**Self-Guide to Ebook Publishing – Practical Steps for Success!**

There are seven practical steps to accomplishing a successful ebook publishing project:

1. [**Choosing The Right Ebook Self-Publishing Program**](#Step1)
2. [**Picking An Ebook Format**](#Step2)
3. [**Providing ISBN Numbers**](#Step3)
4. [**Creating Ebook Covers**](#Step4)
5. [**Setting Up A Royalty Payment Process**](#Step5)
6. [**Using An E-reader For Testing Purposes**](#Step6)
7. [**Promoting Your Ebook**](#Step7)

As a self-published author of eight ebooks now, I know how hard it is to find a literary agent or publishing house interested in publishing your work. One of the first things I did after sending out queries to no avail starting in 2001 was to check out Print-On-Demand (POD) houses to get my novels printed and distributed. I did this for my first two books with high expectations. While there are many fine POD companies ready and willing to publish your work for a fee, I quickly realized there are some significant drawbacks to this method. The number one drawback for me was the high list prices assigned to my printed novels. The prices were not competitive in the marketplace. I even tried offering an ebook format, but it was before the time of digital ebook readers and the current explosion in digital content. With this in mind I decided in 2010 to publish my new novel in ebook format myself. What I learned over the last 8 years are the practical steps necessary for successful ebook publishing, which I am willing to share with those of you who want more control over publishing, distributing and selling your work. In this article, I will focus on three ebook publishing programs; Amazon’s **Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP)** program **Barnes & Noble Press (Nook)** and **Smashwords**. If you wish to save on expenses and control your own destiny, you have to learn these steps in order to participate in this brave new digital world.

**[1. Choosing The Right Ebook Self-Publishing Program:](#Step1)**

Choosing the right ebook publishing program for your work is a critical first step. Fortunately for self-published authors, times have changed dramatically over the last few years. Online self-publishers have paved the way for authors who want to produce a competitive product even if it means a printed format is not offered for sale or a previous title is made available for the first time in digital format. The following three programs are the ones I currently use for self-publishing my ebooks.

**Amazon KDP:**

Amazon’s [**Kindle Direct Publishing**](https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US) is the biggest, most popular and best known of all the self-publishing online services for digital ebooks. There is no way around these facts. They sell thousands of ebooks every month. They rule the marketplace for digital ebooks. You need to have a presence on Amazon if you want to be successful.

With Amazon’s Kindle Direct Publishing program you not only reach the largest ebook market distributor, but the biggest selling e-reader device, the Kindle, which uses the Mobi format.

**Barnes & Noble Press (Formerly Nook Press)**

I also recommend [**Barnes & Noble Press**](https://press.barnesandnoble.com/) (formerly Nook Press), which uses the Epub format. They also are very easy to use and easy to set up your ebook for publishing. I publish on B&N Press to offer Epub formats for Nook device users.

**Smashwords:**

After using several online self-publishing services such as BookTango, Google, Kobo and others, I decided to simplify my life and use [**Smashwords**](https://www.smashwords.com/) for many of my ebooks. The primary reasons for this were to offer Epub and other formats for my ebooks and to reach more distribution channels including Libraries.

**2. Picking An Ebook Format:**

An important step is learning the differences between ebook formats and which format is needed for various digital e-readers. There are many formats, but you don’t need to save your work in every format to self-publish online. For example, Amazon Kindle uses a unique proprietary Mobi format that is based on the Mobipocket standard. This format is not compatible with other e-readers on the market such as the Barnes & Noble Nook series.

Barnes & Noble Press competes with Kindle Direct Publishing and the Amazon Kindle Store. Barnes & Noble Press uses the Epub format, which is an open standard for ebooks created by the International Digital Publishing Forum (IDPF). The Epub format allows e-readers to change the text sizes for a better reading experience and allows the text to flow or fit the e-reader screen sizes as needed. One of the advantages of the Epub format is the ebook can be read on many different e-reader devices and can be accessed over the Internet and read on demand.

Smashwords offers the following seven ebook formats for most e-readers:

* Epub
* Kindle (Mobi)
* PDF
* Sony Reader (LRF)
* Palm Doc (PDB)
* Plain Text
* Online Reader (HTML)

**3. Providing ISBN Numbers:**

ISBN stands for "International Standard Book Number". It is a unique identifier for books, ebooks and other media. Each title, edition or different format that is published and made separately available should be identified by a unique ISBN.

Amazon assigns its own tracking number and allows you to use your own ISBN numbers for ebooks if you wish. Barnes & Noble Press also does not need ISBN numbers to self-publish your ebooks, but you can assign your own ISBN numbers as well. Smashwords will assign its own ISBN numbers for tracking purposes so you do not have to purchase any.

Not using ISBN numbers may limit the number of distribution channels or publishing houses that would be willing to offer your ebook for sale since many online book sellers in the U.S. require ISBN identification for tracking, selling and payment purposes.

