

HOW HARD IS IT TO SELF-PUBLISH???

By Daryl Wood Gerber

Fellow authors have been asking me how hard is it to self-publish.

Let me start by saying that this is my first time. I'm a novice. I'm not sure I'm doing it right. I was ill-equipped for the journey, so, yes, it's hard!!!!

But I've learned a ton, and I'll be glad to share what I have done, step by step.

Most of these are in order. Some might overlap.

- First: Write the book. Yep. Crucial.
- Now edit the book. Edit it again. And again. I edited GIRL ON THE RUN over forty times. After first readers gave me notes, I edited again. After my agent gave me notes, I edited again. After he sent it out to publishers and they rejected it, I edited it again. I've been brutal with this baby. Brutal. I was not married to a line or a scene or a point of view. I wanted to write the best, most commercial book I could. Yes, I started out with the heart of the novel and the story that MUST be told, but I still wanted it to be a winner. Note: if you need to, hire an independent editor. There are a lot of good ones out there. Invest in yourself.
- Meanwhile form a "reviewing" team or a "street" team that you trust. It probably shouldn't include your mother. She's biased. Send free copies to your team. Give them a deadline of a week or two so you get a quick turn around. See if the story grabs them. See if they find glaring errors. Edit the book again based on their suggestions. They might not be right, but follow the consensus. Try not to be defensive.
- Now read it out loud. Yes, aloud. You will find yourself stumbling over lengthy sentences, misspellings, and more. Edit those little trips and falls. Is it ready? Great!
- Now format it for self-publication. I have to admit that I hired somebody to HELP ME! I'm not an idiot, but parts of the Internet world can turn me into a shivering coward. I hooked up with a savvy virtual assistant who has helped other authors self-publish. I could NOT have done the next steps without her and kept sane or remained creative! She did the formatting, but I presented her with a virtually perfectly formatted book. She gave me the parameters and I followed them.
- Next create a campaign and budget. What should the budget be? I'm not sure. Things get costly at this point. You need ISBN numbers. You need artwork. Do

you want to be reviewed by Kirkus or Booklist? Are you going to offer your book on Net Galley for reviewers and librarians? What is the max you will spend? Set that as your budget. Period.

- Create artwork.
- Obtain (purchase) ISBNs. I used Browker.com to obtain a bundle.
- Create marketing materials. Do you need bookmarks? If you're selling e-books, they might not be worthwhile, but if you're going to a conference, make sure you have something to hand out.
- Next, if you have prominent author friends (in your genre) or bloggers or reviewers who have responded favorably to you before, ask them if they would be open to writing a blurb or reviews or testimonials that you can use in marketing materials. Be kind and *understanding* if they cannot. Not everyone has the time; some publishers don't like their authors to do so; some authors don't feel it is a good idea to review a book outside his or her genre. Maintain the friendship first and foremost!
- Join online groups that help a self-published author market their books, like Author Marketing Club. Watch videos and webinars by other authors who have done this before.
- Update your website for the book. That means add a page with the artwork, *buy* buttons, a summary, and a review or two. If you want to share an excerpt, do so.
- Set up Amazon, Kobo, Barnes and Noble and other accounts for e-readers. Decide if you're going to have a print on demand choice. You'll need to provide bank information for each of these so you can receive payments! If you haven't done so, consider setting up a corporation and doing all of this business stuff through the corporation.
- Write copy for the blurb you would like to see on the jacket of a book. What? You're not good at it? Then pick up a few books you like and study the copy to see if you can be inspired to write one. *Warning: do not plagiarize!*
- Does all of this seem endless yet? Almost...but be of stout heart and continue.
- Post your blurb to online sites like Amazon, etc. You know about www.authorcentral.amazon.com, right?
- Upload your artwork and reviews and bio.

- Then alert your social media friends by posting in your newsletter and on Facebook and Twitter that you have a new book. Give them links to pre-order. Give them the date of release. Show your enthusiasm.
- You do have a social media fan base, right? Engage with them. Talk to them; don't shout "sales" at them all the time. Ask them questions. Find out about them. Enjoy them. Your readers are the ones who will share your work with others, but only if they like you.
- Do an interview about the book (by yourself or with a friend asking you questions; on video or in writing). Post it on your website. Give your fans the link.
- If reviews are coming in, post them on your website page.
- Next - and this is important – don't go for the big sale. Sell your book at a *reasonable and minimum* price to get started, say \$2.99.
- Ask your reviewers to post their reviews on Goodreads and Amazon (and elsewhere) by release date. Amazon will ONLY allow them to post once the book is for sale, not on pre-order.
- If you have the budget, advertise on Facebook in a moderate campaign. There are lots of YouTube videos instructing you how to do so. I like Mark Dawson's. Again, set your budget so you won't gouge yourself in the process.
- Make sure you drive traffic to your website by putting your website information at the end of your e-book so readers can click the link to find out about the next great thing you're writing!

And most important, have fun! Savor the mystery as well as the journey.

~Daryl