is you have, what you are going to do with that book, how you will do that and why.

Now that you have made the decision to take your manuscript to a “POD Publisher” then you are entering the world of self-publishing, with the operative word being: SELF!

Let us review what comes next, more specifically what needs to be done to turn that pile of papers into a book.

I have broken it down as follows:

- What is a Book?
- Selecting The POD Publisher
- The Publishing Process
- Marketing & Promotion
- Web Site

Is your head spinning yet? Good!

Budgets:

Budgets are just that, an estimate of potential costs that you could (will probably) incur in the launch of your book.

It is assumed that the Print-on-Demand Publisher you have selected will have their standard setup fees. Always, and I do mean always, remember you get what you pay for!

As you will find in your research, most of these publishers have a myriad of additional services, with additional fees that they offer that will need to be factored in.

Once your book is produced you will want (need) to purchase copies for yourself:

- Sell Directly
- Promotional
- Reviews

You will also need money for marketing & promotion expenses.

Now Let's review a projected budget...

POD Publisher setup fees:	-----\$750.00
Book Purchases: (50 @ 8.97)	-----\$448.50
Postage:	-----\$125.00
Advertising:	-----\$750.00
Supplies:	-----\$100.00
Business Cards (printed):	-----\$25.00
Book Markers (printed):	-----\$150.00
Travel Costs (Gas):	-----\$100.00
Web site:	-----1,000.00
Miscellaneous:	-----<u>\$100.00</u>
Total:	-----3,548.50

While the numbers may vary widely (up or down), the concept of this simple budget is to illustrate that there is more than the initial set up fee associated with POD Publishing, which basically is only getting your manuscript into book form.

Budget Income:

If we take a trade paperback that has a retail price of \$14.95 and assume you get the standard author discount of 40% off retail, (sometimes based on a quantity of books purchased – various POD publishers will have various pricing concepts or plateaus – I am using mine for discussion purposes) the cost will be \$8.97 per book. In this example the most profit you can make per book is \$5.98.

Remember you will be sending copies out for review; cost \$8.97, profit zero. Also you will probably discount the book for direct sales to say \$12.00 per book for a profit of \$3.03 per book. If you do get books into your local bookstore on consignment, typically they want a 30% discount (sometimes more), which means your profit per book will be \$1.50. All this means is that, on average, the profit will be approximately \$3.50 per book, give or take, all things being equal, the river doesn't rise and the sun comes up and...

Now if we were to take that formula and add it back into our budget to look at the income side of the equation, we would come to the realization that to just break even we would have to sell 1,014 books ($1,014 \times \$3.50 = \$3,549$).

However, in order to sell that many books, you will have to purchase additional books, which of course would impact the formula (costs of additional books equal additional books to sell to make back the costs of those additional books...).

And on and on and on...

What is a book?

And why do you need to know that?

The short answer is that a book is your product.

More specifically, you really need to know and understand how a book is put together.

However, when you are doing it yourself you have all the say in the design and format of your book and conversely, you have to do your own designing and formatting of your book.

Let's discuss the main parts of a book:

- First choose a format:
 - Hardcover or Trade Paperback
 - Don't do both simultaneously!

I did have a simultaneous edition, but it is something I would never do again.

A trade paperback is the usual edition.

- Cover

The cover is the greatest sales tool for the book. If the reader is impressed or intrigued or otherwise taken with the cover, more specifically the cover art, the reader is apt to pick the book up and look at it further. If not, you have just eliminated ninety-five percent of your chances of selling the book. The cover is the first “hook” to get someone to buy the book. This is where you need to put your best effort in designing and getting it right. To do any less puts you at a greater disadvantage than you already are.

- Use a photo - Licensed or otherwise
- Graphic design - drawing or...
- The cover will contain:
 - Your cover art (or photo)
 - Bar Code - ISBN
 - Book Blurb
 - Author Photo & Blurb

- Guts of a book
 - Business Page
 - Copyright
 - Disclaimer
 - Publisher Information
 - ISBN - publish date
 - Front Matter
 - Dedication
 - Acknowledgement
 - Non-fiction a TOC
 - Story, the chapters
 - Point Size (The Most Important)
 - Spacing, margins, gutter fill.
 - Page Layout
 - Back Matter
 - Epilogue
 - Acknowledgement
 - Non-fiction
 - Endnotes
 - An Index
 - Bibliography
 - Glossary
 - An after word
 - Colophon

I could spend the whole session talking about book formatting, but suffice it to say this is the most important part of your publishing venture.

