



LAUGHING BEAR 140 NEWSLETTER

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P.O. Box 613322, Dallas, TX 75261-3322 e-mail: editor@laughingbear.com
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The Surviving Small Press: Publishing On Demand vs. Traditional Publishing

Publishing On Demand (POD) is a breakthrough technology that offers publishing alternatives never practical before, but it does not, it cannot replace traditional book publishing methods.

By traditional publishing, I mean to print and bind a quantity of books at one time. The quantity is a projected number of books large enough to cover anticipated sales, but not so many that a surplus will have to be inventoried or remaindered.

That is the economically sound way to publish because it ensures the best balance between cost and projected return.

POD is good if you need a few copies of a book printed occasionally, as in reprints of books have gone out of print or limited-interest books like family histories, community cookbooks, and other instances where publishing more than a few hundred copies would make the costs of printing and storage prohibitive.

Unfortunately, some online POD companies are marketing POD as a cheap and simple means of self-publishing any book.

POD is not suited to publishing a book that 1) you intend to market yourself, 2) a book that you hope will sell many copies, 3) a book from which you intend to make a

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Reporter Shares the Secrets to Getting You and Your Book Booked on TV

by Jeff Crilley, author, *Free Publicity*

You've spent countless hours writing the book – but the media won't even read your press release. It's a common problem.

But as a veteran TV reporter, I have a scoop for you. Getting booked to talk about your book on TV doesn't have to be a difficult as some authors make it.

So, here are five steps to becoming a guest that even some PR pros don't know:

1) Be Timely

Become a student of the news. Is the news media covering a story that relates to your book? You need to sell what the news is buying.

A Dallas businessman, Jim Halperin, wrote a novel about cryonics several years ago. And yet every time the subject of freezing yourself comes up, he successfully books himself on the morning television talk shows to talk about his book. In fact, when controversy broke out last summer about legendary baseball player Ted Williams being frozen, Halperin was successful in getting national attention for his novel, *The First Immortal*.

2) Choose the Right Show

Perhaps the most common mistake even some PR pros make is trying to sell a good book to the wrong show.

Before you call a TV station, start watching their morning show. Do they interview authors? Is there a regular segment featuring books each morning at the same time? Don't pick up the phone or send a news release until you know the answers to these questions.

3) Be Charming and Brief on the Phone

If I were going to pitch a morning show producer, I'd start out by complementing them on their program. I'd say something like, "I'm constantly amazed how you fill the show with such interesting guests. You have a great team in the mornings. I have a book that I think your hosts, Bill and Jane, would love!"

4) Write Like a Reporter

If I were going to send a press release to a morning show producer, I'd write the kind of headline that a newspaper would run. And I'd make the rest of the release so conversational that a TV anchor could read it right on the air.

Why is this so important? Most major market newsrooms get hundreds of press releases every day. Often the decision on whether to cover your story is made in a matter of seconds. Many times that well-crafted sentence in the third paragraph of your press release is never read.

5) Wait for a Slow News Day

The holidays are the slowest "news times" of the year. When government offices are closed, so

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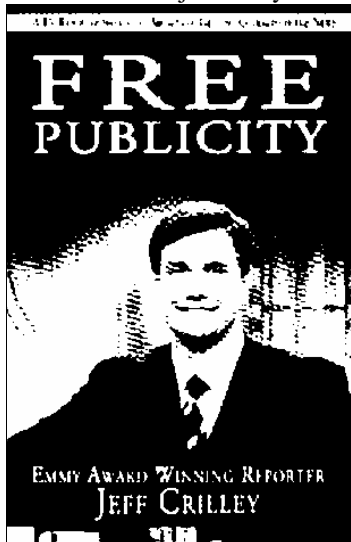
Reporter Shares the Secrets to Getting You and Your Book Booked on TV *(continued)*

are most of our sources. Take advantage of it.

In fact, take out your calendar and begin circling government holidays. If the government isn't making news, we reporters are scrambling to find something to cover. Pitch even an average story on a day when the media is starving for news, and you're much more likely to get coverage.

There you go. Now you're armed with knowledge that even some well-paid public relations professionals don't practice. If your idea is timely, and pitched to the right person when the supply of news is running thin, you're in!

— Jeff Crilley is an Emmy Award Winning Reporter and author of *Free Publicity – A TV Reporter Shares the Secrets for Getting Covered on the News*. It's available at bookstores everywhere or online at www.jeffcrilley.com.



Free Publicity

By Jeff Crilley

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Laughing Bear's New Web Site

I have completely redesigned and rebuilt Laughing Bear's web site (www.laughingbear.com). While the old site was okay, it was tough to find exactly what you wanted and there were several features that were just taking up space.

The new site is completely automated. If you want to find an article, you can search for it using keywords, or you can go to the Articles page and use the controls to filter and sort the articles by category, type and subject to make a custom list of those that best meet your needs.

