

HOW TO SELF-PUBLISH A BOOK

Tips from Indie
Authors

compiled by

BookBub



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ON RESEARCHING BEFORE YOU START...

Do your homework! Before I left many years of traditional publishing to give self-publishing a try, I spent over a year researching, learning, and networking. I still made plenty of mistakes, but I managed to avoid lots more. I know we all want to get our books to readers as quickly as we can, but there is so much misinformation out there, so take the time to do it right.



Claire Cook

*Never Too Late: Your Roadmap
to Reinvention*

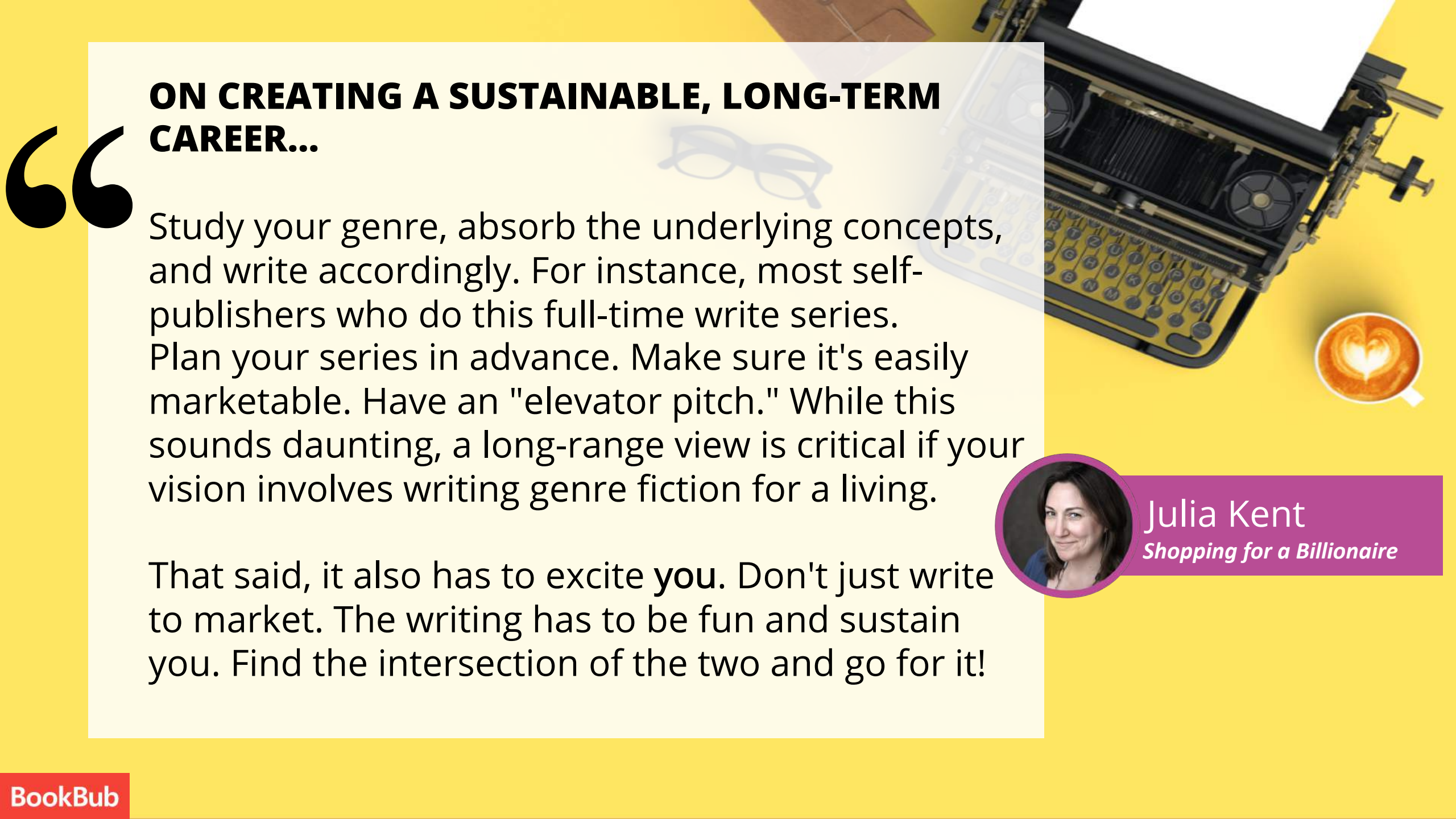
ON CREATING A SUSTAINABLE, LONG-TERM CAREER...

Study your genre, absorb the underlying concepts, and write accordingly. For instance, most self-publishers who do this full-time write series. Plan your series in advance. Make sure it's easily marketable. Have an "elevator pitch." While this sounds daunting, a long-range view is critical if your vision involves writing genre fiction for a living.

