



Quiz: Which publishing road is right for you?

This questionnaire will help you evaluate your options based on your personality and needs.

1) What is your risk tolerance?

- b. High -- I'm a born entrepreneur. I love the fight and the thrill of a challenge.
- c. Moderate -- I don't mind risk as long as the stakes are not excessive.
- d. Low -- I'm most comfortable when I know exactly what to expect.
- e. None -- just thinking about risk makes me tired and anxious.

2) How flexible are you?

- a. I thrive on change. I don't mind testing new ideas or adapting mid-stream.
- b. I'm fairly flexible, but I prefer to have a structured plan in place.
- c. I believe in planning the work and working the plan. Still, nothing is set in stone, and I can live with change as long as it's not too disruptive.
- d. I realize there are no guarantees. I'm most confident when I know what to expect and, at least for the most part, things go according to plan.

3) How much time are you willing to devote to book work that's unrelated to writing or marketing?

- a. I'll work 100+ hours a week, if that's what it takes to succeed.
- b. Logistics can be complicated and hiring and working with contractors takes time. I'm willing to do it, as long as the demands don't interfere too much with my writing -- or family, personal, etc. -- time.
- c. I'm willing to devote a few hours a week to take care of logistical details or business chores, but I'd prefer to spend the majority of my work hours writing.
- d. My writing time is sacred. When I'm not writing, I'm (choose your activity). Maintaining a work life that is as stress-free as possible is of utmost importance to me.

4) What is your financial situation? Are you willing and/or able to invest in the publishing process?

- a. I can't (or don't care to) spend a fortune, but publishing is an investment in my future. If I can't afford to pay for services, I'll gladly invest the necessary hours.
- b. It's important that I produce a quality product. I know my limits and I'm willing to make the necessary sacrifices so that I can hire professionals to do the things I'm not good at.
- c. I want the publishing house experience and am willing to make some compromises.
- d. My time is an investment. I want to be paid for my work, not pay for it.

5) Are you comfortable with multi-tasking and do you enjoy learning/doing new things?

- a. I thrive in high energy environments; I'm first to roll up my sleeves.
- b. I can multi-task to a point and I don't mind doing things I've never tried, but I'd rather hire professionals to handle at least some design and production and/or manage business aspects
- c. I want a professional team I can rely on to take care of production and logistics.
- d. All writers have to market today; writing is all I care to do.

6) What job situation or work environment makes you most comfortable?

- a. I want control of my destiny; if that means I'm on my own, fighting my own battles, so be it.
- b. I'm an entrepreneurial person, but I prefer to work with a supportive and enthusiastic team.
- c. I want control of my career, but I'm most comfortable in a corporate environment where the responsibilities are defined. I'd rather be a CEO, delegating, than the guy or girl in the trenches.
- d. I'm willing to give up some control in exchange for the things -- time, money, prestige -- I value.

7) How important is artistic control?

- a. I'm a hands-on person. I want full control. I'm the best judge of my work. I don't want anyone telling what I can or can't write or how to design, produce or sell my books.
- b. I value artistic control, but working with editors, designers, and other publishing pros gives me perspective and helps me make my work the best it can be, improving my chances for success.
- c. Artistic control is important -- I want the final say over most aspects of the process--but I'd prefer not to be bothered with the nitty-gritty. If delegating means losing some control, that's okay.
- d. I'd prefer a say in the editing and design process, but I'd trust my publisher to do what's best for my book. After all, they're in business to make money and they know what they're

doing.

8) How important is it that your book be widely distributed and well placed in bookstores and retail outlets?

- a. It depends on the cost-value ratio. Powerful online distribution channels enable authors to sell millions of e-books, making presence on bookstore shelves less important. That said, if I found it cost-effective to print books, I wouldn't mind making sales calls or schlepping my book.
- b. A distributor with an enthusiastic sales force can make a big difference, but I understand the costs and challenges of distribution and placement. I'd be happy with a regional presence. I'm also comfortable paying a literary or marketing agent to work on my behalf with a distributor or hand-sell books. Depending upon the situation and/or project, I might consider publishing only in e-book format.
- c. My goal is to see my books in every store, retail outlet, and airport as possible. Yes, there are challenges even for small publishers, but I'm willing to pay for placement if that's an option.
- d. Bookstore presence is the key to attracting a broad audience base. Personal recommendations and impulse purchases drive sales. I wouldn't want to publish if my book were not in stores.

9) How important is prestige?

- a. Not important -- I don't care what others think or say. Sales figures speak louder than words.
- b. Moderately important -- validation by an agent or other publishing professional gives distributors, booksellers, and buyers confidence in me and opens doors I can't open alone.
- c. Important -- when people see a book with a publisher's imprint, they judge it differently, as better quality, than a self-published book, particularly if the publisher is known to be selective.
- d. Extremely important -- I've always dreamed of being published by a Big 5 house. Writing a book is labor of love. I want the rewards -- a chance for a fancy book launch, reviews, literary prizes.

10) How important are royalties? An advance?