On the old site, you could search too, but that and the message board were provided by another company. I didn't have complete control over how they looked or worked. There is always the disadvantage of relying on another company that may change its policies or go out of business at any time. On the new site, I built those features myself.

The new site includes many more articles than the old one, and you can download complete back issues of the newsletter in Adobe PDF format. (If you have wanted to get software to make your own PDF files, but haven't wanted to spend hundreds of dollars on Adobe Acrobat, RoboPDF is a new product that works great and costs just \$79 from www.Robopdf.com. A home edition of RoboPDF is available for free from their web site.

The Links page, now called Publisher Resources, also allows you to use filter controls to find the resources you need quickly. I have weeded out the links that had nothing to do with publishing and have added more relevant ones.

The Publishing Forum is a message board where you can ask questions, help other publishers,

and participate in discussions. The page can either show all the messages at once or just those associated with an ongoing discussion.

The reasons for redesigning the site are more than just wanting something different with more bells and whistles. The old site consisted of well over a hundred web pages. Any time I wanted to change the look of the site or otherwise update all the pages all, I had to make the change on each page.

Other than image files and downloads, the new site consists of just eight ASP scripts that generate hundreds of virtual html pages as they are needed. The pages appear as regular html pages, but they do not really exist as files. Therefore, the new site takes up considerably less space and if changes have to be made they are done in one place and affect all the pages.

Likewise, instead of having a links page with links "hard coded" onto it, the link information is stored in a database and appear on the Publisher Resources page when it is generated. That is why it is so easy to sort through and display just the links that interest you. If you request links to printing companies, the database returns only those links that have been categorized as having to do with printers.

To add a new link for the Publisher Resources page, I just add the information to an MS Access database and it will appear on the page the next time it is called up.

The Publishing Forum message board works the same way. A new message is automatically written to the database and appears when the page is refreshed. If the message is a reply to another posted message, the two share a

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POD vs. Traditional Publishing *(continued)*

living or even just a profit. In other words, if you are publishing the book to make money and/or distribute widely, you will be better off publishing the book using traditional printing and binding.

When you publish a book via POD, the publisher usually pays royalties of 40% to 60% of the cover price for copies sold. When you want copies to sell yourself, you get a 40% discount just like a bookseller. That may not sound so bad, but there is more to POD than money.

You have little or no control over the marketing of your book. You have little or no control over the design of your book or its production. And all copies, whether sold on the web or through bookstores, are sold by the POD publisher.

If you intend to sell over 500 copies of your book, it will be more economical to publish it traditionally. You can control costs, the selling price, marketing, distribution and rights, and therefore profit.

Publishing a book “for free” sounds great until you realize you have to pay wholesale to get a copy of your own book. If you want to publish a book and not have to worry about marketing and sales, you may as well submit your manuscript to a publisher. You’ll get about the same deal, but they will put more effort into promoting your book. If it doesn’t sell, they are stuck with the inventory. If the book is published POD and doesn’t sell, the POD company isn’t out anything, so the POD company has little incentive to spend money marketing your title.

POD companies, like vanity presses, expect to make most of their money selling your own book back to you. They retain sole rights to produce the book, so you are forced to go to them for copies.

You cannot decide later to publish the book yourself without re-acquiring the rights to do so. You also cannot sell the foreign or any other rights to the book without the POD publisher’s permission.

A selling point POD publishers will use to attract you is that your book will be available through Amazon and other online booksellers. POD books are sold through online booksellers because those booksellers will list anything that has an ISBN so long as it can be drop-shipped from the publisher directly to the buyer. That way they do not have to carry any inventory of the book and are at no risk if it doesn’t sell. If the book sells, the online bookstore takes a percentage off the sale. If it doesn’t, they don’t care.

Brick and mortar bookstores will not carry POD books any more than they will vanity press books. The primary reason is that the books are not selected by an editor. No distinction is made on the POD company’s part between masterpieces and junk. Also, the quality of the printing and binding is poor, and since the publisher does little to promote the books, they are unlikely to sell.

Still, POD is not vanity publishing. It is just sometimes misused and misrepresented. Publishers use POD as a service provided for the benefit of their readers and authors. If a book goes out of print, POD gives the publisher a way to make individual copies available to their customers at a moderate price. They don’t expect to make much money from it, but customers will appreciate the service.

The best part is the publisher can keep an out of print book available indefinitely at no expense to the book publisher. No inventory, no shipping, no billing.

Likewise, if you want to publish a family biography, or want

to put together a memory book for your high school reunion, POD lets you make the book available to a limited audience without having to take orders, deliver books, or raise the money to pay for it. Again, you are not going to make much money, but that’s not the point of that kind of project. The important thing is just to make the book available without going broke.

The process of publishing on demand is virtually the same as taking your manuscript file to Kinko’s, or any copy shop, where you can have it copied and bound. When you need a couple of copies of the book, take your electronic file or camera ready sheets to Kinko’s and have as many copies as you need printed out.

