

Daniel Hall Presents



Episode 117

Should You Self-Publish or Traditionally Publish

with Pat Iyer

Welcome to this episode of the Real Fast Results podcast! If you are an author, or an aspiring author, and you are really thinking about writing your first book, or your next book, and you are trying to decide whether to self-publish or go the traditional route, you are in the right place today. Pat Iyer is today's special guest. She is an entrepreneur and published author who can show you the ropes for both types of publishing. Please welcome Pat to the show...

Big Promise: Pros and Cons of Self-Publishing or Traditional Publishing

Well, I think that the big promise, as far as I am concerned is that a lot of people have questions about whether they should self-publish or seek out a traditional or indie publisher. **I have done both, and I can easily share the pros and the cons of each approach.**

I think that before self-publishing became so easy, there really was only one choice, which was to approach a publisher or be approached by a publisher, write up a book proposal, create an outline, a sample chapter, and an analysis of the target market. You'd need to show how your book was different than other books. **Those steps are all very important to make sure that you have a viable book, but the difficulty with traditional publishing is that, from an entrepreneurial standpoint, you do a whole lot of work, and you get small royalties in return.** However, a traditional publisher, or an indie publisher, can open doors for you that you would have never had opened if you hadn't been published.

I've joked that I've made about \$0.35 an hour from my royalties from the work that I've done writing, but I have made, literally, millions of dollars as a result of having books that I have published. The traditional publisher is a great place to start if you don't have experience with copy editing or marketing, or if you are not sure how to put together a book, because they've got a team of people who arrange for interviews... Um, radio interviews, who do the copy editing for you, and who help you shape the book and give you a sense of what it's about.

I started with that rule, but then I began realizing that my market (I was writing for attorneys and legal nurse consultants) was a really small target market. **I realized that, with the amount of work that I was putting into writing, that I would be better off self-publishing my books and selling them directly to legal nurse consultants.** It is a small niche market of nurses who work with attorneys whenever there are medical issues on cases. Nurses use their background to help attorneys understand medical records, and read them, and make the appropriate legal decisions.

Self-publishing used to be the vanity press', and you would pay \$3,000, \$4,000, \$5,000, or more to a publishing company who might do some copy editing for you, would definitely print the books, and then the truck would drive up to your house and offload about a year's worth of boxes, which you, then, as the author, were responsible for selling. **I can't tell you how many horror stories I've heard of people who have had those books in their garage for years, and that's really unpleasant.**

Then, you bring in the print on demand, and it's like, "Oh, you want one book..." If you want one book, you print one book, and if you want 10 books, you print 10 books. Suppose you are a speaker, and you're doing a presentation for a large, well-known company, and they want to have their CEO write up an introduction to that book. Then that book is handed out to all of the attendees at the conference. You can do that with self-publishing, so easily, and you can charge a premium for that.

Imagine that you have a book that's print on demand, and you pay \$2.50 for it. You include that in your speaker contract that every attendee will get the book, and the host of the meeting will pay \$15 a book. Well, if you do that several times a year, that's what I would call "found money". Even without the introduction from the CEO, you still end up being able to get a little bit more as a result of having that speaking engagement. You can't do that with a traditional publisher. You can't go in on the fly and change that book for an occasion. So, for me, that's a big advantage, if you're involved in the speaking world.

What Other Factors Should I Consider?

I just recently finished ghost writing a couple of books for a traditional publisher, and one of the things that we put in the book proposal for my author was information about his platform. **The publishing company wanted to know about numbers of LinkedIn connections, Twitter followers, blogging, and how many speeches he had coming up.** They also wanted to know what he had written before. He had to establish that he had a platform that would be attractive to that publisher.

Once he had established that he would be able to promote that book through his multiple avenues, they were very interested. The agent that we worked with said that the publisher looked at the platform before he looked at the content in the book, and the outline, and the sample chapter. In other words, what were we going to do, my author and I, to promote this book?

I'm working with another author right now. He's ghostwriting a book about how he developed a welding company out of the back of his pickup truck and built it into a multi-million-dollar company. His goal is not to go around the country, get on platforms, and talk about his business success. He wanted the people in his company to know how he got the company started and what the company values are. That's a book that's going to be self-published. It would not necessarily be of interest to a traditional publisher.

So, I think a big thing, if you start with the end in mind, is to know how you plan to promote your book. And, if you have a big platform, you're going to be attractive. If you don't have a big platform, but you might have a celebrity name, the publishers may say, "Well, you know, let's really focus on the people who have got the celebrity name and the big platforms." Otherwise, self-publishing becomes a much more reasonable alternative.

If I Have to Build an Author's Platform, Why Traditionally Publish?

Well, there may be, for strategic reasons, a need for an author to have one of the big publishing company names on the book. That might be very important for promotional purposes. There are salesmen who go out and get books in bookstores, which is difficult to do if you self-publish, if not impossible. They also get books into airport bookstores, although there is a fee associated with those placements.

