

Self-publishing your book: What are the advantages and disadvantages?

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Your manuscript is completed, advice from other writers and authors has been given, preliminary self-publishing research has been done, and the decision has been made to pursue publishing your own book. Before you write the check to have your book published, let's look at the advantages and disadvantages of self-publishing. In this final installment on self-publishing authors discuss the positives and negatives of this option.

Self-publishing is definitely not for the faint-hearted since all areas of the business are the author's sole responsibility. This new awareness might scare away some authors but there are some great advantages. Self-publishing affords authors more creative control, freedom and flexibility over their written work. Some authors have not only published their own books but went the extra mile and started their own publishing companies to capitalize on these benefits. "Financially, creatively and for freedoms sake it made more sense for me to start a publishing company, Music Industry Connection, that would publish my print, audio and e-books," said JaWar, and Atlanta-based recording artist and author of *Atlanta Music Industry Connection: Resources for Artists, Producers and Managers*, 2004, a how-to guide and source for anyone in the music industry. "Starting a publishing company affords me the opportunity to truly learn how the industry works, while given me the chance to reap additional benefits along the way."

Out of all the other perks, creative control of your manuscript may be the most enticing benefit to self-publishing, those who have done it say. "The creativity and freedom to do almost anything you want was the main attraction for me," said Kelvin Williams, Dekalb County school teacher and author of *The Book of Roses, Rain Clouds and Reflections*," a compilation of inspirational poems and short stories for young black men.

Creative control is not the only tempting benefit to self-publishing, but the opportunity to work closely in a one-on-one relationship with a publisher, says Patrick Lewis, owner of Creative Visions, a marketing consulting company in Lithonia.

But, with every positive, there is a negative, and self-publishing has its difficult side too. Self-publishing authors typically do not get the same level of respect as major publishing house authors do when it comes to book signings, tours, and getting their book in a national bookstore chain. The assumption is that a self-published author is not a competent writer to be published by a major house or the print quality of the book is poor. Another challenge is the cost of self-publishing.

“Authors must be prepared to pay out-of-pocket for printing, distribution, and travel expenses,” said Kendra Norman-Bellamy, author of six novels and owner of KNB Publications, LLC, a self-publishing company in Stone Mountain. “The biggest disadvantage we found to self-publishing was the distribution process,” said Ronald and Vernell Mosley, authors and owners of Weldon Productions and Pro Design, a marketing and design company in SouthWest Atlanta.

“Bookstores only buy from major distributors from a publishing house. When trying to approach to distribute only, they want you to start with them from scratch, and go through them for the whole process, even though you might not need all of those services,” said Vernell Mosley, who published *Well Done*, a family cookbook last year. “We are combating this by going to independent bookstores and selling our books on consignment,” said Ronald Mosley.

Despite all of the disadvantages, self-publishing is still the most desirable choice for many authors. “I have no regrets about my start as a self-published author, and I wouldn’t opt not to do the same again,” said Norman Bellamy. “I learned a lot about the industry and gained a greater appreciation for the gift God has given me.” Additionally, authors keep coming back to self-publishing for the networking and business opportunities. “I have developed relationships with other writers, and created a following among readers. I have also enjoyed the challenge of running my own publishing company and exercising creative control over my final product,” said Kenny Blue, who is writing his second book and owner of Journey Publishing.