

Publishing Strategies for The Bookstore of the Future

Step 1: Design a Great Cover

In the near future, half of all books will be sold to consumers *before* they ever see the book. What they'll see is the cover, endorsements or reviews, ads, and excerpts. But they won't see the actual book until after they've paid for it. So, the cover had better look good.

Step 2: Produce Galleys with a Digital Printer

Galleys will be used the same way they always have been: for sales reps, to garner endorsements, to shop rights, and to provide adequate lead time to trade and media contacts who need to evaluate books months ahead of publication.

Step 3: Use Conventional Offset for First Printing

Publishers who anticipate needing more than 500 copies of a book in the first year of publication are better off gambling that a book will sell out the first press run. They should accept the capital investment required for a first printing and take advantage of the economies of scale offered by offset. Books need to be in stock where customers want to buy them when the marketing and publicity effort hits. You can't get this kind of bookstore shelving today with P.O.D.

Step 4: If the Book Flies, Go Back to Press

Keep printing using conventional offset methods until the book shows signs of losing steam. Shop the rights like crazy.

Step 5: If the Book Bombs, Auction Returns

Set up your own site on eBay or Amazon and sell off your returns at a steep discount. Frequently, author royalties are not paid on copies sold at very high discount.

Step 6: Print Short-Run Backlist with POD

The POD edition is non-returnable. Most books will be priced "per download" to a book printing machine.

An Alternative Strategy for POD Publishers

The primary advantage of POD publishing is also the primary disadvantage: no inventory. If the book is not available for browsing in bookstores, you will lose many if not most sales.

If a bookstore has its own book printing machine, let them download and print the first copy free — for use as a reading copy and/or display copy. Then charge for any additional downloads.

This "first copy free" strategy distributes the capital cost of book production between three parties: the publisher loses the gross margin, the author loses the royalty, and the bookstore pays for the paper and binding. The big losers are the Post Office and UPS: nothing ventured, nothing returned.



Invasion, continued from Page 3.

digital printing technologies to produce small press runs, but he is in no way an evangelist for POD.

Poynter is the author of *The Self-Publishing Manual*, currently in its 13th edition from Para Publishing. When POD People call me, I refer them to Poynter's book or Gary Michael Smith's *Publishing for Small Press Runs* (Chatgris Press), and suggest they follow them "like Bibles." Sometimes that gets me off the hook, but like other publishing professionals, I am usually forced into a choice between wasting hours with POD People explaining why it would be foolish to purchase publicity services for a book no one can buy, or being rude ("I don't have time to teach you the history of book publishing so that you understand why I can't help you").



A cottage industry is growing to help POD authors become publishers.

Until it flourishes, my advice to POD People is to treat the POD edition of their books as bound galleys, and then follow the advice of Dan Poynter, Judith Appelbaum, Tom & Marilyn Ross, and the other gurus of self-publishing. To achieve any kind of marketing success, they will need to print and give away several hundred copies of their books. So they should ask their current POD firm for a quote, get quotes from other printers, and find out if they can get electronic copies of their own books to send to different printers.

In most cases, the best thing that could happen to a POD Person is getting their book picked-up by a conventional publisher who knows how to print, distribute, market, and sell effectively. Otherwise, with a lot of hard work and a little luck, they may sell enough copies to cross that bridge between author and publisher, and find themselves in a pleasant new profession. Then I'll send my POD People their way for advice.

