

Transcript from Teleclass On
Insider Secrets to
Self Publishing
Given April 11, 2006

By Marnie L. Pehrson

www.IdeaMarketers.com

www.pwgroup.com

www.MarniePehrson.com

Ebooks vs. Print Books

Throughout this class, I'm going to outline the pros and cons of self-publishing ebooks and print books. I'll also give you tips on producing your ebooks and print books as well as promoting them.

Benefits of Ebooks

Low Production Cost

Usually with ebooks, the biggest expense people run into is the ebook creator. Maybe they are buying Adobe Writer, but there are more economical ways to create a PDF than this. You can go to ebay and search for PDF writer and find software that will write PDF files for as low as \$10-\$20.

You can also create other ebook formats without cost. There is MS Reader for iPAQ's and PDA's. There is also a program called DropBook that will create the palm pilot version of your ebook. You can create several versions of your ebook so that people who want different formats can have them in the format they need. For example, every time we release a new ebook at www.CleanRomanceClub.com, I'll create a couple different Adobe versions - one for 8.5x11 printing and one for booklet printing. Then I'll create the MS Reader and Palm pilot versions. That way we cover our bases with people who use portable technology and those who want to read it on their computer or print it out.

It's not difficult to create these formats, if you have a little technical know-how. If you're a technophobe, you'll probably want to hire someone to do this, but overall they aren't hard to learn to use.

Ebook Readers

If you need software to view the ebooks, use one of the programs below:

- Adobe Acrobat Reader (PDF) <http://www.adobe.com/>
- Microsoft Reader for PC
<http://www.microsoft.com/reader/downloads/pc.asp>
- Microsoft Reader for Pocket PC's (PDA's)
<http://www.microsoft.com/reader/downloads/ppc.asp>

Ebook Creators

These links will take you to software for creating various ebook formats:

- MS Reader - <http://www.microsoft.com/reader/downloads/pc.asp>
- Drop Book - Creates Palm Pilot files.
<http://www.palmdigitalmedia.com/dropbook>
- Palm Reader - Palm Pilot reader for your desktop computer so you can view Palm Pilot files without having a Palm Pilot.
- PDF Creators - Do a Search on eBay for "PDF Creators"
http://search.ebay.com/PDF-Creator_W0QQfkrZ1QQfromZR8

High Profit Margin

Another benefit to ebooks is that they have a high profit margin. They have very little cost. If you use Paypal, you lose maybe 2-3% per transaction. If you use an affiliate program through Clickbank.com, you can give commissions and get other people to promote your ebooks. Clickbank will automatically pay the affiliates and cut you checks periodically for what's been sold. You'll want to see the clickbank.com site for transaction charges.

You can set your Paypal thank you page to automatically take the buyer to the download page so that as long as it's a successful transaction it goes to the download page. If it's a failed transaction, you can set it to go to a different page so the person doesn't gain access to the ebook.

Higher Price Markup

If you're doing something like a self-help, business-related, or money-making ebook you can sell it for more as an ebook than if it were printed and sold in a store. People aren't used to paying \$99 for a print book. They're used to paying \$9.95, \$19.95, or maybe \$29.95 on a business book. But with an ebook you can price it higher and it's almost pure profit.

Interactivity

You can set hyperlinks and easily upsell your readers. Be sure to make all your links active so they go to the internet for more information on your products or services. You can even embed affiliate links in your ebook and make money by selling other people's

products. Some people offer their ebook free, and then they make money through the links they put in their ebooks.

Ebooks also have instant delivery, instant gratification for the reader and there's no shipping costs.

Downside to Ebooks

Learning Curve

Many people still aren't comfortable with ebooks. A lot of people want a book they can hold in their hands.

You're eliminating the bookstore market. Someone won't go into a Barnes & Noble and find your ebook sitting on the shelf. Then again, getting in a Barnes & Noble bookstore is difficult anyway, so that might not be such a great loss.

There's less prestige to an ebook. If you're a speaker or a consultant, ebooks don't easily lend themselves to back-of-the-room sales; although, you could put it on a CD and sell the CD at the back of the room.

