



17 STEPS

.....
to Earn Your First

\$1,000

.....
with Self-Publishing



← **BY STEVE SCOTT** →

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17 Steps to Earn Your First \$1,000 with Self-Publishing

Self-publishing often can be a *frustrating* business.

You hear about the success stories from some authors, but the books that *you* write seem to languish in obscurity.

In fact, you might be spending more money on your books than you're bringing in.

Fortunately, there is a simple process you can follow to get the ball rolling with your publishing business. This is the same process that I've used to **publish over 60 books, which has generated over a million copies sold in the past four years**. This process worked well in 2012 and it *still* works in late 2016. ([Here's the proof from our most recent book launch.](#))

More...

In this post, we're going to break down a 17-step process that will take you all the way from newbie writer to published author who generates a nice side income with your books. In fact, if you follow this plan and work hard on each step, you can use this information to generate your first \$1,000 as an indie nonfiction author.

Let's get to it...

Why Focus on Your First \$1,000?

Whenever starting something new, we all need "proof of concept" that what's being taught is something that *actually* works. So if you see some results, then you're more inclined to keep going and work even harder.

Self-publishing is no different. As a new author, it's nice to generate a bit of income before you make that mental commitment to focus on this business as a regular side hustle.

So why \$1,000?

Well, we feel this is a great milestone for three reasons:

- It's a challenging goal, but doable if you're willing to work hard.
- It's enough money that can have a positive impact on your financial situation.
- It's income that can be reinvested back into your book business, so you can turn your early success into a permanent source of revenue.

Overall, \$1,000 is a challenging goal that's possible with a little bit of hard work. And once you hit this milestone, you can set an even loftier goal (like generating \$5,000 or more with your self-publishing business.)

We have a lot of ground to cover in this article, so let's kick things off with the first step.

Step #1: Find a Niche or Genre

The simplest path to generating your first dollars as a self-published author is to **find an underserved market and write books that these readers want**. In other words, it makes no sense to reinvent the wheel as a brand new author. Later on (once you have some money coming through the door) you can afford to take a few risks with your books. But for now, it's best to create content for a proven niche or genre.

So, what is a niche or genre?

These are book types which are written for a certain audience. To keep things simple, I use the word “niche” to describe nonfiction books and “genre” for fiction books.

As an example, here a few markets you can choose for your books:

Each of these markets represent a specific interest that *some people* have. One thing to keep in mind is each genre or niche will have major differences in the size of their audiences.

For instance, a book that’s ranked in the top 10 of the vampire romance market on will sell a *lot more* than a top 10 book in the canning and preserving category.

There’s a quick formula you can use to “guesstimate” the amount of sales that a book generates. Just go to the Kindle section of Amazon and scroll down to the section called *Product Details*. Once there, look for a line that says **Amazon Best Sellers Rank** (or BSR), which can be a number from 1 all the way up to 6,000,000. This represents it’s ranking among all books in the Kindle store. The lower number, the more copies it’s selling.

Here is a guide to determine how many sales a book generates on Amazon:

Ranking	Sales
1 to 100	500 to 3,500 daily sales
100 to 1000	100 to 500 daily sales
1,000 to 3,000	65 to 100 daily sales
3,000 to 5,000	30 to 70 daily sales
5,000 to 8,000	24 to 29 daily sales
8,000 to 12,000	21 to 14 daily sales
12,000 to 15,000	18 to 21 daily sales
15,000 to 20,000	13 to 18 daily sales
20,000 to 25,000	10 to 13 daily sales
25,000 to 30,000	7 to 10 daily sales
30,000 to 40,000	5 to 7 daily sales
40,000 to 50,000	2 to 5 daily sales
50,000 to 70,000	.5 to 2 daily sales
70,000 and above	less than .5 daily sales

IMPORTANT:

Use these numbers only as a rough estimate. It’s almost impossible to get an accurate measurement on the sales number of a book because Amazon will often factor in the borrows through the Kindle Unlimited program as part of their algorithm.

My recommendation is to find a market that you personally enjoy. Odds are, you'll publish content for this audience for the next few years. So it's easier to get feel excited about your next book if you're genuinely interested in the topic and want to provide value to the reader.