But, for the majority of people, we are more interested in getting the knowledge into the hands of the audience, and it's easier and easier to do things like book launches and get a critical mass of purchases, if you've got a big enough platform. So, I can see the reasoning behind not wanting to turn your book over to a publisher who will exploit that for 10-11% royalties on the wholesale price of the book. **So, I think it really has to be a strategic decision, based on what you want that book to do for you. But, know that whether you self-publish or go with a traditional publisher, you will be part of the marketing and promotional efforts, in order to see that book succeed.**

If a book sells 5,000 copies, it's considered a success. Most of the traditionally-published books don't get to that level. So, you really want to be aware of the amount of work involved. Writing the book is only part of the work. Promoting the book afterwards is the bulk of the work.

How Much of the Marketing will I Have to Do Myself if I Publish Traditionally?

Well, you do have a responsibility. It's like giving birth to a child, and then saying, "Okay, I'm walking away from the delivery room. You're on your own." You know, you may go through even a 9-month gestation, actually, with a book, although you can do it in less time. But, you've got to focus on things like talking about it in your podcast or someone else's, take extracts from the book and turn those into blogs, with a call to action at the end.

You would also want to find other people who have a similar audience and promote your book to their audience. You would put it in tweets and Facebook posts, LinkedIn posts, etc. It's easier and easier now to share that information with people, and there are lots of strategies you can use to get more visibility.

How Can I Become Traditionally Published and Build My Reputation?

You know, I think it depends a lot on the agent that you work with. My colleague and I had a very good agent who was able to place our book in the hands of a publisher, and that was about 2 ½ years ago. Then, the publisher came back to us a year ago and said, "We want a new book called *Negotiating with a Bully*. We think this topic is hot right now." It turned out to get even hotter with the "Me Too" movement and everything that has transpired.

So, once we have established in that publisher's mind that we were able to produce a good-quality product, then they came back. And, that happened to me 20 years ago, when I started writing with traditional publishers. Once I was able to demonstrate that I had the skills they were looking for, then they came back with, "Now we want a book on this," and, "Now we want a book on that." So, establishing that relationship is very important.

I think what's really critical is showing that you are easy to work with, that you meet deadlines, and that you are not a prima Donna. I think that it's important that you can accept criticism and comments well. When it comes to publishing, there are a lot of high stakes involved, and they really know the market, and they occasionally run into authors who are really hard to work with. That may get you one book, but it's not going to get you repeat work. So, I want to emphasize that.

Being a nurse, I know what it's like to work with difficult people, and it is a challenge. The publishing world isn't necessarily understanding of temper tantrums and individuals who sign contracts to turn over work and then don't produce. Part of what I've done in the past is put together books with multiple authors, and I was the editor. In every project, there is one person, or at least one person, who did not deliver. Either their house was struck by lightning, their hard

drive got fried, they fell off a horse and broke an arm, they went through a divorce, they developed cancer, etc.

I've heard many varieties of those excuses, and a lot of the time, people like the idea of being published more than they like the writing part. They want to know if there's a way that they can just skip the writing part, and no, there isn't. So, I have some scars on my psyche from those experiences, and I want to urge this audience, if you ever have the opportunity to participate by writing a chapter in a book, which is a great way to be published, please take that opportunity very seriously. Meet your deadlines and turn over a good-quality product.

It does have a legacy. You know, I got into writing for legal nurse consultants at a time when the profession was really developing, and the book that I edited was on the shelves for 10 years before the next edition of that core curriculum was published. So, people would come up to me for years saying, "Oh, you wrote the bible for our profession."

They associated me with the quality of that book, and it was up to me, as the editor, to make sure that it was a good-quality book and that it would be helpful to people for a long time. That's the exciting part about writing. You can shape people's lives by what you put on paper, and you've really got responsibility to share that knowledge if you can help other people with what you know.

Is it Possible to Go from Being Self-Published to Traditionally Published?

I think that there certainly is. **I don't think that there's any barrier that prevents a self-published author from working with a book agent or a traditional publisher, just like you can go in the other direction.** I don't think that there are any rules. I think being a good writer and not relying on copy editors to clean up crap is what makes you successful. If your subject captures the attention of a major publisher, they want to sell books. That's what they are all about.

They know that some of them are not going to do well, and they've got some clear-cut winners that come out at the right time, with the right subject matter that people want to read about. That's what they are looking for. That's the needle in the haystack among all of the submissions that they get. They really want quality material that their audience is going to buy.

Final Tips

A question I'm often asked is, "With so many Kindles, and Nooks, and eReaders available, is there a future for physical books?" **Yes, there are people who only want to hold a book in their hands.** They like the feel and the smell of a book. There are also people who love to have Kindle books as well as physical books. Reading is not going to go away. It may change in the

future, as our attention spans continue to shrink, but the idea of whether or not books will survive, I'm sure that they will.

Connecting with Pat

They can reach me through my website, which is EditingMyBook.com. That's my speaker site. I have a page on that site regarding the work that I do as an editor and a ghostwriter. I also help people who take their books and turn them into online courses, to be able to share their content in a new way with a different audience.

Resources

[How to Get a Literary Agent With Dani Hedlund](#)

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