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5 Tips for Publishing Your Own Book

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Gareth Feighery, who runs [MarketTamer.com](#), didn't become an author in hopes of selling a lot of books and reaping the royalties. Instead, he wrote the self-published book *Secrets to Explosive Stock Market Profits* to build the credibility of his Philadelphia-based financial education company and attract clients in a crowded market.

"It's a value proposition. We will often offer [the book] for free in exchange for a name and an email address," says Feighery, who wrote his book in 2007 in preparation for launching his business the following year. "This gives us a chance to communicate with that user."

Like Feighery, more entrepreneurs are turning to self-publishing to promote their companies. Writing and publishing a book may sound daunting, but it's easier than ever with more self-publishing platforms available today. Self-published books are often just e-books, but some companies also create printed versions.

Here are five steps to help you get started:

1. Decide on an engaging topic. Not sure what to write about? Stay away from recapping your company blog posts or simply publishing marketing material. You want to demonstrate your expertise in a distinctive, engaging way, says Cavanaugh Gray, founder of Entrepreneur Café, a Chicago-based small-business development firm. "Don't get too theoretical or too technical, unless you are speaking to a very specific niche of readers." Both print and e-books can be as short as 100 pages or as long as 300, he adds.

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2. Know the basics. Do your homework on the rules of publishing before starting out. For example, owning the International Standard Book Number, which can be purchased at [isbn.org](#) for \$125, can help you retain publishing rights in the future to more easily create updated editions of your book and allow you to switch publishing platforms, says Marna Friedman, an Atlanta-based consultant who advises small businesses on self-publishing. But some publishers acquire ISBNs on your behalf, which means you'll need to stick with the same company for future editions, she adds.

3. Plan your budget. A big expense will be publication costs, which run about \$5 to \$20 per printed book. (Most e-books have minimal fees.) Friedman recommends choosing a publishing platform that offers a print-on-demand option, which lets you order books as needed rather than paying for a bulk order. Otherwise, you could end up ordering too many copies and getting stuck with leftovers. Sites typically ask authors to buy at least 15 copies to get preferential bulk pricing.

Related: [Website Creates Author Community for the Self-Published](#)

You also need to factor in editing and graphic design costs, which can together total \$4,000 to \$8,000, says James Altucher, a New York-based hedge fund manager who has self-published four books. If you're tempted to cut corners on editing and design, remember that a visually unappealing book with errors will hurt your credibility. "Nothing looks worse than grammatical mistakes in a self-published book," Altucher says.

4. Develop a marketing strategy. Even if you didn't set out to write a bestseller, you should figure out a [marketing strategy](#) for the book before it's published. Will you promote it via Twitter or Facebook? Or will it simply be mailed to potential clients? You also can use your company website to promote the book by creating a separate tab on your home page or a special blog. If you plan to market your book to a larger audience than your target customers, compare royalty fees from various publishing sites to see where you'd make the most money.

Related: [How to Create an E-Mail Marketing Campaign That People Will Notice](#)

5. Pick a publisher. Here are four sites worth considering. All of them offer self-publishing software and allow users to publish and distribute their books.

CreateSpace: Started in 2007, Amazon's self-publishing arm lets users publish e-books for the Kindle, as well as print hard copies. The books are sold on CreateSpace or Amazon.com. The site offers expanded distribution options for an additional fee. Creating the book is free, as is the Kindle version. But printing-on-demand costs about \$4.50 per copy for a 300-page book. If that same book is sold for \$15, the author can expect \$4.50 in royalties when using Amazon.com.

Blurb: The six-year-old site enables users to create coffee table books with colorful photos, as well as other types of printed books. Hardcover books cost from \$3.95 to \$49.95 per copy when ordering on demand, depending on the book's size. Authors retain all the revenue from selling copies themselves.

Booktango: Started earlier this year, this self-publishing service offers only e-books. It's free to publish and distribute the e-books, while writers pay from \$49 to \$359 for more services including editing, marketing and design. Writers retain all sales revenue. Books are sold through the site, but can also be uploaded to other sites including Amazon and Apple's iBookstore.

Lulu: Founded in 2002, this website offers e-books and printed books. Authors pay \$8.50 per printed copy of an average size book, while e-books are free. The company takes a 20 percent commission on book sales, and writers collect the rest. Lulu offers e-book distribution to iBookstore, Barnes & Noble's Nook bookstore and the Lulu Marketplace, as well as Amazon and the Lulu Marketplace for print books.

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