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The Step-By-Step Guide to Self-Publishing for Profit!

Start a Home-Based Publishing Company and
Publish your Nonfiction Book with CreateSpace
and Amazon

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Pineapple Publications,
Elk Grove, CA

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www.gypsyjournal.net

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Other books by C. Pinheiro:

- How to Start a Successful Home-Based Freelance Bookkeeping and Tax Preparation Business
- The Chef's Commandments: Maximize Your Kitchen's Profitability Building and Maintaining a Successful, Profit-Driven Restaurant
- The Chef's Commandments: Happy Cooks, Happy Customers
A Chef's Guide to Restaurant Employee Management: Kitchen Staffing, Hiring, Recruiting, and Training
- EA Exam Review Complete: Individuals, Businesses and Representation IRS Enrolled Agent Exam Study Guide

Other books by Nick Russell

- Meandering Down The Highway: A Year On The Road With Fulltime RVers
- Highway History And Back Road Mystery
- The Frugal RVer
- Work Your Way Across The USA

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“I was an artist once. A starving artist! My work was pure, divine inspiration. It was a love affair between me and my work. But let me tell you something... being a starving artist sucks!”

-Nick Russell, the Gypsy Journal

Introduction

Do you have a great idea for a nonfiction book, but you're unsure how you should proceed? You are an entrepreneur—who just happens to be a writer! Perhaps you have a partial manuscript, or even a complete manuscript, and you have been trying unsuccessfully to market the book to publishers. There **is** a market for your book out there! If you want to learn how to build a good writing business that will pay consistent dividends over the long haul, keep on reading.

The main purpose of this book is to help you cut through all the hype that surrounds the publishing industry and learn how you can make money putting words onto paper. Stop dreaming and start living; get your book published and distributed the easy way, and keep all your royalties for yourself! It is possible if you follow a few easy steps. Don't put your manuscript in the money-grubbing hands of a vanity publisher.

This book is designed for working writers who want to make money publishing their nonfiction books. This is not a get-rich-quick scheme, so if you are hoping to make a fortune overnight, it's probably not going to happen. But this book will show you how to make money publishing nonfiction. Most authors can expect to make a decent living within three to five years. For some of us, it happened sooner. You **CAN** publish your nonfiction book and start your own publishing company—all on a shoestring budget.

In less than a few weeks, you can register your own publishing imprint with the Bowker ISBN Agency. Reap the benefits of passive income that successful publishing provides. No more waiting for query responses. No more begging for scraps at the “royalties table.”

It's easier to self-publish now than ever before (and **not** with a vanity press that charges money up front). In the past, self-publishing took a high investment. Not anymore. You can start your own publishing company from your home office.

Writing is an art. Publishing is a business. This book is about writing useful nonfiction: books that *will sell*. Turning a profit is not a crime. You can write and make a good living doing it, and not sacrifice your creative spirit. Writing for profit means that you can spend more time with your kids, your

family, and doing the things you love. Start making real money doing what you love. **That's** writing for profit!

Chapter 1: Let's Get Started

“A vanity publisher is someone who will accept an author's money to produce X number of titles for the author regardless of the quality, nature, or marketability of the author's manuscript.”

-The Midwest Book Review

Avoiding Vanity Publishers

Are you the artistic type with a burning desire to see your words in print? Do friends describe you as creative and talented, with a flair for the dramatic? Do you have a message to tell the world, a message that you refuse to be allowed to be sullied by filthy lucre? Is sharing your work with the world *more important* to you than making money? Then you are the **perfect target** for a vanity publisher.

Vanity publishers are the vultures of the publishing world. A vanity publisher's main customer isn't the book buyer—it's YOU. Their revenues come from authors who desperately want to publish, and believe that the vanity publisher is the fast track to a bestseller. The Internet abounds with tales of fraud perpetrated by vanity publishers. They never seem to go away. Some stories are so egregious that the publishers eventually get taken to court. Some of the owners even get jail time for fraud, but it isn't long before another vanity publisher pops up to take their place.

Some vanity publishers will call themselves “subsidy publishers,” “share publishers,” or “cooperative publishers.” There are very few genuine subsidy publishers. Although there are some legitimate subsidy publishers, they cater to a highly specific market. The ones that do exist generally service academic books or poetry. A vanity publisher will edit, proofread, typeset, and publish your book at your expense. Traditional publishers do not charge authors for services once a manuscript has been accepted.

A great resource for authors is **Writer Beware** (www.writerbeware.com), a free website that offers cautionary information about vanity publishers and other writers' scams. Don't publish your book without checking out this website and learning a little bit about the scams that get perpetrated on writers. The more educated you are about the pitfalls in this industry; the easier it will be for you to avoid scams.