- a. When publishers pay an advance and the book doesn't earn out, even if it's because the publisher fell down on the job, the author takes the rap and gets blackballed. I'd rather rely on myself. I'm willing to take a chance on myself, and I want the highest royalties possible.
- b. An advance would be nice, but I understand the pitfalls; high royalties are more important.
- c. I'd love an advance, but getting a big advance is like winning the lottery. Slow and steady, with a support team to keep things on track, is the way to go.
- d. An advance would allow me to write full time and fund my marketing efforts. A big

advance is a show of confidence and means the publisher will put muscle behind the book. That's vital.

YOUR SOLUTION:

If your responses are mostly:

a) Your needs and temperament are well-suited for Do-It-Yourself

publishing. With electronic DIY platforms like Smashwords, Barnes and Noble PubIt or Amazon Kindle Direct, the author retains complete control of the publishing process. You're required to upload fully formatted, compatible files. Smashwords provides a list of formatters upon request; otherwise you're on your own. At 30-70 percent, depending upon the platform and book's retail price, DIY offers the highest royalties in the business.

For authors who wish to publish in paper formats, Amazon KDP offers an inexpensive DIY platform. Authors set their own price, allowing them to earn some of the highest royalties in the industry. Createspace (before it became KDP) used to offer reasonably priced a la carte services -- editing, layout and design, formatting, and marketing -- but no longer does. KDP does still have expanded distribution to bookstores, libraries, and institutions, and e-book conversion through Amazon's Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) program.

The downside is that you're on your own -- unless you hire help like an editor/proofreader. The self-publishing community is supportive and many self-publishers form friendships with others, but all the responsibility -- for design, production, distribution, marketing, and sales -- falls on the individual. This can be daunting, and it's frustrating when things go wrong, but there are plenty of Internet resources or professionals to help you navigate the terrain.

b) You're a good candidate for assisted self-publishing or a hybrid/subsidy

press. Subsidy presses, which used to be considered an indiscriminate, last choice option for hacks or writers who couldn't make it in traditional publishing are enjoying newfound respectability. Hybrid houses, like Morgan James Publishing LLC, are choosy about the authors they sign. Unlike old-school subsidy presses, MJ works only on projects that meet stringent quality standards. Here, too, the downside is that they are expensive. These hybrid publishers are becoming increasingly popular with authors who wish to produce quality work, while eliminating some of the time-draining chores and complex aspects of self-publishing. Some authors hire literary agents, who may oversee the entire process; others work with a publishing team, typically consisting of professional editors, book designers, marketing pros, and/or small press distributors. Authors retain a high percentage of their earnings and, by hiring an agent or team to help with the nuts and bolts of the publishing

process, they also save time. Working with seasoned pros lends credibility and helps to counteract the self-publishing stigma.

The downside, of course, is that all this help comes at a cost. A book can be published on DIY platforms for under \$100, depending upon how much the author can or is willing to do. Even though the money usually goes toward print copies, a hybrid publisher may require you to pay thousands and many agents still charge 15 percent whether their clients publish traditionally or on their own.

c) A small Indie Press may be right for you. Indie presses are choosy about the authors they sign, which give them respectability and credibility much like the large traditional publishers. Unlike old-school subsidy presses, they work only on projects that meet stringent quality standards, and they provide editorial assistance. The upside is that they don't charge any fees – the downside is that the author makes less money than the above options, getting royalties or a percentage of net sales on both paper and e-book formats. Indie Reader offers similar services on an a la carte basis, giving authors greater flexibility and control, with the work still done by highly regarded industry pros.

Authors who don't fit the big house profile -- writers whose beautifully written literary work or unconventional stories wouldn't attract a large enough audience to impress a bigger house -- are good candidates for small, quality houses like Greywolf Press or Milkweed Editions. Few, if any, small houses have the resources to pay huge advances nor do they have the marketing clout of a major publisher, but they enjoy a reputation for nurturing talent and most stand behind their authors -- they won't dump an author if her book fails to meet unrealistic sales projections.

d) You'd probably be best-served by a large traditional publisher.

While I'm a firm believer in the power of self-publishing, publishing with a legacy house has advantages. For one, there's the prestige of being anointed. Major publishers offer an advance against royalties, alleviating financial stress. At a traditional house, a publishing team works to edit, design, and produce high quality products. The Big 5 houses have marketing departments to garner professional reviews and secure traditional media attention -- avenues currently closed to indie authors -- a sales force to ensure widespread bookstore and retail distribution, and the finances and clout (sometimes) to pay for regional or national book tours and primo bookstore placement. Those are the pros. The down side or con is that it is extremely difficult (or impossible) to get one of "The Big 5" or any of their imprints without having a literary agent to submit your work...and getting a literary agent is also difficult. Because of this difficulty, there are no guarantees and authors may have to wait years to get published (if they are lucky enough to have their manuscripts accepted at all).

Michele Chynoweth, Publishing Workshop Handout

This is an exciting time to be an author. The industry is evolving, with greater power and control in the hands of authors than ever before. Just a few years ago, an author could either sit around, waiting for a publisher to anoint her, or self-publish and endure the "vanity" stigma. Today, we can publish proudly and enjoy tremendous success -- whichever publishing option we choose!

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