

The Brave New World of Indie Publishing

Indie Publishing 201 – Making It Happen (1 Hour Class – Class Outline)

Intro

- This class assumes you've already taken my class "Indie Publishing 101 – To Be or Not To Be."
- Topics will cover in this Session:
 - The essential steps from finishing a rough draft to launching your indie book (step-by-step manner – will take up the majority of our time)
 - Do you really need an agent for indie publishing? If so, when?

From Rough Draft to Book Launch – A Step by Step Primer

- So, you've completed your 1st Draft...when are you ready to publish your indie book? How can you know?
 - When the book is completely free of all errors (Editing, story itself, spelling and punctuation).
 - ILLUSTRATION – Why this is so Important (See Beethoven Book SLIDE).
 - I have a team of 6-7 proofreaders, who ALL catch things my wife and, and the other ladies missed.
- The importance of **hiring a good editor and proofreader**
 - How do you choose a good editor?
 - Credentials and References are Critical (Anyone can call themselves an Editor). They should provide this on their website.
 - Look for successful authors helped by them (writing awards, bestsellers, etc.).
 - How do you know what level of editing you need (and when)?
 - Every novel needs Editing (beginners to the very best)

- 2 Basic levels: Macro and Micro (some divide Micro into 2 pieces: copy editing and proofreading).
- Macro (Content): characters, storyline, dialog, pace (the big picture)
- Micro (proofreading): typos, punctuation, misspelled words (or wrong word choice: there, their, they're, etc.), timeline conflicts, etc. (cleaning things up, polishing, etc.)
- How much will it cost?
 - Some charge by word count, others by number of pages/chapters
 - Generally, more experience/proven editors charge way more than newbies and relatively unknown editors.
 - Macro - (for a 300-page, 80k book) - Prices I've seen on internet: \$165, \$405, \$760, \$1,600/\$3,000
 - Micro - (for a 300-page, 80k book) - \$360/\$525/\$1,500
- Taking the time to rewrite and fix edits.
 - Allow enough time for this in your scheduling/planning –
 - Depending on your skill level, could take an extra week or two, or up to 6-8 weeks (if lots of rewriting needed).
- Cover Design and Formatting
 - A great cover matters a great deal –
 - You've heard the saying, "don't judge a book by its cover."
 - Don't believe it. In the world of publishing, the opposite is true.
 - A great-looking cover maybe the #1 reason people decide to consider a book further.
 - Because this is true - Aim for Top Shelf Quality.
 - This means, unless you are a gifted with graphics and proficient at programs like Photo Shop or PixelMator (Mac), you need to plan on hiring someone to do your cover.

- Costs range from about \$150 - \$600 (depending on who you use and what genre you're writing in).
- The quality of your cover should rival the quality of the best-selling book covers.
- Example of my 6 indies (compared to Indie Duds)
- I would also suggest that you take the time to create a cover for a PRINT VERSION of your book, not just the e-book (front, back & spine).
 - 2 Examples of my First Two
 - Costs more, but worth the added expense.
- Back Cover Copy – A necessary feature, for ebook AND print editions.
 - A few worthy endorsements (if possible). Only use if big recognizable names (See Example)
 - A compelling blurb (paragraph that summarizes and entices). Work on getting good at this (a difficult thing to master – reducing 300 pages to a handful of sentences).
 - Spent a couple of days on mine.
 - Author Bio & Pic
- The need for ISBNs (vs ASIN's with ebooks).
 - International Standard Book Number
 - Need to get 1 for each print book edition (hardback vs paperback, etc.)
 - Don't need one for ebooks (Amazon and others usually provide the number (See Example)
 - Spend the extra money – Go with Bowker (the industry champion). Get the ISBN and the Bar Code
 - Don't buy cheap 3rd party ISBNs – The owner of the ISBN is the de-facto publisher of the work.
 - \$100-150.00 for 1 book, cheaper if buying several at a time.