Don't confuse vanity publishers with Print-On-Demand publishers—they are not the same thing. Here are the definitions of the different types of publishing companies:

- **Commercial Publisher:** Commercial publishers are often referred to as reputable publishers. A commercial publisher is the Holy Grail for most authors. A commercial publisher, generally working with the author's literary agent, purchases the right to publish a

manuscript. Commercial publishers are highly selective, and only publish a small percentage of the manuscripts they actually receive. They handle all the marketing, editing, cover design, and distribution. There are no costs to the author, and the author rarely gets to decide on the final product that gets delivered to the reader. Examples of large commercial publishers include Penguin Books, Random House, and HarperCollins.

- **Vanity Publisher:** A vanity publisher prints and binds a book at the author's sole expense. Vanity publishers may exclude objectionable content such as pornography, but otherwise they do not screen for quality—they publish anyone who can pay, often for thousands upon thousands of dollars.¹
- **Self-publishing with Print-On-Demand:** Self-publishing is similar to vanity publishing in that self-published authors bear the costs of self-publishing their own book. However, the use of an online Print-On-Demand publisher has made these costs minor compared to the cost of vanity publishing. By using the services of one Print-On-Demand publisher, **CreateSpace**, an author can typically self-publish a well-designed and edited book for between \$200 and \$1,000—basically the cost of an ISBN and a freelance copy editor. **CreateSpace** is a Print-On-Demand publisher, printer, and online marketplace all in one! The completed manuscripts and copyrights are owned by the author, who keeps all proceeds from sales. With CreateSpace, royalties are directly deposited into the author's bank account a month after the sale of the books.

Unlike traditional publishers, vanity publishers target the author as their customer. Vanity publishers earn the bulk of their revenues from the authors, rather than actual sales of the books. Vanity publishers bill authors for services, printing, and other fees. There are numerous ways that vanity publishers (and sometimes traditional publishers too) take advantage of inexperienced writers. Some abusive practices include:

1. Charging excessive fees, sometimes thousands of dollars, for printing and other items, such as marketing the book. If you are unhappy with these practices, vanity publishers often include ambiguous “defamation clauses” in their contracts that prevent you from publicizing your displeasure.

¹ Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America. *Writer Beware! Warnings About Literary Fraud and Other Schemes, Scams, and Pitfalls That Target Writers.*

2. Vanity publishers use little editorial oversight. Vanity presses claim to be selective, but many will accept any manuscript that comes their way, even if the subject matter is marginal. In addition, an ISBN from a vanity publisher is the kiss of death. Bookstores and distributors all know who the vanity presses are, and they will rarely, if ever, have anything to do with them. Bookstores will not stock your book on their shelves if it's from a vanity publisher. This is reason enough to purchase your own ISBNs and start your own small press. An unknown small publisher is a million times better than a vanity press.

3. Vanity presses often breach their own contracts—repeatedly. They make inflated promises and rarely deliver on them.

Look up the history of *Atlanta Nights*. This was a collaborative novel written by professional authors—an intentionally horrible manuscript that was submitted to PublishAmerica. After PublishAmerica accepted the manuscript, the hoax was revealed, and PublishAmerica quickly backpedaled and rejected the submission. But the damage was done—the secret was out. Numerous other “sting” manuscripts also have been accepted by PublishAmerica, including one manuscript with the same thirty pages repeated ten times.²

Vanity presses often publish a manuscript regardless of content or quality. Some authors knowingly publish with a vanity press, placing more importance on seeing their book in print than on turning a profit. If you aren't interested in actually making any money off of your writing, then by all means, use a vanity press. They aren't called “vanity” presses for nothing!

However, if you take the time to self-publish wisely, you can spend little money up front, and still generate royalties on your nonfiction books and other writing products. Why not self-publish your own book and keep all the royalties for yourself?

Cut out the middleman and deal directly with the retailer (in this case, Amazon). Print-On-Demand (POD) publishing services have made self-publishing much easier than before. POD, also known as “Publish On Demand,” is a printing technology in which new copies of a book are not printed until an order has been received. When a customer purchases a copy online, the order is immediately sent to the publisher that produces a single

² Sci Fi Wire. SF Authors Sting Publisher. www.scifi.com.

copy to fill the demand. As the author and the copyright holder, you then receive a larger percentage of the retail price as a commission. That's it.

This book gives you step-by-step instructions on how to set up your own publishing imprint and publish your nonfiction book. There are almost no up-front costs, and you can keep more of your money. CreateSpace has changed the way people publish and distribute books. If you have a useful, well-written piece of nonfiction, there is a very good chance that you can make money self-publishing. In my case, I no longer keep any inventory. I don't ship any books. I don't deal with any product returns. I just write, proofread, relax, and collect the royalties. You can do it too!