Ebooks in general are best for business-to-business books. Unique or specialty information, money-making subjects and self-help are ideal for ebooks.

Using Ebooks as Interim or Intro Products

Another way we've used ebooks is as interim products. At www.CleanRomanceClub.com, my partner and I sell our ebooks to fiction readers as an interim product. We have books that periodically come out in print, but to give our readers something between releases, we make shorter fiction novels available as ebooks. We don't sell them for as much as we would a print book, but since it's 96% profit, it's worth doing.

We use fiction ebooks as a means for providing our customers with an interim product. Ebooks are also great introductory products. They give people a chance to learn a little about your topic or see if they like your writing style.

Q. How do you decide how to price your book?

A. Look at your competition. Search online for similar products and see what they are charging.

Q. How many pages constitute an ebook? What's the fewest pages you could have and call it an ebook.

A. I've done them as short as 10 pages for a free ebook. I did a 36-page business one that I sold for \$9.95.

Q. How do you keep people from copying your ebook?

A. You can password protect your ebook. Adobe will also let you set parameters like not allowing them to copy/paste your book to a word processor. Or you can set the number of times they can print the book or not be able to print it. Be aware that if you limit your reader's printing ability, they may be upset. Many people want to print ebooks and read them away from the computer.

Q. Don't you have some books that people can buy as either ebooks or paperbacks?

A. Yes, I do. Generally an ebook is priced less (or no more) than the print version. So you're bound by what the market will pay for the print version on what you can charge for the ebook.

Q. For fiction should you do both ebook and print?

A. It depends on the quality of the book and your budget and your ability to hit the print market. If you're trying to get your feet wet and build a following, you could start with the ebook and then go to print later.

Q. Is marketing fiction more difficult than marketing nonfiction?

A. It can be because people can justify nonfiction as a business expense or an educational expense, but people often consider fiction as an indulgence. If you have a following, an ebook can make a great interim product for fiction authors to fill in the gap between royalty checks. For example, if our publisher picks something up for print, then it could take 6 months to a year or more before we see a royalty check. So you can write the ebook in the meantime, satisfy readers, and give yourself some cash flow.

Q. When you say a book is 30 pages or 80 pages. What is the standard typeface, size and margins?

A. It depends upon how you set it up. I've seen some people use 2 inch margins and 14-point font if they plan on having the reader read online. Don't go below a 12-point font

for something that will be read on screen. I generally format for printing... 1 inch margins on all sides and 12 point font so the reader doesn't waste too much paper.

Q. What type of font is easier to read online?

A. In typesetting class my instructor taught me that a serif font is generally easier to read. The little tails on the letters guide the eyes – something like Times New Roman or Book Antiqua. (This document is in Book Antiqua.)

Q. Do you need two copyrights for an ebook and print book?

A. If they are the same, you shouldn't need two. If the two versions are different, they would need separate copyrights.

Q. Do I need ISBN's for both ebook and print versions?

A. If you plan to sell them both through distributors, you'll need two separate ISBN's.

Q. Can you put illustrations in ebooks?

A. You can have graphics in Adobe PDF's and MS Reader, but not in the Palm Pilot version.

Benefits of Print Books

With print, there's more prestige. Back-of-the-room sales are easier. Readers will have something to hold in their hands, and you can hit the bookstore market. People who would never purchase an ebook will buy a print book.

Downside to Print Books

The downside is that you can't charge as much as you could for some ebooks. There is very low profit margin. If you sell them yourself, you may have to stock an inventory (unless you drop ship).

Print books are better for fiction, religious or some self-help. They are also a good way to establish a name for yourself.

ISBN's

If you're going to sell your ebook through Amazon, you're going to need an ISBN, otherwise, I don't see the point in wasting an ISBN on an ebook, but that's just my personal opinion. If you're going to use some of the distribution out there like Amazon for ebooks, you will need an ISBN for your ebook. If you've got a print book and you want someone to be able to walk into any bookstore and order your book, then you'll need an ISBN. I always put ISBN's on my print books, but haven't as yet bothered on an ebook.