The POD has a huge laser printer that pops out bound books from your PDF file. Whenever an order comes in, a single book is produced, packaged and mailed directly to the buyer. Every so often you receive a check from the POD publishers for your share of the revenue. The POD’s share pays for their overhead, handling, and profit.

If you publish a book using Kinko’s to publish on demand, you pay for the cost of the book and then sell it any way you want. You have control over the marketing and distribution.

When a POD book is published the sales price is set by the POD publisher, as is the amount of profit you will realize. They have sole control over how and where the book is sold.

If you, for whatever reason, want to try publishing a new book on an on-demand basis, you will be well advised to try doing it first using the Kinko’s method. Then later if the book takes off, you can have copies printed by a book printer. Even if it doesn’t take off, you can at least maintain control over the project and revenues. 🐻

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Laughing Bear's New Website *(continued)*

common thread number so they will be displayed together if you want to see just the messages posted on that subject.

Most of the articles are too long to be practical in a database, so the text for them is stored in a script, each with a identifying key-word. The titles, descriptions, and keywords are stored in a database, which lets them be sorted and filtered on the Articles page.

The use of databases makes it much easier to maintain the web site. When information needs to be added or changed, instead of having to download individual pages, edit them, and then upload them back to the server, I can just make the change to the database.

When you first come to the site, you will see a Flash animated introduction page. You have to click the "Click to Enter" link to go to the new home page. The reason for this is practical. Throughout the years many web sites have linked to the Laughing Bear home page, www.laughingbear.com/index.html. If I were to change the home page address to www.laughingbear.com/index.ASP, all those precious links would be broken. So the introduction page has the old home page address and does nothing but keep those links active.

Many individual articles and other pages from the old web site are linked to other sites as well. To maintain those links, I kept the original files on the server, but when someone goes to one of those pages, they are redirected to the new web site. Maintaining those links is important. The site has been getting approximately 140,000 hits, 10,500 individual page views, and 8,700 individual user sessions per month, and much of that traffic comes from links on other sites. 🐻

Announcements

- **Vera Gold**, founder and executive director of **96 Inc**, died of leukemia on March 10, 2004. "The cultural community of Boston suffered a major loss today," said Mayor Thomas M. Menino. "She did so many things: She was committed to the arts and to artists in every discipline; a pillar of the community who cared about the individuals in it. She was someone you wanted to be with." (Nancy Mehegan, co-director, 96 Inc, PO Box 15559, Boston, MA 02215; www.96inc.com)

- **Edwards Brothers, Inc.** (2500 S. State St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104; www.edwardsbrothers.com) is a leading producer of short and medium run books and journals. Their seminar, "From Disks and Paper to Books" provides classroom and hands-on learning on all phases of book production. 2004 classes will be held April 22-23, May 20-21, and October 14-15. This is a unique opportunity to learn how your books are produced, making you a more informed buyer of book production services. Details on their web site.

- **Wiselephant** (www.wiselephant.com) provides marketing and promotion services for authors, publishers and artists.

- **Zoo Press** (www.zoopress.org) has a new address: Zoo Press, PO Box 3528, Omaha, NE 68103. In fall 2004 Zoo Press will assume control of *The Nebraska Review*.

- **Opera, Inc.** (2200 Arbor Tech Dr., Hebron, KY 41048; www.semblance7.com) produces trade show displays.

- **e-BookServices.com** (www.e-bookservices.com) produces e-Books in India. Services include e-Book development, content development, accessible format creation (visually impaired), audio transcription, pre-press, proofreading, typesetting and much more.

- **Independent Authors Network** (Toni Graeme, founder / facilitator, 408-844 Fisgard St., Victoria, BC, V8T 3M5 Canada; www.beaconhillbooks.net) holds meetings every six weeks, sponsors workshops and publishes a bi-annual international book catalogue of member's books.

- **ebrary** (www.ebrary.com) is a leading provider of information distribution and retrieval services for book publishers. They provide an effective way to reach libraries through their distribution channels, at the same time reducing costs associated with promoting titles electronically. For magazine and newsletter publishers, they offer a solution for easily and cost-effectively distributing digital editions and creating online archives.

- **AnyBook Professional Series** (Ron Watters, Great Rift Software; www.ronwatters.com/RonSoft5.htm) is the new 32-bit version of the popular AnyBook software. I've mentioned this software before that handles inventory, orders, accounts payable and receivable, and everything else a publisher could ask for. This new, more powerful version does all that and works on Microsoft Windows 2000, ME, and XP. Since this software is shareware, you can try it out before buying it.

- **Mountain High Writers Conference** (www.mountainhighwriters.com) will be held in Denver, Colorado from May 6 to 8, 2004. You will sharpen your writing skills and learn about publishing and bookselling from successful industry professionals. There will also be a screenwriting competition.

- **Small Press Center** (Karin Taylor, director; The Small Press Center, 20 West 44th St., New York, NY 10036; www.smallpress.org) is the new home for the Laughing Bear Press collection of small press books, magazines, and other materials. Thank you, SPC!