You don't even need to publish a runaway bestseller in order to make a fine living as a writer. In three years, I have created a publishing company that supports my family comfortably. I work almost entirely from home. I make a nice living, and I'm not rotting away behind a courtesy desk or working at a lunch counter (both of which I have done!)

This doesn't mean that you should try to do everything yourself. Everyone needs a good copy editor (unless you have a family member or a close friend with exceptional editing skills), and you may want to consider professional cover design and layout services. But most of these services can be contracted out for a very reasonable price. One company—Lulu—even offers professional cover design starting at about \$100. That's extremely inexpensive. You can do it all on a budget. If you have the will and the skills—this book will show you the way!

Finding a Real Niche for Your Book

What is a niche market? Niche marketing is the process of finding profitable market segments and designing custom products for them. Niche marketing is the key to success. Focus your research and energy toward a series of products targeted to a specific market. This way, you can continue to re-use the same research material over and over in different ways.

Nonfiction books are easier to market and self-publish because they are generally niche products. If you have a special skill or knowledge of a particular industry, then you will have a much better chance at turning a profit for your books. Self-publishing is about building a publishing business that will provide long-term profits and secure financial support for you and your family.

“Niche books do best. This seems to be the mantra of self-publishing. Nonfiction books with a well-defined topic and a nice hook to them can do well, especially if they have a target audience that you can focus on.”

-David Carnoy, Executive Editor, CNET Reviews

Successful self-publishing is NOT about publishing your opus, your memoirs, or your personal journey. Don't say that you've written a self-help book for those overcoming alcoholism when your book is actually a long-winded diary of your own struggles with the disease. You may believe that your own life story is absolutely fascinating—but unless you're famous, your personal journey is going to be difficult to sell.

A study guide for the bar exam is going to sell more readily than your personal memoir about passing the bar. A step-by-step guide for raising children with Down syndrome is going to sell better than your life history with your own Down syndrome child. This doesn't mean that you can't inject your own narratives into the books—quite the contrary: your personal experiences shape your writing. They may even make you an expert in the subject. But your personal experiences shouldn't be the main focus of your book. Make sure that the focal point of your book is the dissemination of information.

Any useful book has a market if it is well-written and *solves a problem*. Buyers want a nonfiction book that answers a question, helps them do something,

or helps them overcome a difficulty. Your job, as a writer, is to provide the answer for your potential readers. Your book is the vehicle.

Creating a niche as a self-published author doesn't mean you should only write about one subject. If you only want to write for fun, then by all means write about anything you like. But if you want to make money as a writer and support yourself and your family with your writing, then it's a lot easier if you focus on a few related subjects. That doesn't mean that you have to be bored. Each subsequent volume will generate revenue, and then each book becomes an advertisement for the next book.

There are plenty of interesting, challenging topics that you can write about that will generate revenue and allow you to make a comfortable living doing something that you truly enjoy.

No author's journey is the same, however. Some authors market their books exclusively online and rarely do any face-to-face promotion. Others make the bulk of their revenues by soliciting their market directly. You will have to adjust your marketing techniques based on the type of material you produce. For example, if your book is on an obscure subject, you may have better results marketing exclusively online. If your book is on a regional subject like *The History of San Diego*, you'll need to make rounds in the community and hand out copies of your book to local businesses that you think might be interested in carrying it. When you self-publish, book marketing is ***your responsibility***.

Regional books must be marketed locally. If you are a gifted salesperson, this may be perfect for you. If you market your book locally, remember that a discount of 30-50 percent off the cover price is customary. You can purchase the book from CreateSpace at wholesale price, and then sell the copies to the businesses directly.

In order to sell to businesses on a wholesale basis, you may need to obtain a seller's permit (also called a re-seller's permit). This allows you to sell your books directly to a retailer without charging sales tax. This is because the retailer will charge the end-consumer sales tax. Selling directly to a retailer is often called "B2B sales" (business-to-business sales). Check with your local county office to see if a seller's permit is required in your area.

Selling in person is more difficult than selling online, but you will earn more money on books that you market directly. If you're a people person, you

may even enjoy the experience. If you sell directly, you may be required to collect sales tax on your in-state sales. You might sell books directly at book fairs or local events. Check with your taxing authority about the sales tax requirements for your state.

You will read about multiple small publishers in this book, and each one has a different experience. The author of the *Gypsy Journal*, Nick Russell, does a lot of face-to-face marketing at RV rallies, RV trade shows, and at RV parks. He sells books directly to his readers at industry events. He has a huge following and his buyers treat him like he's a friend.

On the other hand, Jan Axelson, the founder of Lakeview Research, is content to market her books exclusively online. Jan Axelson's distributor takes care of all her order fulfillment, foreign rights, and more. That means she's free to spend her time doing research for her next book, rather than selling or managing her inventory.

Dan Poynter, the self-publishing guru, uses a variety of different methods to market his books. Interviews with all of these successful self-published authors are at the end of this book.

