

E-Books and Self Publishing Are Not Just a Cheap Alternative

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There are a lot of authors opting for either writing their books as e-books, or going down the path of self publishing thinking it's an easy and cheap alternative to publishing 'properly' but this is not so.

I received an email submission today from an author who claimed to have already 'had published' the first two books in his series and was now wanting to self publish the third and would I please click the link provided in the email to take a look at his work and then let me know what I could do for him. *Well at least he said please!*

He or she provided a name 'Chris' which was not gender specific, so I'll just refer to him as a he for the rest of this article. First big mistake - his link did not work. I did try to take a look, just to see how bad the rest of his information was. He also failed to provide any details on what the book was about, fiction or non-fiction, how the previous books were published and how well they sold, but worst of all, he had copied in at least 20 other publishing services companies in the same email.

Now I, like most who work in this industry, am often receiving such poorly written email submissions but this was decidedly the worst I've ever seen. I was so affronted by Chris's arrogance in assuming we were all just dying to get our hands on his latest work, that I hit the 'reply to all' button. The response was outstanding! Many of those publishers emailed me back to congratulate me on delivering Chris a clip on the ear over the lack of information and tone of his (or her) submission.

Not surprisingly I've not heard further from the budding author.

I've been involved in quite a few discussions recently about people's assumption that ebooks or self publishing are an easy and low cost alternative to working with 'real publishers'. Yes this is true in some ways, as they will often bear the upfront costs of publishing a book, however, the assumption that a self published book or ebook does not need to be well edited, laid out, designed, or marketed to the same level as any other high quality book is madness on the part of the authors who are defaulting to this line of thinking.

I mean, have you seen some of the awful books out there which have obviously been whipped up in a single afternoon on someone's laptop? It's literary insanity! If you have the time and desire to put your words out to the rest of the world, would it not make sense to do so in the best, most professional, most marketable way possible?

While it is true that many of the large traditional publishing houses do take a very long time, if ever, to respond to submissions, and they all seem to have many rules on how to make a submission to their companies, it's also true that they do a great job of creating high quality books out of simply typed up manuscripts if they are well written and professionally presented. They don't however, ever take on manuscripts which are badly written, and poorly submitted.

Traditional publishers do offer a number of advantages to authors, but they are not the only gateways to creating a great book out of a good manuscript, as an increasing number of self publishing services and book shepherds are arising from the ashes of the Global Financial Crisis related redundancies around the world. Authors still need to approach self publishing as an option with the same care and respect for their manuscript as they would with ANY publisher. And be prepared to invest in doing it well.

If you want your book to make it beyond the first 50 you give away to friends and family, you really need to have it well edited - and that means use a professional BOOK editor. You then need to make sure it's well designed, on both the inside and outside - use a BOOK designer, not a website designer or your cousin's niece who does desktop publishing at school! Then you need to make sure you know how to market it, and to whom, so that your distribution system can help the books to sell.

These are critical steps for both printed and ebooks!

With ebooks you also need to work out what programmes you'll produce in and just a standard PDF file is not the same as an ebook! A lot of 20-50 page reports as PDF's are made free as downloadable items as a means of promoting their knowledge or providing a teaser for a book, but these are not really what I'm referring to in terms of properly presented ebooks which are downloadable from a number of sources and can be read by readers such as Kindle, Moby Pocket, Sony Readers, Palm Pilots and iPhones.

There's so much to this business of getting it right, and because there are so many people out there all competing for the readers' attention in every genre of book, the best written and presented books will always beat the books that have just been thrown together.

When you submit a book to a self publishing service provider or to a traditional publisher, we need to know things like: what is your book about, who is your targeted reader, what other work have you published, what other books would this one compete or compare with.

Work on your pitch - keep it simple but remarkable and professional, and there's a very good chance your book will rise to the top of the submissions pile a lot more easily. If you have already self published your book and it's not been properly edited, designed or marketed, don't give up but next time find a really good publishing coach or book shepherd to help you. You'll be amazed at the difference.

Happy writing....