

Should a Speaker Self Publish??

by *Joni Wilson*

One magical weekend in March 1998 my life's direction did a complete one-eighty when I attended a seminar in Anaheim California called "How to Build Your Speaking and Writing Empire." given by Mark Victor Hansen and Jack Canfield. Mark and Jack are both accomplished speakers and co-creators of the "*Chicken Soup for the Soul*" phenomena. At the time my plans were to make the transition from voice trainer/entertainer to professional speaker. The role of author had never entered into my career mix.

For the weekend, Mark and Jack had assembled the finest authorities in the industry. Their task was to fill our heads with correct information, give us a clear road map to follow while pointing out some of the pitfalls they had personally experienced along their own roads to success. People like Dottie Walters, Jerry Jenkins, Dan Poynter, Joel Roberts to name a few, all spoke and shared their stories.

As the weekend progressed I heard the same words repeated over and over, "If you're going to be a successful speaker, you must be recognized as an expert in your field. The best way to do this is to become a published author. Write your book!" How can you debate the wisdom spoken when it comes from the mouths of two of the most successful speaker/writers in the world.

My course for the next three years was set as I excitedly sat in the conference room and created the *3-Dimensional Voice*. To give me the boost I needed, Mark endorsed my project and I was off and running. I spent the next 5 months teaching voice, writing my masterpiece and planning my strategy following step by step the path set by the experts.

With manuscript in hand I signed up for another weekend with Mark and Jack in November with one purpose in mind... to somehow put my creation into the capable hands of Jerry Jenkins who could guide me through the self-publishing maze and help me produce an 'Industry standard' quality book. Bingo Again! Jerry agreed to take a look at my creation and help me iron out the rough spots. (And there were plenty of those that I, as novice writer, couldn't see.) I bless the day I handed my project to Jerry for his wonderful team not only held my sometimes shaky hands through my first book, but with their guidance and suggestions, one book became a series of five books called the *Wilson Voice Series*.

It's been only three years and I now have two books in my series *The 3-Dimensional Voice* and the *3-Dimensional Business Voice* self-published and doing quite well. As for my speaking career, I am a board member of the San Diego Chapter of the National Speakers Association, I am a paid speaker, I give classes on voice improvement and I am selling my books and tapes at the back of the room just like Mark, Jack, Jerry, Dottie, Dan and the rest of those incredible people I grew to respect and admire.

Now when a budding speaker comes up to me and asks, "What should I do to get started, I have so much I want to say." I smile at them, while giggling to myself inside, and give them the same wonderful advice the experts gave me on that magical weekend three years ago. "If you want to be a speaker let the world not only hear your words, but let them read your words as well. Write your book!"

Here are five good reasons the experts gave to self publish. (They convinced me!!)

1.) Unless you have some kind of celebrity status, and can pre-sell books on your name only, the major publishing houses will not touch you. In the time it takes for you to get an answer back from them, you could have your book in your hands, be doing media interviews, have sold enough books at the back of the room, on amazon.com and in special sales to pay the cost of your publishing.

2.) Selling a book is like dividing up a pie. Everyone who comes to the table gets a piece of it. If you slice up your \$15.95 cover price between the distributor who takes 55% off the top, your storage, shipping, advertising, publisher (no they do not pay for your PR), and your expenses, by the time it comes to the authors share, your left with the crumbs. As a self publishing author, I am not only the author, publisher, distributor, but when I sell at the back of the room, I don't even have to give that 55% away. I OWN MY BOOKS. Wow, that feels great!

3.) In creating a series of books, when I have, (through my own diligent work which I would have to do anyway even if I had a publisher), created a market and a demand for my books, I can then sell the entire package to a publishing house and negotiate a better contract. (Many-A Best Seller started as a self published book.)

4.) I can do my book the way I want to without the heavy hand of an editor cutting out all of my creative gems . Self publishing through the Jenkins Group gave me the professional guidance I needed to keep me from going too far over the edge and yet they allowed me the freedom to make the final choice. As I look back at book one the *3-Dimensional Voice*, some of my choices will be revised when I do my next printing. (Oh darn Nikki was right!)

5.) This is the joy of creating something I am proud of and being able to include the role of Blue Loon Press publisher to my list of accomplishments. As a speaker, the more life experiences you have, the more you can talk about. Boy can I tell good publishing stories.

Good luck and go write that book!!!

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