There are **two strategies** you can use to help with market selection:

1. The Rule of #30,000
2. Write to a Market (using the advice of Chris Fox)

Let me briefly go over each one:

Strategy I: Use the Rule of #30,000

I have followed this strategy since the start of my self-publishing journey. The idea here is to explore the categories and sub-categories in the Kindle marketplace, looking at the different niches and book ideas.

What you're looking for is to **find at least three books with a BSR that's under #30,000, which is around 5 to 7 sales a day or \$10 to \$15 earning if you sell your book at \$2.99.**

The above might not seem like a lot of money, but it can quickly build when you have a multiple books and thousands of true fans who buy every title in your catalog (this is a concept we teach through our [Authority Pub Academy course](#).)

You can use the Rule of #30,000 in a few different ways. I like to explore a potential market using this metric to discover markets that are being underserved by existing authors. If I *can't* find any related books under this number, then I will move on to a different market.

You can also use this rule to identify a bestselling book idea. If you can find multiple books on the same topic, then you know it'll probably have decent sales.

Strategy II: Write to a Market

This is a concept popularized by Chris Fox (in his [book](#) of the same name). The idea here is to find what's already selling and craft a book that matches the expectations of readers. The key here is to find a market that's profitable but isn't *too* competitive.

In an [interview with Simon Whistler on the Rocking Self-Publishing podcast](#), Fox provides a simple strategy for finding a quality market that's being underserved:

"In order to write to market, authors must research the market. Chris recommends seeking out subcategories in which the top books are ranked around #1,000 or higher in the Kindle Store, and the 20th or 40th bestselling books are ranked anywhere from #5,000 to #10,000. A subcategory with these types of rankings within the top 100 books means readers love the genre, but they're not being supplied with enough books."

The Rule of #30,000 and Writing to Market strategies are *not* set in stone. At the end of the day, the best thing you can do is dedicate a few hours to researching the different books and markets in the Kindle store. Try to find titles that relate to your personal interests that also have some profit potential.

Step #2: Understand the Needs of Your Market

The quickest way to sell many copies of a book is to know what your market wants and then give it to them. Yes, I'll agree this seems like an obvious statement. But many authors seem to forget this simple rule. And honestly, I've

made this mistake a few times as well.

My point here is you can't come up with a book idea and *assume* it will sell. Instead, you should take time to research this industry to understand the pain points of your potential readers and the type of information they really need.

Primarily, you want to find four things:

1. What are trending or popular topics in this market?
2. What are the holes in the available information that is being underserved?
3. What are the popular pieces of content that could be expanded on or improved?
4. What types of content gets the most comments and/or social shares?

Keep these questions in mind while researching your market. What you'll quickly discover is there are dozens of book opportunities in pretty much any niche. So be sure to write down everything that comes to mind because at least *one* of these ideas will become **your breakthrough bestseller**.

Now, there are many resources you can use to research a niche. In fact, we have a lengthy post that's dedicated to this subject: [13 Proven Tools for Discovering Bestselling Book Ideas](#).

If you don't have time to read this article, then here is a quick list of my favorite tools that I've used to research a market:

To get started, I recommend identifying your niche *before* checking out the above websites. That way, you'll know where to best focus your efforts.

Step #3: Do a Complete Brain Dump

You've probably generated a number of book ideas in the previous step. Some will be potential bestsellers and others will be duds. The key here is to keep researching this market and discover *all* of the topics that might be interesting to prospective readers.

Once you've researched this market, set aside a 60- to 90-minute block of time where you can do a complete "brain dump" of book ideas. Sure, you might already have a few ideas in mind from your research, but it's important to isolate yourself from the distractions of modern technology, look at this list of topics, and then brainstorm additional book ideas.

I challenge you to come up with **at least 50 book ideas**.

Odds are, most of these ideas won't go anywhere *or* they might end up as a section of a longer book, but you should come up with as many ideas as possible (and write them down) because these topics will become an asset you can leverage whenever you're stuck wondering what to write next.

Step #4: Think "Inch Wide, Mile Deep."