Make sure you understand a book and its' parts before you start the process.

Have in mind what you want to do, what you want to see and how that can be accomplished.

And don't let the publisher sway, cajole, threaten or BS you otherwise.

Remember it is your book and you do get to do it your way!

The Publishing Process:

Let's talk about Publishing.

There are three types of publishing (*discuss*)

Traditional

Co-publishing

Self-Publishing

Print-on-Demand is a printing technology for creating books one at a time, just like offset printing is a printing option, another way to print books.

However, with the advent of the technology, Print-on-Demand or POD more commonly refers to a publishing option, rather than a printing option. A POD Publisher or POD Publishing. Going POD.

POD Publishing falls somewhere in between co-publishing and self-publishing, more commonly known as vanity publishing. Or as some in the industry say: "Pay to Play."

Basically you pay a fee and this POD Publisher will turn your manuscript into a book, simple as that. But let's talk about that for a moment.

Selecting a POD Publisher:

When I did my first book there were five or so POD Publishers, which interestingly four of those publishers are now part of one company.

By my third book there were over 40.

Now I understand there are over 60!

That alone should tell you who is making the money on this process. But I digress.

First and foremost you need to do your homework, the research, the pro and con lists of each publisher you are considering.

Review the services offered by each publisher and how that fits into what you want to accomplish.

- Do you need all those services?
- What do you really get?
- Can you do things on your own?
- And most importantly what will these services provide as a cost benefit?

Choosing the POD Publisher is a very daunting task, even if you don't think so.

Once you have narrowed the search down to a few publishers that made your cut, review their contract.

- Will the contract
 - Give you flexibility
 - What are the restrictions?
 - Can you make changes?
 - How many passes do you get
 - On cover design
 - On formatting
 - On making changes
 - Do you keep your rights?
 - Can you get them back?
 - How long will that take?
 - Subsidiary sales?
 - How do you terminate the contract?

Order a sample book.

Remember, you are the customer, you do get to have it your way - something I didn't know when I started out.

Select the publisher that feels right for you and that you will feel comfortable working with.

For me the most important fact is the cost per book. A lesson I've learned along the way. That far exceeds everything else and I'll explain why.

To be able to sell books and make a profit requires you have room to work. Bookstores on consignment usually want a 30% discount. You need to be able to discount your book with enough room for you to make some money. Not to mention recover some of your costs.

Think of it this way. In order to pay off the debt incurred to do this I need to sell X number of books (plus the additional cost of books & shipping factored in) at some profit per book. If I only make on average \$3.50 per book how many books will I need to sell to break even, to show a profit? (The pizza oven analogy.)

Some POD Publishers require you to purchase a minimum number of books (usually around 100 plus) to get a good price per book.

For Winter Ghost I paid 10.02 at the 100 plateau, 10.87 at the 25 plateau and 11.02 for less than 25.

Something you will need to consider. What are the options for authors to purchase books for resale? Investigate this thoroughly. This will greatly affect your bottom line.

Remember your book is your product that you will be selling. It has your name on it. Make sure it is the best it can be with the publisher that will work with you to accomplish that task.

The last item you should understand about POD Publishing is that to do so is considered surrendering, giving up, throwing in the towel, basically taking the easy way out. No respect.

Which, somehow means you're not legit, you've cheated, you've gamed the system.

I find it interesting that most agents (probably all) don't consider a POD Published book as a publishing credit and usually request that you don't list it as such.

I've even found language that says if you previously POD Published don't bother querying!

The point here is that in addition to everything else you need to consider you have to weigh the fact that doing so may put a damper on your future projects. But hey it is your book.

Will this change in the future? I'd like to think so. I believe there will be a convergence of publishing that will offer all options, and that which will be beneficial to all, not just the chosen few. But that is just me.

Submitting your work.

Most POD Publishers will have a set of instructions for you to follow.

But basically you upload your manuscript.

Have everything ready to go before you sit down to upload.

Do you have you own cover to submit? Either way, you will work together on the cover art.

- Is your manuscript formatted the way the publisher requires?
 - Do you have any pages to add to the manuscript?
 - Is your business page worded the way you want, the disclaimer and all.
 - A dedication page an acknowledgement... or any other front matter pages.
 - Any back matter pages?

