



Publishing Nonfiction Books on Spirituality

benebell wen

MODULE 4 SELF (OR INDEPENDENT) PUBLISHING

Why Self-Publish Your Book

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:

If relinquishing any control over your book causes you to go queasy, then you better self-publish your book and not go the route of traditional publishing.

You lose a lot of control over your book when you go the route of a traditional publisher. The most redeeming reason for going the self-publishing route is control. You get to keep all control.

Let's say you've gone with a traditional publisher and at the eleventh hour before printing, you catch glaring errors in the manuscript. This happens. It's life. It's no one's fault and it's not because anyone was being negligent or incompetent. It just happens. I had read past a heading in one of my books at least a hundred times and somehow each time overlooked the fact that one of the words was misspelled, because that heading was squished into a center chapter after I'd read 300 pages of text and my eyeballs made assumptions. It saw the correct spelling and overlooked what was actually printed. Your eyeballs will do that to you when you're reading hundreds of pages of text at a time. In fact, it wasn't just me, but three editors also overlooked the same typo.

Now let's say in this hypothetical that a first print run for 10,000 copies of the book has been sent off to the printers, and for reasons unbeknownst to humanity, AFTER the book has been printed but before publication date, the error is caught. What next.

Well, my experience with traditional publishing is nothing. Nothing happens. You just deal with the typo for 10,000 copies and if you're lucky, the publisher will agree to make the correction on the next print run. A one-word typo, yes, no problem, most traditional publishers will make the correction for the second print run.

But what if it's a really substantive error or it's a revision that requires major re-formatting of the book? Then it's not likely that any changes will be made at the behest of the author. You're stuck with the error. And you know the error is there but are helpless and then a critic catches the error and gives you 3 star review for the error. Such is the life of a traditionally published author.

When you're self-published, it doesn't matter if it's the eleventh hour or what the hour is, at any time, at your discretion, you can make whatever types of changes or overhaul of your book you want. If you're going the route of print-on-demand, you can unlist your book temporarily, make the necessary changes, and then re-upload your revised manuscript, relist, and few will have been the wiser. If you've gone with a printing press, it still doesn't really matter because chances are your first print run was a small quantity, like 300 or 500 copies, and you can easily print out inserts with Errata, which are notes for corrections.

I think that is the biggest draw for self-publishing. You can make edits at your whim and revise and produce new editions as you please, especially if you're going the print-on-demand route. Often with a traditional publisher, you are stuck with the mistake for the life of that book or at the very least, the life of that edition of the book. Maybe, if you're lucky and the book sells well, you'll be asked to work on an updated edition and at that time, you can make changes.

Don't underestimate the significance and benefits of having full control over the production of your book. With my second book, *The Tao of Craft*, even though it is *not* a grimoire, I had envisioned the book design and how the book was formatted to convey that subtle sense of a grimoire. I wanted the layout, design, the way the images and correspondence tables were set out to convey the style of a grimoire. But once the book goes into the hands of the book designer, it's out of my jurisdiction. I can say whatever I want to say from the sidelines, but it literally feels like what happens when my husband sits on the couch shouting at the football players on the TV screen. So of course, the final book design didn't really convey that grimoire aesthetic I was hoping for. Ah well. Such are the circumstances you accept when you go the route of traditional publishing. Now, if you are a self-published author, you can tweak that book design and layout until it looks exactly the way you want.

You also have full control over your schedule and deadlines. With traditional publishing, the editor will hand you a copyedited manuscript and then give you 10 days to review it and get back to them with any corrections or changes. Anyone who works full-time, has a family, basically has a life and commitments and needs to deal with reality will know that 10 days isn't nearly enough time to scrutinize 600 pages of text. And these days, it's 600 pages of text off a computer screen. It's not like the olden times when you get shipped a hard copy of your manuscript printed out. Although... I did get a hard copy of *Holistic Tarot* to look at. That was kind of cool. Anyway I digress. These days, it's all digital. For *The Tao of Craft*, all reviews were done digitally. When you self-publish, you set your own deadlines, so you can take longer than 10 days to scrutinize your own galleys. You can take as long as you like.

You can also take as short as you like. That's another benefit of self-publishing. In traditional publishing, the publication process is commonly drawn out to about a full year. You won't believe how antsy and anxious authors get, waiting for the publication date of their book. Sometimes, timing is everything and especially in the realm of authors writing on spiritual topics, your intuition may tell you X moment is the right time to publish and capture the largest audience due to some particular phase, trend, or fad, or just so you can definitely and for sure "be the first" to get such a book out there, but if you're traditionally published, you will be sitting on your laurels, beholden to the publisher's schedule. You could very well miss the boat on the best timing and your intuition would have been moot. If you self-publish, you can, to utilize a cliché, strike while the iron is still hot. I have no idea if that cliché even works. I just like the visual. You can utilize your intuition to time the publication of your book perfectly. You're in control of the publication schedule. That's a wonderful thing when you're an author and that's why self-publishing can be beneficial over traditional publishing.

If you look carefully through the bestseller lists on Amazon, you'll see that a large number of titles claiming the sales are self-published books. Any shade being thrown at self-publishing is usually coming from traditional publishers or those who are traditionally published and really, really, *really* proud to be traditionally published. By and large the consumer population couldn't give a fuck if you're traditionally or self-published. If your book sucks, it sucks. If it's good, it's good. Traditional publishing these days isn't really that much better than independent publishing, and it's mostly an exercise of a writer feeling better about herself for being traditionally published. Other than that tiny itty bitty ounce of ego-fluffing and street cred, there isn't much to traditional publishing. So don't sweat being self-published author!

Ever since the Digital Age set in, traditional publishers have struggled to make ends meet. More and more of them are shutting down or merging with other publishing houses just to stay alive. Budgets are smaller, in-house editors are overworked like you wouldn't believe, and so the quality of output has gone down. Editors just don't have the time to devote to each title because they're assigned so many. I'm not dogging on traditional publishers. It's just basic economics and human nature.

Also, the collective consciousness on how to write, copyedit, and publish a book, also known as the wonderful world of Google, means the bar has been raised when it comes to the quality of self-published books. I believe readers have picked up on that. By and large, readers aren't going to choose a traditionally published book over a self-published book when choosing what to read. *But they do* care about polish. If your book *looks* like a poorly put-together self-published book, then that is going to hurt you. But not because it's self-published. It's going to hurt you because of poor polish. You need to polish up your self-published book and let it shine as bright as the traditionally published books. If you can do that, then the difference between the two is negligible.

Back in Module III, I compared traditional publishing with self-publishing in one of the audio files, provided a theoretical earnings comparison chart between the two, and a workbook download to help you weigh between traditional and self-publishing. So be sure to check that out if you haven't already.

END AUDIO LECTURE TRANSCRIPT.
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