



Publish Or Perish? The Author's Conundrum

By Wendy Lewis, Founder/President of Wendy Lewis & Co Ltd, Global Aesthetics Consultancy

As a prolific author (I've penned 13 books for commercial publishers in my own byline and currently working on my next), as well as an experienced ghostwriter of books for MDs for two decades, here is the lowdown on the state of publishing 2019.

While it is true that Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the moveable type we know as the printing press was a revelation in 15th century Europe, times have surely changed. With the advent of the Kindle, iPad, and digital everything, fewer printed books actually get read today in that form, which has radically changed the publishing industry.

It was my great fortune to publish my first consumer book through an impromptu introduction to a New York literary agent through Alan Matarasso, MD, FACS in 2008. It was called, *The Lowdown on Facelifts and Other Wrinkle Remedies* (Quadrille, London). As it was considered breakthrough in its day for the UK market, it was serialized in the Daily Mail and went on to have a second edition. Back then most aspiring authors like me could hardly have imagined the sweeping changes coming to the publishing industry.

Publishers basically had all the power and controlled your fate. They alone decided which writers could get published and they had a lot of choices. Most non-fiction manuscripts got rejected, and first-time authors of fiction were left begging and pleading for a break. The only conduit to publication was through a connected agent who worked on commission and also had a lot of choices of authors to work with. If you were lucky

Fast forward to 2019, and thanks to the advent of digital and social media, anybody can be an author today. You now have the ability to reach your target audience of readers without having to go through the arduous traditional route. You have options and you hold all the cards.



enough to get an agent to take you on, the next stage was a lengthy book proposal with a detailed table of contents, marketing plan and sample chapter, all of which was created on spec. A professional writer was needed to compose a book proposal which came with a price tag of \$5,000 and up. If you got a bite from a publisher, you would get some sort of advance (not large), to be paid at various intervals, and your agent took a 15% cut. Agents and publishers were considered the omnipotent gatekeepers to seeing your book on the shelves of the local Barnes & Noble, if there is one still open near you. Even the legendary Barnes & Noble, dubbed "the world's biggest bookseller" with over 600 stores in 50 states is under financial strain. Declining sales and the great digital takeover have hurt them hard. Most B&N's have morphed into a combination book store, toy and gift shop, with a Starbucks.

The New Book Publishing

Fast forward to 2019, and thanks to the advent of digital and social media, anybody can be an author today. You now have the ability to reach your target audience of readers without having to go through the arduous

traditional route. You have options and you hold all the cards. We have gone from the idea of "You're an expert so you should write a book," to "You wrote a book, so you must be an expert." Surely you get the nuances here.

Self-publishing is one such path that many physicians choose. This method can take on several forms. Doctors may work with a vanity press, so to speak, which is a category of publishers that will take on high profile authors with book ideas they think they can sell into Amazon and other booksellers. They usually manage the process from start to finish by enlisting a ghost writer, coming up with a catchy title, cover design, scope, content, voice, etc. It can be an expensive proposition for the author but can yield positive results through name recognition in the eyes of peers, customers (i.e. patients), fans and followers, and the media.

Another option is to hire a ghost writer on your own to create the manuscript with your input, and then self-publish with a publisher, often located in Asia where costs are significantly lower. I used the term 'publisher,' but in essence these are really

Continued on Page 77

Publish Or Perish? The Author's Conundrum

Continued from Page 76

printers who take the content and images provided by the author, print the book and bind it with a cover created by a graphic designer of the author's choice. To self-publish, if you plan to sell your book commercially, you will need to get an ISBN (International Standard Book Number), which is a unique 13-digit code assigned to every commercial book. A self-published author, you are acting as a publisher and can thus, buy your own ISBN for your books that are in print or electronic form.

In my experience, this can end up being a lengthy process, most often due to the limited time a busy practicing physician can devote to getting it done. Sadly, I have worked on many of these projects that have never seen the light of day because the authors lose interest or get too busy and it falls through the cracks.

The real glitch in the above strategy is that not all self-published books will be accepted by the largest bookseller on the planet—Amazon. This means that to get your book into the hands of consumers who are not already your patients, you may have to do it yourself via PR and online marketing which adds considerably to the cost of the project.

To counter this issue, instead of printing thousands of books and storing them in your office or attic, you can consider the print on demand option. This is a more affordable way to print your own self-published book in manageable quantities, as in the hundreds

Instead of printing thousands of books and storing them in your office or attic, you can consider the print on demand option. This is a more affordable way to print your own self-published book in manageable quantities, as in the hundreds instead of thousands of copies. This is also a good option for a book on a timely topic that you may plan to update in a year as the subject evolves.

instead of thousands of copies. This is also a good option for a book on a timely topic that you may plan to update in a year as the subject evolves.

The Rise of the eBook

An electronic book, eBook as we know it, is essentially the digital counterpart of a printed book that consists of text and images. It is distributed as a digital file that can be read on any mobile device, from phones, to tablets, to laptops. Common formats of eBooks include: .iba(Apple iBooks), .azw(Amazon Kindle), EPUB and PDF files.

Among the key advantages of the eBook format are convenience and cost. The instant gratification factor appeal is obvious. You literally download the eBook and voila, it's yours forever. eBooks are usually cheap or free, and there are no shipping costs and tariffs that kick in. Once you have downloaded the files, you will have total access to read and share the contents any time you want. Through an Adobe account, you can highlight text and make notes in the margins as you would with a traditional book of any kind. Due to the tremendous cost savings when compared to traditional paperback and hardcover books, libraries and students are all over this trend.

If you choose to go the eBook route, you can enlist the services of a professional eBook publisher who can handle the conversion of your full manuscript into an eBook form. This may be submitted in a Word doc, PDF and InDesign files, depending on the publisher, and they can create a format that will be readable on all relevant platforms. This typically costs upwards of a few hundred to a few thousand dollars as a one-time charge.

Lastly, there is also the DIY eBook plan, which is a very cost-effective tactic that offers the additional benefits of building your mailing list. Surely you have seen promotions like this on websites: "Download our free eBook to get insider secrets about (fill in the blank)." This eBook format can be customized by a professional writer in the first person (doctor's voice—"I") or 3rd person (the practice voice—"we") and designed with your practice branding so it is uniquely yours.

For most plastic surgeons, eBooks are an ideal way to create viable, readable content at an affordable price on any relevant topic. When marketed effectively online and through social channels to the right target audience, eBooks can deliver personalized key messages in your practice's voice and tone on a digital platform.

You may consider an eBook format on a specific narrow topic, similar to what you may have created a landing page or microsite for, such as Hair Restoration Resource, New Frontiers in Body Shaping, The Truth about BBL, Top 10 Treatments for Skin of Color, etc. These can also be easily translated into other languages, if that would be useful to attract other target audiences to your practice.

For most plastic surgeons, eBooks are an ideal way to create viable, readable content at an affordable price on any relevant topic. When marketed effectively online and through social channels to the right target audience, eBooks can deliver personalized key messages in your practice's voice and tone on a digital platform. It solves the dual purpose of getting you started as an 'author' in the simplest and least costly way, and has the potential to make an impact on your practice.

So, are you ready to become an author?

Wendy Lewis is President of Wendy Lewis and CO Ltd, www.wendylewisco.com, Editor in Chief of www.beautyinthebag.com, and author of *Aesthetic Clinic Marketing in the Digital Age* (CRC Press, 2018). Her next book, *Growing an Aesthetic Surgery Practice: A Roadmap for Success*, will be published by Thieme in 2020. [wl@wlbeauty.com](mailto:w@wlbeauty.com)