One of the biggest "aha moments" I've had with self-publishing is many readers don't have time to read massive compendiums that cover an entire market. Instead, they prefer short, actionable books that provide an extensive solution on **one strategy**.

This realization has led to a concept that we call "Inch Wide, Mile Deep" (IWMD) at the [Authority Pub Academy](#).

Put simply, your book should focus on a single topic in your market, which provides an extensive solution to this

challenge. To illustrate this point, let's take the niche topic of nonfiction self-publishing (since this is a website that specializes in this market.)

If you apply the IWMD strategy to self-publishing you could come up with a variety of excellent topics—all relating to specific challenges that indie authors face:

- How to find bestselling book ideas
- How to write a nonfiction book
- How to write to a specific market
- How to dictate your book
- How to get lots of positive reviews
- How to write a compelling book description
- How to market your book and increase sales
- How to run an email list to promote your books
- How to build an author platform
- How to manage your time and be productive as an indie
- How to leverage different ad platforms to promote your books (Facebook, BookBub, Amazon Marketing Services.)
- How to understand the legal implications of running an author business.

Okay, those are just a few ideas that I rattled off with about three minutes of brainstorming. The funny thing? Most of the ideas have already been covered in a book or as part of a premium course. So odds are, each one would probably sell well.

If you apply the IWMD strategy to your market and identify the “micro challenges” that readers are facing, then you'll discover it's pretty easy to come up with enough book ideas to keep you busy for the next few years.

Step #5: Use the 3 P's to Narrow Down Your Selection

At Authority.pub, we recommend a simple process for picking book ideas that will work for your market. It's something we call the 3 P's of self-publishing:

- **Profitability:** Are people interested in this topic? (i.e. Use the Rule of #30,000 to see if people already buy similar books.)
- **Passion:** Do you have interest in writing about this topic? (i.e. Is an important concept that you'd love to share with others?)
- **Personal experience:** Do you have experience with this subject or can you interview enough people in this industry to come up with great content that helps readers?

I firmly believe that all 3 P's are important to the process. Put simply, this book idea should be a perfect merge of all three requirements:

To illustrate this point, if I looked at the list from step #4, I would pick any of the book topics *except* the ones on dictating a book and understanding the legal implications of running a self-publishing business. That's because they topics where I don't have a lot of personal experience.

So, as you're going through the list of book ideas, there be ones that you'd like to eliminate. This can happen for a number of reasons:

- You don't think it will sell
- You don't have enough experience
- You don't think the audience is large enough
- You don't fully understand the concept

Don't be afraid to eliminate an idea for any of these reasons, but also keep them around for future reference because you never know when it might be useful for a future book (or piece of content).

Whittle down this book idea list until you come to three winners . All of them should fit the 3 P's criteria, and *more importantly* you should be ready to write about any of these topics depending on the feedback that you get from your market. So let's talk about that next!

Step #6: Get Feedback from a Facebook Group

As you've seen throughout this post, we believe market research is a critical part of your success as a self-published author. This is doubly true when you're taking those crucial first steps into this competitive business.

Unfortunately, there is a "chicken-or-egg" problem when it comes to market research as a brand new author.

If you don't have an existing audience, how do you do find out what they want to read?

And if you don't know what they want, how can you write a book that builds an audience?

Fortunately, there is a quick fix to this chicken-or-egg problem... And the best part?... It's completely free!

Simply go to Facebook, type in keywords (or phrases) related to your market, join a few groups related to this niche, and then interact with the members of these groups.

Now, here's where it gets tricky...

You want to be part of this group for a few weeks and provide value *before* asking anything in return.

Seriously, don't be "that guy" (or girl) who joins a group and then immediately starts pitching their widget. That's the quickest path to getting ignored, flamed, or even booted out.

My advice?

Be helpful by:

- Reading older posts and understanding how members interact with one another.
- Commenting (and liking) on other threads.
- Providing giving helpful advice and tips from your personal experiences.
- Posting links to helpful, free content that you find from other websites.

Building a book-based business requires long-term thinking. So it's better to take time to establish credibility in these communities *before* asking anything in return.

