

# Author, Author!

Writing a book may be a chore, but publishing one is easier than ever—and for many entrepreneurs, it's a way to get an edge.

**C**AN YOU, A NEWLY MINTED ENTREPRENEUR, get a jump on the competition by self-publishing a book? Yes, you can! Or so claims Stacey Hanke, consultant and author of the self-published how-to book *Yes You Can!*

Last year Hanke was looking for a way to stand out from the mob of other consultants competing to serve as business communication advisers. So she spent nine months writing and a total of \$3,000 to publish the 165-page book—and bought 500 copies so she could hand them out to potential clients. Hanke, 39, says the book “opened doors,” and boosted her business and requests for speeches by 20 percent. Today those speeches are ripe occasions for selling copies of *Yes You Can!* to other people, at \$14 each. Try getting that kind of return with a copy of your résumé.

For growing numbers of professionals who want instant credibility, books are the new business cards. It's part of a publishing surge that led the number of print-on-demand titles to rise 132 percent in 2008 over the previous year, according to Bowker's Books in Print database. The entrepreneur with a book under her belt is no longer a schnook fighting for recognition; she's a Published Author sharing her wisdom. “People figure you must be an expert—it's kind of weird, but it works that way,” says Doug Wojcieszak, who self-published *Sorry Works!*, on how hospitals should treat families that bring malpractice cases.

The book-as-calling-card has been brought to us by advances in digital publishing, most notably


the print-on-demand book. This business is an example of the “long tail” model, where online distribution enables sales of unique items (like your book) in tiny quantities (like 25 copies for your sales conference). New printing companies are eager to make the long tail happen. For \$1,000, the company AuthorHouse proofread *Sorry Works!*—apparently, there's no extra charge for exclamation points in the self-publishing world—helped Wojcieszak design a cover and got him the first copies of his \$24.99 book within 30 days.

But note the word *self*. You're basically on your own when it comes to marketing and distribution. Edward Zelinsky, a graphic designer in Falmouth, Maine, uses Lulu.com, another print-on-demand house, to publish books of his work. But he can't recall someone hiring him for his design services via Lulu's Web site, where his books are available for free viewing and downloading. “The Web sites are so deep and vast,” he says, “your book disappears into the maw.”

At least the publishers try to help authors cast a wider net. At Lulu.com you can pay an extra \$49.95 to get the copyright and an ISBN (International Standard Book Number). That in turn will get it on the Books in Print list viewed by libraries

**For businesspeople looking to establish credibility in a hurry, the self-published book is the new business card.**

and other publishers, making it possible for people to order it from retailers like Borders. For publishing packages starting at \$500, AuthorHouse assigns its authors ISBNs and has them listed on sites like Amazon.com.

One great aspect of self-publishing, says Keith Ogorek, of AuthorHouse parent company Author Solutions, “is that the book doesn't say it's self-published, so nobody knows.” Just don't count on these books as a way to get rich. Booksellers typically take 50 percent of the retail price, leaving authors 5 to 10 percent. An author should see self-publishing as a marketing tool, not a route to big bucks, says Hanke, who adds, “I'll make millions on my *next* book.” 

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