Most of my books are about accounting and taxation, a niche product. I do most of my marketing online. I use Google AdWords (more on this later) to advertise. I also send out review copies to accounting professionals and students in order to create buzz. I have tried print ads and direct mail with little success. The most profitable advertising for my titles has been online advertising.

Every author is different. Your marketing approach will depend on your book's subject matter and your tolerance for direct customer contact. Most authors choose to market multiple ways—you will find out what works best for you as time goes on.

Here are some successful examples of small independent publishers and the books they sell. Some of these small publishers feature the work of only one author.

Dawn Sign Press

American Sign Language Materials

Books, videos, posters, and other sign language materials. Materials designed specifically for deaf children and adults.

Gypsy Journal

RV Travel Newspaper

The authors are full-time RVers. In addition to their bi-monthly newspaper, they also publish special reports, booklets, CDs, and books.

Lakeview Research

Small publisher specializing only in computer interfacing books. This successful author-publisher produces books that are geared toward professional developers, rather than the general public.

Pineapple Publications

This is my own publishing company, specializing in books on bookkeeping, management, publishing, and taxation.

Rainbow Morning Music

A small press dedicated exclusively to the children's books and recordings of Barry Louis Polisar.

Veva Skateboard Books

This press is exclusively dedicated to—you guessed it—skateboarding books.

Get the idea? If you have an idea that's unique and useful, there's probably a market out there for your book.

Keep All Your Rights—and Your Profits!

If you want your book to be published, why not simply send your manuscript to traditional publishers and have *them* pay all the costs of publishing your book?

For starters, it's not that easy. Your manuscript would sit in a giant pile of what editors call “slush” — unsolicited manuscripts that have no chance of ever being published. Finding a literary agent increases the odds in your favor, but it is as tough to find a reputable agent as it is a publisher.

Let's clarify the position of the literary agent. Agents represent authors. They review manuscripts and give unbiased feedback. Agents will analyze the competition, and they send your manuscript to a publisher. Then they negotiate your rights with a publisher. Many publishers will not accept manuscripts from unagented authors. The agent's job is to work for you—to place your books in front of editors at the publishing houses. It's often very difficult for new authors to secure a literary agent.

For every John Grisham or Stephen King out there, there are 10,000 authors just as talented whose book will never see the light of day because they can't breach the walls the industry has built around itself.

Consider the steps involved in getting a book published. First you write the book. Then you re-write it again and again. Then you send it off to a few dozen agents, hoping to entice them into giving it a quick glance. Some will. Others will just toss it in the trash, or if you're really lucky, send it back to you at your expense.

So let's say you get lucky and you do somehow catch an agent's attention. If he's good, he'll float your manuscript in front of various publishing houses. Most readers and editors at these houses won't give it a second glance. There is just too much competition out there for your work to demand more than a quick look. The numbers are decidedly against you.

But let's go one step further and say your book does get bought by a publisher. Now what? You may or may not get a small check up-front from the publisher, of which your agent will take about 15 percent. You will also get a ton of rewrite instructions, and once those are finished and submitted, you can usually expect more. Finally, a year or two after your book is first accepted, it will get into print. Then what? Usually nothing!

The publishing house will give it to their sales representatives to present to bookstores, and maybe a few thousand will sell. The publishing house will do little or no marketing of your book. If you want it to sell, you must take it upon yourself to contact bookstores and set up book signings, and to contact reviewers and seek out interviews.

Nick Russell, the *Gypsy Journal*

I wrote mystery novels, two of which were accepted by a traditional publisher. But the advances dried up quickly. It's hard to follow your "inner muse" when your stomach is growling, your fingers are cold because there is no heat, and the landlord is beating on the door wanting his rent. (He would have called, but the telephone was disconnected weeks ago!)

I forgot about love, I forgot about my art, I forgot about creating, and I became a whore. Now I do it for the money. Today I publish for profit. For the last twenty-five years I have made a very comfortable living writing and self-publishing books, booklets, newspapers, and niche publications. You can do it too!

Traditional publishers are too busy promoting the "big names" to give an unknown author much attention or promotion. By the time all is said and done, if you are lucky you will probably make about minimum wage when you factor in all of the time you have invested in writing, selling, and promoting the book.

Don't forget, whatever you make, it will be a very small percentage of the cover price, and your agent will get a portion of it. So you do all of the work to research and write your book, you beg someone to look at it, you rewrite it again and again, and then you have to do all of the promotion work yourself. And for all of that, you get a few cents for every copy sold. The publisher, your agent, and the bookstore make most of the money for your hard work.

That's why I say forget agents and publishers—write and publish your own material, market it, and keep all the profits!³

³ Nick Russell. *The Truth About the Publishing Business*. Used with permission.