That said, it also has to excite **you**. Don't just write to market. The writing has to be fun and sustain you. Find the intersection of the two and go for it!



Julia Kent
Shopping for a Billionaire





ON SEEKING HELP...

Self-publishing requires a level of discipline that may be difficult for some, and for you to do it all — and most of us are not capable of that. Know your limitations. Don't be afraid to seek help and learn from others... this will save you much frustration and make your experience a positive and successful venture.



Deborah Fletcher Mello

Tempted by the Badge

“ON SETTING EXPECTATIONS...

Don't expect too much. Your first book will likely do very little. This industry rewards those who stick with it, who keep putting books out and heavily produce. Think long-term: If your book only earns a few dollars a week, think how much it will have earned you in 10 years. Then think how much 20 books will have earned you in that time.

Always keep your eye on the end goal and keep writing and releasing. New books are the only thing guaranteed to make you some money.



Adam Croft

In Plain Sight



“ON SETTING A TARGET AUDIENCE...

Write the book for one person. That person might be you. It might be a friend or family member. Write it for one person who is passionate about that kind of character persona, that kind of plot, that style of tempo and pacing. Hit a home run with one person and there will be thousands more just like them who will also love your work.



Ernest Dempsey
The Napoleon Affair



ON BUILDING A FAN BASE...

Prior to publishing, you should have a fan base intact, using social media to garner interest and spread the word about your upcoming release. If you don't have a fan base, make your book free for a while to introduce yourself to readers. If they love your first free book, they will buy the next, and will keep coming back for more!

Ana E. Ross

Billionaire Brides of Granite Falls Series



“ ON PRIORITIZING READERS OVER SALES STATS...

Focus on your readers, not your sales. When you place your readers first, it means not rushing the story. It means ensuring your readers' experience is fully immersive. It means reader loyalty will become your reality.

Sales will follow as you grow your readership — but if all you do is try to market your first novel without placing your readers first, your potential readers will turn away.



Steena Holmes

The Patient

ON FULFILLING GENRE EXPECTATIONS...



Look at the bestsellers in your genre. Make sure your cover looks just as good. Make sure your blurb is just as enticing. Make sure your manuscript is edited, proofread, and impossible to put down. With a professional cover, blurb, and story, you're already ahead of the game.

In some genres it also helps to write series. If you write science fiction like me, consider labeling your novel 'book 1' and get started on that sequel!

Daniel Arenson
The Requiem Series



ON FINDING THE RIGHT COVER DESIGNER...

“Go to some of the top-selling books in your genre, browse quickly through the covers, and see which ones pop out to you most. When you find a style you like, you can ask the author of the books whose covers you like who they work with.

I also like to browse premade cover sites. If I find someone whose covers I'm repeatedly drawn to, I reach out to see about doing a custom project. And when I'm working with my designer, I always think about how the cover will look as a thumbnail, since that's how so many of the Amazon ads show up.



Alana Terry
Forget Me Now

ON FINDING THE RIGHT COVER DESIGNER...

“Cover design is critical because it makes that all-important first impression on readers. To find the right designer, look at the covers in your genre that wow you. Try contacting the author. Be prepared to invest in a good cover.

When you find a designer, be sure you understand the process and what you're paying for, such as rounds feedback. You also want to own the cover outright, so be clear on copyright and use of stock images.



Rick Mofina
Missing Daughter

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ON PUBLISHING POLISHED WORK...

The absolute best advice I ever received was not to rush to publication, hire top-of-the-line editors, and get more than one proofreader. We have one chance to hook readers, and presentation matters as much as content.

Whether you offer a book for free, at a reduced price, or at full price, it should make no difference in the level of editing your product receives before landing in the hands of readers. Errors stop readers while reading and may also stop them from picking up the next in series!

Melissa Foster

This Is Love



“ON PUBLISHING POLISHED WORK...”

Beyond writing the best book you can write, it's so important not to take shortcuts. You can fool readers into buying a sloppy book once, but you can't build a career by skipping solid editorial, or forgoing professional book covers, or making bad marketing choices. To rise above the millions of new books being published every year, it's important to present yourself professionally.



Tanya Anne Crosby

The Girl Who Stayed



ON FORMATTING YOUR BOOKS...

When I published my first book, I went strictly DIY, following April Hamilton's *The Indie Author Guide* to create a Word document for Kindle and Smashwords and a PDF for CreateSpace. Then I switched to Vellum in 2017.

Vellum not only formats for mobi and various epub, but it makes changing the back matter simple. It also lets me add a little style to my books that helps brand my two different series. In addition, Scrivener now specifically produces a document for Vellum, so the process of producing files for publication in both ebook and print has become seamless.



M. Louisa Locke

Victorian San Francisco Mysteries

“ ON FORMATTING YOUR BOOKS...