You will receive a proof of the inside layout that will show setup formatting, spacing,

margins, gutter depth and the all important point size.

Make sure you understand all of this and be comfortable with how your book will look.

You may still want to order a book (if you already haven't) to see how this publisher puts a book together.

Once everything is complete and approved you will receive a "proof" copy of the actual book. This is your last chance to fix anything (and most publishers will charge extra for changes at this stage) but again it is your product it needs to be perfect.

If you are happy with your product, just say okay and your book goes into production, available on the publisher's web site, posted to the online sites...

Okay that was the easy stuff.

All of us can do that without too much effort.

Basically for a few bucks and a couple months of time, we will have a box, or two of our freshly printed books sitting in our living room.

That's great isn't it?

Now what?

Now what indeed?

The biggest hurdle we face in going this route is how to sell these books.

Since we don't have a sales force or marketing department to promote these books, guess who gets to do the marketing, promotion and sales?

Time to change hats.

Marketing & Promotion:

Just like any other product, we need to let people know we have something to sell and how they can buy that product.

Operating on a very small scale and even smaller budget, we can do the following:

- Book Reviews
- Advertising - Cost & Benefit
- Publicity - interview, ads
- Direct Mailer - email - twitter, facebook
- Word of mouth
- Events - book signings, book fairs, libraries
- Be creative
- Bookstores

Let's talk about bookstores for a moment.

Without a sales force or marketing, bookstores will not even know about your book.

Trying to contact bookstores by yourself is next to impossible, even if you did get through, they are very hesitant to work with you.

I did a targeted mailing to 96 bookstores in the Midwest for Jennifer's Plan, inside which I included a self-addressed stamped postcard with the option of saying; "Yes, No or Go Away." Only fifteen responded, 4 yes, 9 no, 1 maybe and 1 critiqued my letter!

I have a slight advantage selling my books.

I live in a resort town and work a night or two at the local restaurant, which allows me to peddle my books there as will the local coffee shop.

Meeting the author and buying on impulse is a great selling tool.

Web Site:

Yes you do need one.

And that may be all I need to say.

Some of the POD Publishers offer an attached site or you can piggyback onto other sites, but I believe you should have your own stand-alone site and preferably under your author name.

However you can have a “book” site that links back to your main site.

Some years ago, my son asked me when I was going to put up my site. When I asked what the hell for, he said because someday you will want to and your name won't be available.

I put up a one-page site using my initials and name since I was still a consultant at the time. However, I use a shortened name for writing, which is also the same name as a famous basketball coach and a Ford dealership. Oh and by the way I hire out for this work! Marketing & Promotion is the hardest piece of the puzzle. It requires great amounts of time and

money to promote your books, with very little payback.

Without a sales force behind you, it is near impossible to get the word out further than your little world.

Hiring the work out may be something to consider and while that may be a very expensive proposition, the return may be worth it.

Again remember how many books do you need to sell to pay these expenses, less the cost (and shipping) of more books, etc.

Of the many reasons to consider, before you decide to go with a POD Publisher, this reason alone may be the deciding factor.

Weigh all of your options, your reasons and your ability to do all this before making your final decision.

Closing Thoughts:

No doubt, to go POD will require time and money and an extraordinary effort to sell books, so the question is why would you do this? Why would you want to do this?

I believe there are three main reasons why:

- The first and foremost is EGO
- The second is Because You Can
- The third is Out of Frustration

I am certainly guilty of all three!

Do your homework. Understand that you are about to start a business and launch a new product. Without that knowledge you cannot expect to have any success.

To do any less will leave you much more frustrated than that rejection letter ever did.

Winter Ghost Income Statement 2009

Royalty Income -----	\$0.00
Books Sold-----	\$2,153.00
Total Income-----	\$2,153.00
Book Purchases-----	\$1,429.25
Marketing/Promotion-----	\$763.98
Office Supplies-----	\$0.00
Postage/Overnight-----	\$58.50
Professional Services (Fees)-----	\$535.00
Research-----	\$0.00
Shipping & Handling-----	\$220.04
Travel Costs-----	\$0.00
Web & ISP Expense (prorated)-----	\$67.80
Total Expenses-----	\$3,074.57
Net Income-----	(\$921.57)