You get these from isbn.org in 10-packs. They are 10 for \$270 (the last I looked).

ISBN's

- **ISBN Registration** - Bowker is the company through which you can purchase ISBN numbers for your books. Be sure to list your books in their database so that it will be in *Books in Print*. This is the catalog from which bookstores order!
<http://www.isbn.org/>

Do-It-Yourselfer Publishing

There are vanity presses out there like xlibris, Booklocker, AuthorHouse and iUniverse and these are middlemen. All of them deal with the printer that I'm going to tell you about. They all use the same printer, the same distributors. This printer/distributor that they use distributes you through Ingram and Baker & Taylor. They automatically list you on Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Walmart.com, etc.

They are all using the same company to do it and then what they're doing for you is the layout and design and possibly some promotion. Of the ones I looked at, the cheapest I found that will lay out, design and get your book to this printer is Booklocker. They were about \$400. So if you are a total neophyte and don't know how to lay out a book, you could go to a company like this or hire a book designer to help you. But, if you're pretty good with software, you could do the interior in Word. You'll need to design your cover in something better, maybe PhotoShop. I use PageMaker to layout the interior and cover of my books. Many of my books, I design the interior and hire a graphic designer to do the cover. It eventually has to get into two PDF's - one file for the interior and one for the cover.

I do have a friend who made the interior of her book in Word and then had a book designer create her cover in a PDF.

The company the vanity presses use is called www.LightningSource.com . If you're going to work directly with LightningSource, you've got to have your own PDF's. And you will need a sales tax id. That's the only downside to me -- that you've got to get the sales tax id and turn in reports to the government all the time. However, if you're retailing, you need one of those anyway.

Once you have your PDF files you just transmit them to LightningSource. The benefit to this is that you have full control. It's economical setup. By the time you buy an ISBN and pay the \$12 annual cataloging fee with LightningSource your setup will run you between \$110-\$140 per book depending upon its length. Bear in mind that you will have to pay the initial \$270 for 10 ISBN's. So I'm pro-rating that into the \$110-\$140 setup.

They will do hardback or paperback and they are good quality books. They hold up. I've had 12 titles printed through them and have had good success with these. The benefit with them is that it's print on demand. You can buy one book, ten books, 100 books, whatever you need. They will drop ship for you as well.

As for cost, at the time of this writing, they would charge about \$3.15 for a 150-page book. ($$.90 + .015 \times (\# \text{ of pages})$).

They automatically distribute your book through Ingram, Baker & Taylor, Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Walmart.com, etc. So let's say you've set up your book through LightningSource and someone orders through Amazon. LightningSource automatically fulfills the orders and then they cut you checks. There's a few months' delay and then you should get checks each month after that - assuming you have orders.

Another option is to use a book printer like Morris Publishing. If you have thousands of copies printed you can get the price down to around \$2.00 each for a book that might cost \$3.50 through LightningSource. So if you know you're going to move them, that would be a good way to go.

Book Printers/Distributors

- **Lightning Source** - Print on demand printers. A subsidiary of Ingram Booksellers. When you have an ISBN, they will automatically list your title on Amazon, BarnesAndNoble.com, Walmart.com, and BooksAMillion.com
<http://www.lightningsource.com>
- **Morris Publishing** - Traditional printers of paperback books.
<http://www.morrispublishing.com>

Book/Cover Designers

- www.JorlanPublishing.com
Provide editing and book design services. They offer editing, book design, and a self-publishing package which includes design using color cover and standard interior templates. They also offer custom book design. Contact Lana Jordan at books@jorlanpublishing.com
- **Marny Parkin** - design and layout (typesetting) of book interior.
marnyparkin@pxi.net
- **Killer Covers** - <http://www.killercovers.com/>
- **Lori Nawyn** - book graphic designer, book covers, etc.
<http://www.lorinawyn.com/>

Graphics

- **Microsoft Clipart and Photo Gallery**
<http://office.microsoft.com/clipart/default.aspx?lc=en-us>

Hiring an Editor

For years, I never used an editor. I would get several people to proofread my books, but lately I've become a big believer in editors. They catch things that we don't catch.