I use a professional to do my book formatting who's fast with new books and updates. Whatever formatting method you use, use vendor-specific links. If you send readers to your website first, you'll lose some percentage of click-through, and that can add up over time.

Skye Warren

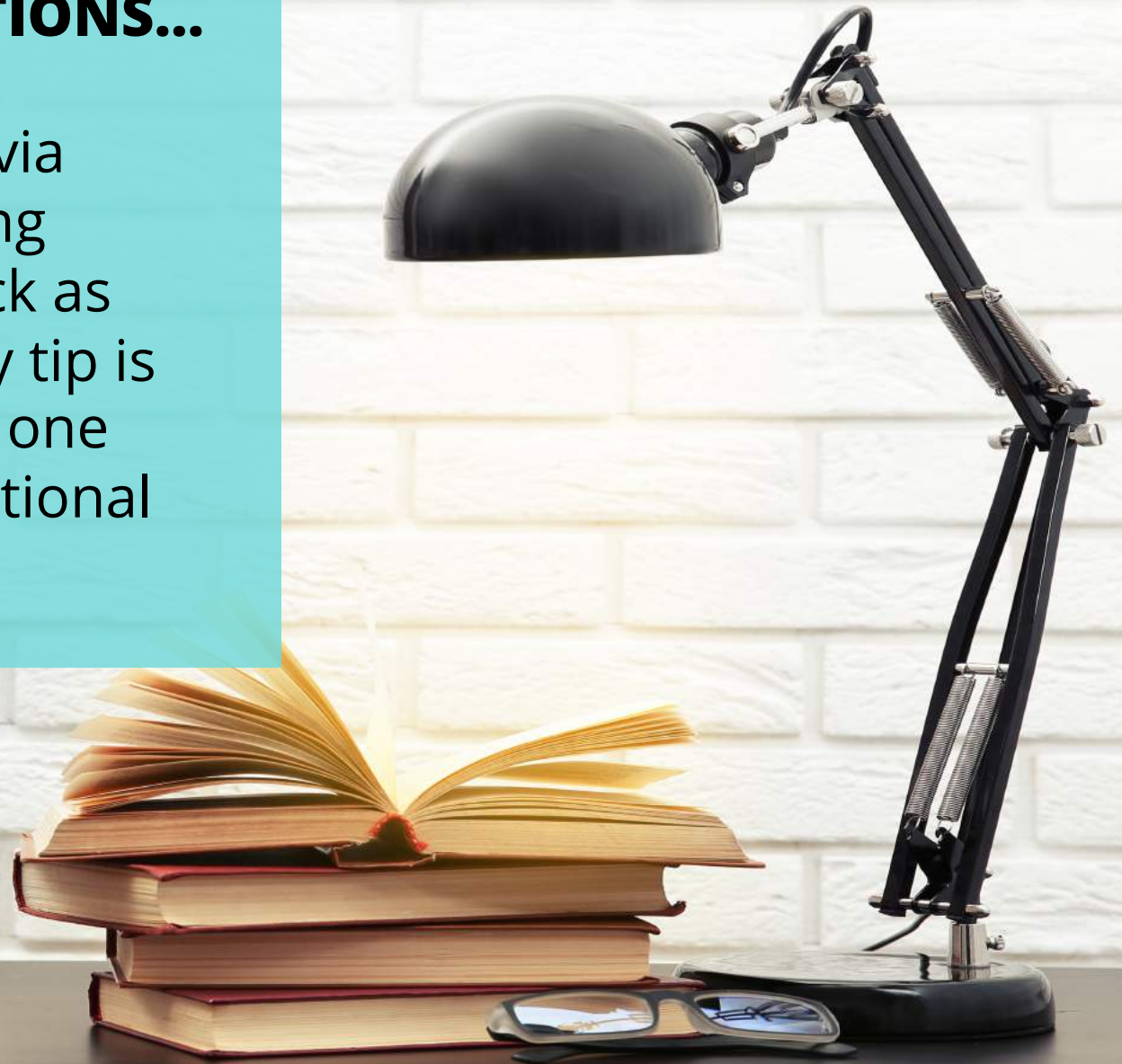
Overture



“ ON PUBLISHING PRINT EDITIONS...

I used to publish paperbacks via Amazon KDP but now am using IngramSpark for my paperback as well as hardcover editions. My tip is to make the editions look like one published by the big five traditional publishers.

Ty Patterson
The Warrior Series



ON GATHERING EARLY REVIEWS...

“NetGalley can be an excellent tool. It’s a service to upload your book so bloggers, reviewers, librarians, and booksellers can request a copy. I would suggest a co-op for this [to split the cost with other authors]. Next would be a blogger list — turn to Facebook, Google, and Goodreads for this. Reach out, make it personal, and follow up. You’ll get a lot of no-replies, but keep trying. Also post a callout on Facebook. Ask for readers’ favorite blogs to follow, ask bloggers to drop their links. It’ll give you a place to start.

