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How I Became a Published Author

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An old adage says that we all have at least one book inside us. It might be our memoirs, a travelogue, a mystery novel, a biography, or one of dozens of genres.

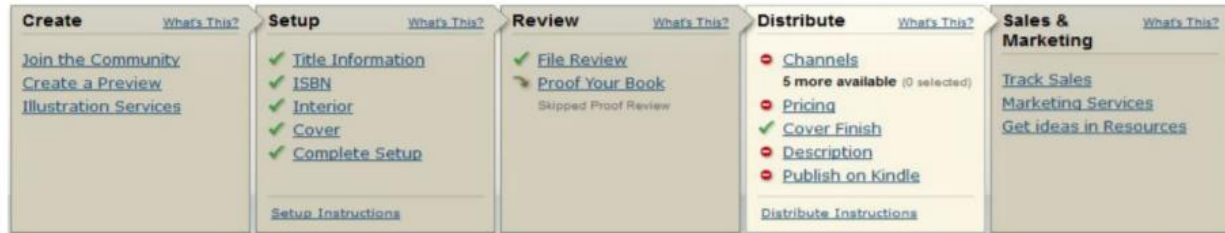
I had a book just waiting to emerge for years until I couldn't stand it anymore. My grandmother, who died in 1971, had left me her diaries, which she had kept for almost 70 years. As I read through them, I realized how much my extended family would enjoy reading about her life. So, over a period of several years, I read and took notes from the diaries. Then I drafted a book in MS Word which enhanced some of her most memorable experiences. When I finished, I began to search for a place to get my little book published. That's when I ran into some unexpected results.

My search for local storefront publishers came up with few choices, so I tried the Internet. I first found several large companies who had slick websites and lots of promotions. When I contacted one of them, I got offers and promises, but not much information about how the process worked or how much it would cost. When I finally did get a cost estimate, I found it to be unreasonable. The company bombarded me with emails and phone calls until I had to demand that they stop harassing me. I was discouraged.

Then a friend told me about the self-publishing websites that have sprung up in the last decade. I searched "self-publishing" on the web and found several sites. These companies offer support and useful tools, but the author does most of the work. I explored three sites, looking for the one that had the most useful tools for me, like a template for laying out the book, cover designs, and good customer support.



Eventually, I was drawn to one company called CreateSpace that offered a logical set of steps in the publishing process, a library of reference articles about each stage of the process, and support through email and phone. This site would not only publish my book, but also help me set up a marketing plan to sell copies or buy copies myself, which is what I wanted to do. The whole process was divided into clearly-defined stages with steps that had to be completed before moving on to the next stage. The first step was saving my Word document as a .PDF file and uploading it to the website. The next stage was getting it into the required book format. I copied the entire book into a 6"x 9" book template provided by CreateSpace. During the process, I made a few content changes – adding or deleting a sentence, slipping in a new chapter



heading, and so on. I also chose a cover design from their gallery, although I could have created my own, and added photos. The final stage involved careful reviewing and proofreading of the book. CreateSpace provided a Reviewer tool that let me see a virtual copy of my book online. I could turn pages and make corrections as I went through the book. This stage took the most time but helped ensure good results.

A few times during the process, I contacted the site via email with a question and got a phone call back the next day. As a first-time user, I appreciated the patience and knowledge of the phone supporters.

When I had completed all the steps, I received a proof copy of the actual book in the mail for me to approve before any further copies were printed. This helpful step let me see how my text and photos looked in a finished product. Even this final proof copy required me to read it through twice to check the placement of photos, page numbers, etc. I also had my husband, who had not read the book before, read it and give me his feedback.

Up to this point, the only cost I had incurred was about \$14.00 for shipping the proof copy. Once I gave the final approval and was ready to order more copies, the publisher quoted me a price. Since my book was a paperback with only 145 pages and in black and white, my cost per book was very low. I ordered 35 copies for \$116.00 and can order more or put them up for sale any time in the future. Besides books, CreateSpace also helps people market their original music or films.



For me, CreateSpace has been the perfect choice. But two other companies that I explored prior to CreateSpace also might be good options. A friend had an excellent experience with Blurb.com. He wanted a very large, hard cover book that was primarily colored photos. He said that Blurb offered many support options while letting him lay out the photos and format the pages. Another site called DiggyPOD.com is somewhat like CreateSpace in that it

offers support to authors and tools to help at each stage. For example, they sent me a free copy of a paperback which not only contained Q&A's about their process, but also gave me a hands-on copy of their product. They will also provide upfront cost estimates.



I'm certain there are many other good self-publishing companies on the web besides those I found. Maybe it's time to let your inner book take shape. If you are fairly skilled in Microsoft Word, you have a head start. Take a look at self-publishing. You might become a published author