

Ten Questions You Should Ask Your Publisher

- 1. Cover:** The cover is your first, and may be your only, chance to make a good impression. Go to the bookstores of the companies you are considering and check out the cover art.
- 2. Contract:** Companies offering publishing services have contracts, which you should read. The contract should be non-exclusive.
- 3. Setup Costs:** Basic publishing ranges from about \$500 to \$800, but not all publishing packages include the same options. It's important to compare apples to apples. And beware of really low prices because you get what you pay for, in most of these cases, next to nothing.
- 4. Book Price:** Make sure that book pricing is competitive when compared to general market prices. You don't want your book to be too expensive to compete.
- 5. Distribution:** Make sure your publishing package includes distribution through all the leading book wholesalers in the United States, especially Ingram, and in the UK. Everyone includes Amazon, so that's not an issue. Also, you should ask about the discount. Traditional publishers give distributors a 55% discount out of which the distributor gives the bookseller about 40%. POD books are more expensive to print, so discounts may not be that high. However, Ingram penalizes POD by taking a higher percentage on books with lower discounts. For example, on a book with a 50% distributor discount, Ingram will keep 20% instead of 15% and offer booksellers only 30%.
- 6. Royalties:** Royalties are tricky because POD companies may pay on net receipts or net margin or any of many different terms, all of which mean that the royalty is based on what's left after the print cost and distributor cost is taken out. Using this system, a royalty that sounds like a lot can actually be very small. For instance, a royalty of 20% based on net of a \$10 book with a 55% distributor discount would be forty cents. On the other hand, a royalty of 10% based on *list* for the same book with the same discount would be one dollar. Royalties are usually paid quarterly.
- 7. Support:** Who is going to work with you on your book? Will they answer the phone if you have a question or a problem? Will they only respond by email? Make sure your publisher is responsive, and not just the salespeople.
- 8. Timeline:** How long from start to finish? Anywhere from three to six months is acceptable.
- 9. Returnable Books:** Books don't automatically get on bookstore shelves, but if you plan to market to bookstores, you should make sure that returns are an option. It's important because bookstores can return bestselling books from the most well known authors if they don't sell. If you want them to buy your book, it should offer the same perks.
- 10. Author Discount:** Authors have to market their books as there is no POD publisher, self publishing company, or publishing services company that does this for you, so it's important what the cost of the book to you is going to be. There are some companies that will charge the author the retail cost, so be careful about this one.