I'll give you a little of my own story as an example. I branched out into fiction novels a few years ago. I'd send them to publishers and then they would come back rejected. I used ebooks as a way to practice and improve my fiction. Finally, through self-publishing I eventually had them sitting on store shelves.

I got a review from a critic who said I needed an editor, but I ignored it because it was the first book I'd written, and I knew I'd improved since then. When my second book came out, the same critic reviewed it and complimented on my talent for telling a story, for developing characters and fictionalizing history. However, the reviewer said it all the talent I had was tainted by my "immature writing style" and recommended I find a good editor. My first instinct was to say, "No way! I've been writing for 10 years, I can't possibly have an immature writing style." Nevertheless, the more I thought about it, the more I realized I wanted to perfect my craft and if having an editor was all that stood between me and the *New York Times Best Seller List*, I'd get an editor.

I asked around and I found a good one. I told her what the person said. She looked at my work and said, "I know what it is. I can help you." There are certain things that a publisher looks for and sees that we may never see. My readers never noticed it. They

thought my books were great because they held their interest and carried them through the book. But there are rules of good writing that I was violating that a publisher would see and automatically say, “this person doesn’t know what she’s doing.” They wouldn’t even look past that.

One thing I was doing wrong was switching point of views. For example, I would tell something from the heroine’s point of view in one paragraph and then in the next show it from the hero’s point of view. I should have stuck with one point of view throughout a chapter or section. Another problem I had was telling instead of showing. I’d summarize and just tell the reader what happened instead of showing them through dialog or action. A good editor will catch these things and help you.

I had one story that my editor took a chapter out of the middle of the book and placed it in the beginning as a prologue because I had it as a flashback. She said publishers don’t like flashbacks because they’re rarely done well. There could be little things that an editor who has worked with a publishing company would know that you don’t know. Those little things could be all that’s standing between you and getting published.

Within two months of working with my editor, I had a fiction novel picked up by a publishing company.

Editors

- **Kit & Kerdoodle Writing & Editing Services**
<http://www.ideamarketers.com/services/kerdoodle.htm>
- **Heather Horrocks** - born2write@networld.com
- **Kathleen Wright, Fiction Coach** - Ramp up your fiction www.riverwriters.com
- **Writers Edge Service** - <http://www.writersedgeservice.com/> - A literary service that assists Christian authors in getting their works published. Provide critiques.
- **Scribendi.com** - editing in different languages <http://www.scribendi.com/>

Promoting Your Books

- www.IdeaMarketers.com - Offers article promotion. You may post excerpts and book reviews. You may also list your books on the site alongside your writer profile and articles. There’s promotion for your books available on the home page of the site. IdeaMarketers receives over 1.3 million page views/month.
- www.BuildEbooks.com
- www.1ChapterFree.com - post information on yourself and your books and link to sample chapters

- www.SheLovesGod.com - submit articles, excerpts and book reviews of Christian books
- www.pwgroup.com - Marnie Pehrson's web design, hosting and promotion for authors.
- Judy Cullins Book Coaching - Book Coaching, Book Writing, Print and eBook Publishing and Book Marketing - <http://www.bookcoaching.com/>

Author Web Site

Having your own author web site is important. You could include things like a page about you, sneak peeks of what you're working on, a blog, and sample chapters. Let people get to know you. If you're doing a business book, you need credibility. You know those sales pages where someone's trying to sell "How to Make a Million Dollars in 90 Days"? Most of the time if you want to know more about the author, you'll probably have a tough time finding it. If I'm going to buy something like that, I'm going to research the person and see if they really know what they're talking about. If there's no link to an author site, I move on and they lose the sale.

Having a web site about the author builds credibility and trust, and that's priceless on the Internet. Put your picture on there. Get a good picture made - not just you standing in front of your bedroom wall - but a good photo. It helps people feel like they know you.