The best approach is to purchase your own ISBN numbers from an approved agent of The International ISBN Agency based in the U.K. that coordinates all ISBN numbers. One such agency in the U.S. that can provide ISBN numbers is a company called [**Publisher Services**](https://www.isbn-us.com/)**,** a division of Bar Code Graphics, Inc. For a reasonable price, they will provide a single ISBN number and an electronic barcode that can be used with any format.

Don’t forget to submit a form to copyright your work with the government. I used the [**Electronic Copyright Office**](https://eco.copyright.gov/eService_enu/start.swe?SWECmd=Login&SWECM=S&SRN=&SWEHo=eco.copyright.gov) (ECO) System to protect my novels once they are published.

**4. Creating Ebook Covers:**

Another important aspect to any ebook project is creating a professional ebook cover for your novel. Cover images are required for most self-publishing programs. Again, there are many online companies and publishing houses willing to provide this type of service for a fee. However, unless you are a professional cover designer and design your own cover page, I recommend you purchase professional designer covers for your ebooks if you want to compete successfully in this marketplace. There are many digital ebook cover designers and the price is usually around a 100 dollars. The one I use is called **Kerman Covers Designer.** I recommend you find someone like Kerman to design your cover page.

**5. Setting Up A Royalty Payment Process:**

In order to sell your digital work online, you will need to set up a secure royalty payment process. Again, there are many solutions available on the market depending on how you intend to sell your work and receive payments. Fortunately, working with Amazon KDP, Barnes & Noble Press or Smashwords makes the process easier. Amazon KDP and Barnes & Noble Press require you to set up an Electronic Royalty Payment Account with your bank information. Smashwords sends Royalty payments automatically to PayPal. The main advantages of these programs are the payment security they provide, the ease of account setup, faster payment of royalties and customer support.

**6. Using An E-reader For Testing Purposes:**

The three online self-publishing services mentioned in this article all accept MS Word Documents for submission. Once uploaded, they will reformat the document to work on their digital devices. However, some writers like to submit their books in specific e-reader formats such as Epub, Mobi, PDF or other format.

In this case, you need to download an e-reader application to your PC to test Epub, Mobi or Adobe PDF formats before submitting them to Amazon, Barnes & Noble Press, Smashwords or other online publisher. You want to view the ebook and correct any issues before submission. I recommend [**Calibre E-book Management System**](https://calibre-ebook.com/) with their E-book Viewer that can read or convert most common types of documents such as Epub, Mobi, PDF, MS Word and other formats. You can also download [**Adobe Digital Editions**](https://www.adobe.com/solutions/ebook/digital-editions.html) to read PDF or Epub ebooks. Both downloads are free. I also recommend you add a Table of Contents to your ebook to make searching and reading chapters easier for your readers.

As a side note, you can also read ebooks on your PC. Amazon provides Kindle for PC. Barnes & Noble Press provides NOOK for PC. Smashwords provides an Online Reader. The list goes on.

As I have mentioned earlier, there are many e-readers on the market and each requires compatible ebook formats for reading purposes. The biggest selling e-reader on the market today is the Amazon Kindle, which accounts for nearly 70% market share. For this reason alone, it behooves you to make you ebook compatible with this product. Fortunately, it is relatively easy to submit and publish your ebook for the Amazon Kindle Store in a matter of days. They are extremely efficient and provide excellent technical support.

Another popular e-reader device is the Barnes & Noble Nook. This device is compatible with the Epub format and other formats, but not the Kindle format.

**7. Promoting Your Ebook:**

There is no easy method in promoting a new ebook in today’s market place. It will require time, effort and money; and it is necessary since there are so many ebook titles available for sale. The good news is with the proliferation of e-book readers and digital content, the tide has turned for digital publishing. Amazon.com recently reported that they are selling more digital books than printed copies for the first time in history.

Unfortunately, I have found that neither Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing, Barnes & Noble Press, nor Smashwords offer complete marketing or promotion services to drive ebook sales. This requires much more effort than any self-publishing service can provide alone.

In the meantime, I recommend you find the best online channels to distribute a Press Release that reaches your target market and doesn’t cost a lot of money. It is also important to drive ebook sales using your own website, author membership groups and social media sites. Fortunately, setting up a personal website is easy to do and you can add URL links to any of the programs, online book stores, ebook publishing houses, companies, application programs, e-reader devices and agencies mentioned in this article. After all, it is up to the author to champion their work no matter how the work is published.

**Author Note:**

It has been three years since I last published this article. Since that time I have learned some valuable lessons on how to be successful at promoting and selling ebooks. Read my latest article, **Key Lessons Learned On How To Become A Successful Indie Author**.You will learn valuable lessons to help sell more ebooks. I wish you further success as an Indie Author.

I can be reached on my website via this link: [**Don Viecelli**](https://www.donviecelli.com/)

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