



Question Set 2

Why did you decide to self-publish your book?

Since most publishers don't accept unsolicited manuscripts for publishing consideration, one typically must first have a literary agent who goes to publishers in an effort to sell a book idea. Every literary agent I contacted showed zero interest in representing me. If nothing else, the fact my book is targeted towards young black males was a red flag; this is the demographic least likely to buy or read a book. However, I was never discouraged. I knew self-publishing was a viable option for reaching my target audience, inspiring people, and encouraging honorable achievement in every field of human endeavor.

In addition, the publishing industry has evolved significantly over the last decade. According to what I've heard from many authors, traditional publishers are more likely than ever to limit an author's royalties for a book. And if traditional publishers aren't positive a book will sell well, they're hesitant to make an investment in the form of an advance for the author, or using corporate resources to market a book. This is all the more reason to self-publish.

What marketplaces did you use to publish your book? Which ones are easier to use as a self-publisher?

I used [Createspace.com](#) to publish the soft cover version, and [Kindle Direct Publishing](#) for an Amazon Kindle e-book (they're both owned by Amazon.com). I used [Lulu.com](#) to publish a hardcover version, and [PubIt by Barnes & Noble](#) to publish a Nook e-book. All were relatively easy to use as a self-publishing author.

What are some of the technical things that a writer should keep in mind if he/she plans to self-publish? Does an author need special software to self-publish?

I was able to work through technical issues by being diligent. **Most independent publishing services offer tools and resources to help authors complete their work.** Some of these tools and services are free, but some cost money. There are also many providers who service the self-publishing community, offering everything from copy editing and ISBN numbers, to cover design, e-book creation, independent reviews, marketing services, and large batch publishing at lower rates than traditional print-on-demand publishers.

As I wrote my book, I searched the Internet and read as much as I could on self-publishing. I made sure I clearly understood copyright law, even consulting an attorney specializing in intellectual property to ensure my work was protected. My attorney also made sure I clearly understood "fair use" guidelines (which deal with quoting copyrighted material). He also made sure I acquired the proper permission to quote copyrighted material. The attorney came at a cost, but this was a proactive step in ensuring I did everything correctly from a legal perspective.

For me, Microsoft Word was the easiest word processing application to use for creating a formal manuscript. However, I had to learn some features in Microsoft Word that I had never used before, despite my years of experience using the application. I had to learn how to create custom headers in each section of my book to ensure it looked professional (i.e. chapter names appear in the odd-numbered page headers, except for the first page of each chapter, and the book's name appears in the even-numbered page headers). I also had to be careful when manipulating tags in Microsoft Word so my chapter headings, table of contents, and index were formatted as I intended. Furthermore, I had to play

around with many font types and sizes until I found the combination that worked best for me. I chose the font, Times New Roman (size 11) for the body, and Baskerville Old Face (size 12) for the page headers. I could have paid someone to do all of this for me; however, this would have delayed my time to market. Therefore, I did it myself.

To design a cover page, I spent time in the West Palm Beach, Florida, public library, where I analyzed the design of hundreds of books. And I spent significant time at a Barnes & Nobles store in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, where I looked at all of the best-selling books. I also referred to an old marketing book from business school and reviewed **the psychology of color schemes**. Then I drafted a few cover page designs on paper by hand.

I chose sky blue as the dominant color of my book cover, as it's a cheerful color with no negative connotations; therefore, despite the powerful subject matter of my book, when people hold it in their hands and look at the cover, they naturally smile. So when people start reading my book, they'll start with a smile on their face. Then they'll laugh, cry, think about their life and the world, and experience a broad cross-section of multi-dimensional emotions. All this, before ending the book with a smile on their face and the realization that as human beings, everyone is capable of achieving their dreams, despite the adversity they might have to endure.

I completed my book's cover design (front and back) using Microsoft Word. I then copied my design to a template that I downloaded from Createspace.com. The template ensured the front and back covers fit the 6 x 9 inch book size appropriately. I used [Lulu.com's](http://Lulu.com) design services to create the equivalent cover for the hardcover version of my book.

After publishing the soft and hardcover versions of my book, I focused on creating e-book versions for Amazon Kindle and Barnes & Noble Nook. I downloaded a free copy of the [Calibre E-Book Management](#) application to facilitate e-book conversion. **I found that e-books are easier to create when a Microsoft Word file is saved as a filtered HTML file.** This process removes much of the Microsoft Word formatting that's not necessary for an e-book (i.e. the headers, footers, etc.).

Thereafter, I had to remove numerous section and page breaks so that hard page breaks only appeared between chapters, or wherever I wanted text or pictures to start or end on particular page. I also had to replace some data tables in the book with pictures (Jpeg files). I had used tables to show U.S. unemployment data in the book. However, tables don't convert well to the e-book format, as they are not consistent in size when displayed on different types of e-reading hardware (i.e. Kindle, Kindle Paperwhite, and Kindle Fire). To ensure a common user experience, I thought it would be better to use pictures than tables. I created Jpeg files by copying the data tables from my Microsoft Word manuscript, and pasting them into Microsoft Paint. I then cropped the edges of the pictures and saved them as Jpeg files. Thus, the more technologically proficient one is, the less likely they'll need to pay someone to edit the formatting of an e-book.

An additional issue I had in creating an e-book is the automatically generated table of contents of my draft e-book file was missing several key sections (those that didn't include the word "chapter"). The Calibre application scans header tags and includes ones with specific tags like "Class=Chapter" in the table of contents. Through analysis I discovered three approaches to fixing this. One, I could edit the query Calibre uses as it converts a filtered HTML file to an e-book. Alternatively, I could rename sections of my book so it matched the criteria used by Calibre to create a table of contents. For instance, the section I called "Author's Note" could be renamed "Prologue." However, I wanted the e-book to be consistent with the printed version, so I ruled this option out. As a third approach, I could use an HTML editing tool to adjust the file's "h1" (heading 1) tags. This required basic knowledge of HTML and the ability to use an HTML editing tool like Microsoft SharePoint Designer. I chose the latter approach because as future types of technology are deployed, I may have to convert the filtered HTML file to a different type of file (possibly using a different conversion tool), and I wanted the appropriate "h1" tags already in place. **This type of problem is one of many ways tenlegs.com comes in handy. The ability to connect with others and collaborate can save precious time for an author, as well as help**

one avoid frustration in completing a project. For instance, someone not skilled at graphic design, HTML editing, or custom Jpeg file creation, can find the expert help they need.

Lastly, since I acquired web design skills over the years, I was able to create a custom website for [The Janitor's Sons](#), which helps for marketing purposes.

Did you get outside help from anyone to help edit your work? If so, how did you find them?

Before I released my book, I had it professional proofread by a company I found through a Google search. However, one cannot rely on a professional proofreader to catch every typo or grammatical error. In my final reading of my book (after having it proofread), I found 2 glaring errors. So my advice to aspiring self-published authors: before publishing your work, take some time away from the book (a week or two), then re-read it (even if you already think it's perfect). You may be surprised by what you find. It's also a good idea to have as many close friends and family members read it as possible. This will allow one to get different perspectives. It was great to get constructive criticism from my wife, an avid reader, and well as a close friend.