

Introduction to Indie Publishing

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My definition of *Indie Publishing*

- Bypass *literary agents* and *publishers* and take your book straight to the online market.
- Work with top freelance professionals (for editing, cover design, perhaps interior layout).
- It is a business—marketing is necessary.

My definition of *Self Publishing*

- Bypass *literary agents* and *publishers* and take your book straight to the online market.
- Do everything yourself.
- It is more of a hobby—little or no marketing is needed.

Why I choose *Indie publishing*

Disclaimer: This is based only on my *own* goals and strategies. Every author has different needs.

1. I want my books to be read *now*

- Traditional publishing involves a *minimum* of two years (probably longer) from finished manuscript to market. Most authors never even make it past the *agent* step.
- Indie publishing requires a few days from manuscript to market. No agent, no publisher.
- Even print books can be available within 24 hours of uploading the book.

2. I want to have creative control of my books

- I can fix errors in the book when readers find them.
- I can replace book covers whenever I can afford a better one, or when the marketplace changes (covers for my genre are different today than they were 5 years ago, and they're *very* different from 10 years ago).
- Traditional publishers do not allow you to choose (or to change) your covers.
- I can retitle and rerelease my books to target an evolving market.
- I can change the book's description on its Amazon product page to target an evolving market, and as I learn more about writing effective descriptions, and to dial in on the effectiveness of my ads.

3. Indie Publishing allows me to feel empowered

- Psychology research shows that a major contributor to happiness is *autonomy*—"the feeling that your life – its activities and habits – are under your control."
- Indie authors can learn new skills then apply those skills to increase the success of their published books (with traditional publishing, once you sign a contract, you have zero control over your book).
- As the great indie author Joanna Penn says: "*Stop asking permission. You don't need it. Stop waiting to be chosen. Choose yourself.*"

4. I want to earn some money

- With indie publishing, your ebook royalties are 70% of every sale (traditionally-published authors average 10%, with a range of 8% to 25%).
- Obviously, you need to sell far *fewer* books to make the same amount of money.
- Plus, I don't want to give 15% of my earnings to an agent.
- With Amazon, indie authors are paid 60 days after the month of sales. Every month, without fail.

Who makes more money, Indie Authors or Traditional Authors?

The only accurate answer to this is... it depends. You can find endless articles on this online, some arguing one way, some arguing the opposite. Regardless, here's an undeniable fact:

Thousands of indie authors are making a decent living from their books.

5. I want to be able to change the prices of my books as needed

- I need to be able to change prices for various promotions and sales (this is a big part of marketing).

6. I am not interested in literary prizes or recognitions from publishers

- Independently published books are usually not eligible for such things.
- I do not want approval from agents, editors, and publishers—I only want approval from my readers.

7. I am not particularly interested in print distribution in book stores

- I am mainly interested in marketing ebooks.
- It's much easier to achieve a high volume of sales with online ebook marketing (again, my main goal is getting as many people to read my books as possible).

8. I prefer to get paid in royalties rather than an advance

- Traditionally-published authors receive an advance (average of a few thousand dollars), and then royalties after that. However, many never earn their advance, so they get no royalties.
- To me, the benefit of getting an advance does not outweigh the disadvantages of traditional publishing.

9. I want to do my own marketing

- From Joanna Penn: "Increasingly, authors have to do their own marketing and agents will often seek out authors who have a 'platform' or at least an email list of readers."
- So... authors have to do their own marketing regardless of how they publish.
- And... marketing is *much easier* when you have control over your book's pricing, cover design, and product page description.

10. I don't mind investing in my books

- Traditional publishing requires *no* up-front costs (but you do have to pay for marketing).
- If a publisher asks for money, they are not a *traditional publisher*, they are a *vanity publisher*.
- Indie publishing *does* have up-front costs (professional editing and cover design, and then marketing costs).

11. And finally... *if* for some reason I ever decide to go with traditional publishing, indie publishing has become a great way to get in the door

- From Joanna Penn: "These days, if you self-publish and do well, agents and publishers will come to you. You don't have to beg and plead for attention. The power balance is reversed and the empowered indie can get much better deals than a first-time author with no evidence of sales."
- If your goal is to be traditionally published, you might as well be selling books and building up your audience as you work toward that goal. Think of it as a *paid apprenticeship*!

How does Indie Publishing work?

HINT - It's much *easier* than you might think

Brief Summary:

- Plan (outline) your book
- Write your book
- Edit your book to the best of *your* ability
- Get **expert** help with editing (usually, this means a *paid professional*)
 - Structural edit if you are just starting out
 - Line edit for every book, no matter how many books you've written
 - Proofreader for every book, no matter how many books you've written
- Create your book's front and back matter
- Get expert help with creating a *cover* that aligns with your genre (usually, this means a paid professional)
- Create the ebook EPUB file and the print PDF file
- Upload your ebook and print book to Amazon (and/or other retailers)
- Begin marketing your book
 - Marketing is ongoing... you only make money if you are marketing your book. If you stop marketing, royalties stop coming.