BOOK REVIEW

Lisa Renee Jones

Inside Out Series





ON DISTRIBUTING ADVANCE READER COPIES...

I use the BookFunnel platform. BookFunnel makes it easy for readers to download an ARC to their preferred device and BookFunnel support is phenomenal if one of my readers has a problem with the download. I also follow up with readers after with personal emails to ensure reviews get posted.

Lacy Williams

Kissed by a Cowboy



ON PRICING YOUR EBOOKS...

I'm a proponent of the free or \$0.99 first-in-series model. It allows people to sample your work without financial risk. If they enjoy it, they will buy more books. Nudge-pricing — slowly ramping up the price from one book to the next in a series, capping out at a number your readers will tolerate — can work. I recommend testing different price points, then analyzing the results. You may be surprised at what your readers are willing to pay for something they enjoy.



J. Robert Kennedy
James Acton Thrillers





ON GENERATING FOLLOW-ON SALES...

Include a call-to-action (CTA) in your back matter. Promote the next book in the series and entice readers to sign up to your newsletter by giving them something of value, e.g. a free short story.



Lee Strauss
Perception

“ON PROMOTING SERIES...

If you can tie three to five books together into a series, readers will get drawn into your world and keep watching for the next installment. Make sure of that by putting an excerpt from Book 2 at the end of Book 1.

Once you create that first volume of work — with careful editing, professional cover art, and a decent amount of positive reviews — submit for a BookBub Featured Deal on Book 1. Make it free. You'll sell far more of Books 2 and 3 if you let readers sample Book 1. And with millions of BookBub subscribers, you'll dramatically increase your exposure to new readers!

Glynnis Campbell
Bride of Fire



“ ON HIRING A BUSINESS COACH...

Authors who succeed and hit the bestseller lists employ one common approach: They work hard with incredible focus. The most challenging aspect for many is juggling the writing schedule with intense marketing demands. The best thing I did early in my indie career was to hire a business coach who helped me set goals and develop strategy. It was the primary thing that spurred me to excellence.

Interested? Do your research — make a list, follow them on social media, watch their YouTube videos. Interview candidates carefully before hiring.

Kellie Coates Gilbert

Promises



“ON SAVING YOUR MARKETING BUDGET FOR WHEN IT COUNTS...

Self-publishing a book for the first time doesn't mean the author is new to writing. But if this is your first book, start Book 2 and don't waste time marketing Book 1. Until you have several books out, it's not worthwhile to spend time or money on the first book. Wait until you have three written to make a big splash.

Selling one book to a new reader will get you some short-term cash. Selling one book to a new reader and having two more books ready for them to buy will make you a new *fan*. That's gold.



Dale Mayer

Arsenic in the Azaleas

“ ON TREATING YOUR AUTHOR CAREER LIKE A SMALL BUSINESS...

Invest in your business. Professional editors, cover designers, and thought-out marketing tactics are key to a successful launch and to building your own brand. What you put in will directly influence what you get out of it. Treat your release like the launch of a small business, because that's what it is!

Stormy Smith
Bound by Duty



“ON FINDING A BALANCE BETWEEN WRITING AND MARKETING...”

Even when you're publishing your first book, you're creating so much more than the book itself — you're creating a brand. To make your brand a success, everything matters, from the book's quality and its spectacular cover, to setting up social media platforms where you engage with your readers frequently, to spending time (a lot of time) learning about self-promotion for your specific genre. Some days I spend more time promoting and advertising my books than I do writing them. It's not what I'd rather be doing with my time, but it's vital if I want to maintain the kind of visibility needed to keep books selling day after day.

Cheryl Bradshaw

Sloane Monroe Stories



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ON WRITING MORE BOOKS...

Publishing your first book is not an end, it's an early milestone in the process of writing and publishing. Do now what will help you stick around. Put the writing first. Protect your creativity and your time. If you don't tend to your writing, you won't have anything to publish! So get writing your next book.



Patricia McLinn

The Runaway Bride



“ ON CASTING ASIDE PERFECTIONISM...

Know you'll make mistakes and it's okay... the world won't end. No one is perfect. Focus on the things you did well and move forward aiming to do better next time. I've had the highest highs and lowest lows during my self-publishing career, but I always try to remember this is a marathon and not a sprint.



Chelle Bliss

Misadventures of a City Girl

A top-down view of a clean, white desk. In the top-left corner, a portion of a silver laptop is visible with a pair of black-rimmed glasses resting on its trackpad. In the bottom-right corner, there is a black spiral-bound notebook with a silver pen and a black pencil lying on it. Next to the notebook is a white cup of dark coffee on a matching saucer with a spoon. Two black paper clips are also visible near the bottom right.

Read the full post:

insights.bookbub.com/how-self-publish-book