With fiction, I've really noticed a big need for Web sites. I've got readers who tell me they check my blog every morning. I was shocked that they were actually reading it. The more you know about someone, the more loyal you are to them - if you like them. Fiction has that fan factor to it. Readers get a kick out of getting to know you. My CleanRomanceClub partner and I do a get-together every year in August where our members come meet us in person. It's grown every year. That's always fun. We get their feedback and hear what stories and scenes they liked best.

You build loyalty when you let people get to know you. They keep buying because they like you and feel a personal connection with you.

I do custom design of author Web sites and specialize in designing ones that fit the author's personality. I heavily promote their site and books online through my network of Web sites. For example, as part of my promotion, I keep one of the author's book excerpts and/or articles on the home page of www.IdeaMarketers.com (a site that receives over 1.3 million page views/month). For examples and details on my web design, hosting and marketing services, visit www.pwgroup.com.

Syndicated Column

On IdeaMarketers we have a complete system for helping you become a syndicated columnist on the web. There's a free ebook you can download that teaches you how to become a syndicated column on the Web. It's available for free download at <http://www.ideamarketers.com/syndicatedwriters/freebook.cfm>

Press Releases

If you can come up with a newsworthy angle for your book, then press releases are a good marketing tool. I've used PRWeb.com to promote books and ebooks. I have paid for promotion on there and it was worth it. For example, the last \$80 promotion I did for my ebook, "*How to Become a Syndicated Columnist on the Web*" has been shown over 37,000 times, an estimated 721 media outlets picked it up, and it immediately appeared on Yahoo.

Joint Ventures

Joint ventures can be a valuable marketing tool. For example, my partner Marcia Lynn McClure was already established as a romance author in bookstores, with a regular following of readers. When I started writing fiction, I went to her with the idea of doing the www.CleanRomanceClub.com together. She read my work, liked it enough to feel comfortable associating herself with me, and we began that project together. I had the technical know-how to build and promote the site, and Marcia had a strong customer base. A lot of her readers have become my readers, and I'm able to provide the technical expertise to turn manuscripts she had lying around into ebooks and market them online. It gave her a significant additional revenue stream.

If you have something you can offer to another person who has what you need, then a joint venture is a great way to go.

Another friend of mine, Leslie Householder (www.ThoughtsAlive.com) has written a unique self-help book called *The Jackrabbit Factor: Why You Can!* The way she launched it was to go to a bunch of us who had ezines and rounded up close to a million subscribers. Each ezine owner donated a free virtual product that would draw people back to their sites. Then she set a launch date and gave the ezine owners an email to send out that announced *The JackRabbit Factor's* availability on that date. Anyone who purchased on that date would not only get the book but also would receive all the free bonuses donated by the various ezine owners. It was means of cross promoting a bunch of people's work. Leslie's book went to #5 on Barnes & Noble.com as a result. Now she

can say she's a best selling author, which has gotten her more media coverage and promotion for her book.

If you're trying to get bestseller status, not every sale is counted toward that. If you buy the books from LightningSource and sell them straight off your site, they don't count toward bestseller status. They look at the major distribution channels like Barnes & Noble. Small town stores are not included in the statistics.

Another way to offset your costs up front is to take pre-orders. I've done this before when my funds were a little tighter. On my first book, I had a list of subscribers and I allowed them to preorder the book at a slight discount. That way I knew how many books to order and knew I had the money to cover setup costs. LightningSource generally gives you 30 days to pay. So you can collect the money from customers and then pay LightningSource with no money out of your pocket.

Improving Your Craft

Writing is an ongoing pursuit and it always pays to improve your skills. I have a list of recommended resources at <http://www.ideamarketers.com/services/selfpublishingresources.cfm> . Bookmark the page, as I'll be adding to it periodically.

If you need help designing, hosting or promoting your author web site and/or books, please visit www.pwgroup.com . Or you may reach me personally at marnie@pwgroup.com or 706-866-2295 or 800-524-2307.