- Formatting - Hiring Someone vs Do it yourself.
 - Formatting involves taking your finished manuscript (from Microsoft Word) and reshaping it so that it works well in e-book or print formats.
 - This is something you can do yourself, but there's a significant learning curve.
 - There are software programs that will help you format your book: Calibre, Scrivener, Adobe InDesign (VELLUM for Mac) are popular programs.
 - If you prefer, you can hire people to do it for you (prices range from \$75-200.00).
- Time to Upload your Book
 - After you have done all the above things, you are ready to upload your book to online stores, like Amazon.
 - It's a fairly involved process, but these online stores have made it fairly easy to accomplish.
 - They've thought through pretty much everything that needs to be done.
 - But seriously, don't begin this process until everything is complete.
 - One of the biggest decisions every author has to make is: *Do I go with Amazon-only or should I "Go wide"?* (MORE ON THIS IN MARKETING SESSION)
 - Amazon-only means your books will only be available online through Amazon (print or Kindle).
 - You can still sell books directly to customers (like with PayPal), but not through other stores (like Barnes & Noble, Kobo, iTunes and Christianbook.com)
 - Going wide means Amazon will be just one of the places people can buy your books (can be purchased in all the other venues, also).
 - How pre-orders work

- Amazon and others will allow you to set up a preorder for your book.
- Usually you offer your book at a discounted price during preorder phase.
- Allows you to promote and market your book in advance of its release date. WITH A LINK THAT IS PERMANENT.
- Some authors do this so well, their book hits the bestseller status as soon as it launches.
- WARNING – Amazon requires you to give your release a deadline date. Serious penalties occur if you don't have your final version uploaded by then.
- Print books – Why You Should (Create Space vs others)
 - I think it's very wise to take the extra steps and create print book editions, not just e-books.
 - Is true, it's nearly impossible for indie authors to get their books available in traditional stores.
 - Retail stores only take books from traditional publishing houses.
 - They see traditional publishers as the “gatekeepers” for book quality (no way to vet the quality of indie authors).
 - Most retail stores are franchises in chains, and require a huge print commitment (4-5,000 books printed).
 - They want the ability to return any books that don't sell for a refund.
 - Some of the reasons why you should still print your books.
 - It's fun having a real book in your hands with your name on it.

- With POD, print costs are very reasonable (\$3-5/book), and you only have to print as many copies as you need (I typically order 5-10 at a time).
- I make between \$2-500 extra each month from my print book sales.
- Often make between \$100-400 extra on book sales when I speak at book signings.
- The only extra expense involved is to have the cover design include the back and spine, and to pay a little extra to have the print book formatted (unless you do this yourself).
- I use CreateSpace to print mine (owned by Amazon) – very reasonable, good quality (will resend if any books defective):
 - Ingram Spark or Lightning Source are the other major printers indies use.
 - Do a Google search to see which one is better for you.
- Deciding your Book Launch Date (Do Have One)
 - It's important to figure out a book launch date vs. just winging it and releasing it "whenever everything comes together."
 - Here's how to Plan it:
 - I suggest sitting down with a notepad and calendar and create a schedule that begins with the completion of your manuscript (unedited).
 - Then list out all the various action-steps we have just gone over and think through how much time you'll need for each one.
 - Allow for some overlap between certain steps (Example: while my cover is being created, I can have my proofreaders going over the final edit of my manuscript).
 - When you've done this, you have a reasonable date you can use, which comes in very handy (really essential) for promoting your book before its release.

- When You've Done all this, you're ready to Launch Your Book (Which Leads to our 3rd and Final Topic – **Marketing Your Books**)

Before We Close Part 2 ... Do you Really Need an Agent as an Indie?

- My Short Answer? NO, you don't.
 - That is, if by the term "Indie" you mean you're doing everything yourself.
 - Why would you need/want an Agent?
 - The process is simple enough if you're dealing directly with Amazon or one of the other Online Stores.
 - Upload the book, select the Royalty Percentage (70% or 35% if under \$2.99). Start getting Paid.
 - An agent, in that instance, would be happy to take 15% of your book income.
 - One Qualifying Factor –
 - Some Agents have opened up Shop to Basically take care of all your non-writing tasks for 15% (or some other %).
 - If that's the case, and you don't want to do all the legwork. I'd say that's a great deal.
- Another Reason you Might want an Agent's help.
 - If you are doing the Hybrid thing (Self publishing some and going with a Traditional Publisher too).
 - In that case, see if your agent is willing to only rep you on the Trad Pub side (again, unless they're willing to really do all the legwork for the indie side, too).