Once you've established authority, you can create a simple survey in this group that basically says, "I'm considering writing a book in the ___ market. Which of these books would you find most interesting?" Then create a poll where members can respond.

You'll be surprised at how many people will respond to this simple poll. From there, you can use this feedback to start brainstorming what you'll cover in this book.

SIDE NOTE:

Polls also provide a golden opportunity to find those early reads. If your ideas are compelling enough, you'll get the occasional comment like: "Wow, that sounds like a book I want to read!" Obviously, this is someone who is probably interested in your book.

All you have to do is reach out to them (I prefer Facebook's private message feature) and ask if they would be interested in receiving a free copy when it's available. This can be great way to find readers who will leave a review once your book is live.

So be sure to pay close attention to the comments people are leaving in your polls and take the time to reach out to anyone who is interested in your book idea.

Step #7: Craft a Compelling Title

Your book title will make or break your success. If the copy on the cover grabs people's attention and make them want to learn more, then it will generate a large number of sales. On the other hand, if you're using a boring, "keyword-stuffed," generic sounding title, then your book will end up lost amongst the millions of books on Amazon.

Remember—people are looking for specific solutions to their specific problems. So your book needs to hook their interest and directly relate to a benefit that they're seeking.

And...

You only have **few seconds** to make this happen.

So your choice of a book title should be decided long *before* it's published.

A nonfiction book title can be broken down into two parts:

There is the main title, which can be a simple one to seven-word phrase that's both memorable and brandable. Just think of the most popular nonfiction books:

- Rich Dad Poor Dad
- Eat Pray Love
- Getting Things Done
- The 4-Hour Workweek

Really, the only job of a main title is to **create curiosity and grab someone's attention.**

Just think of the way you browse books on Amazon or in a bookstore. The two things you first notice are the title and cover image. So if your title can immediately grab their attention, then your already halfway there.

There are also specific title formulas that work well for the nonfiction book market.

Like:

TITLE FORMULA	EXAMPLE
An attention grabber	Running Sucks, Super Brain, Why Men Love Bitches
A benefit-driven title	Getting Things Done, How to Win Friends and Influence People, Love Yourself Like Your Life Depends on It
A time-specific result	4-Hour Work Week, The 17-Day Diet, 21 Days to a More Disciplined Life
A numbered list of content	21 Prayers of Gratitude, How to Make Him Beg to Be Your Boyfriend in 6 Simple Steps, 52 Small Changes
A keyword-specific title	Paleo Diet Recipes, How to Lose Weight Fast, Get a Girlfriend

The second part of the titling process is to come up with a subtitle that supports the claim of main title. You can do many things here:

SUBTITLE FORMULA	EXAMPLE
Identify the target market by focusing on a specific gender, demographic, or interest.	What The Rich Teach Their Kids About Money – That The Poor And Middle Class Do Not! (Rich Dad Poor Dad)
Describe what benefit you'll receive by implementing what's taught inside the book	The Art of Stress-Free Productivity (Getting Things Done)
List multiple benefits to the reader.	Escape the 9 to 5, Live Anywhere, and Join the New Rich (The 4-Hour Workweek)
Speak to a pain point the reader is experiencing.	How to Stop Worrying, Relieve Anxiety, and Eliminate Negative Thinking (Declutter Your Mind)
Offer valuable resources that make the reader's life easier and more convenient, or provides a solution.	Apps for iPhone, iPad, Android, Kindle Fire and PC/iOS Desktop Computers (115 Productivity Apps to Maximize Your Time)

Before we move on to the next step, I want to get on my soapbox for a minute...

Don't treat the title of your book as an afterthought. Spend a few hours working on it *before* you start writing it. Not only does this give you a sense of direction for the book, it will also help you generate the early buzz that can lead to those important early reviews and sales.

Your choice of a title has a huge impact on your ability to reach the "\$1,000 milestone." Choose your title wisely, and you could hit this milestone with your first book. Choose poorly and self-publishing will become a daily slog with little income to show for your efforts.

To illustrate this point, let's talk about the classic book *Think and Grow Rich*.

Napoleon Hill (the author) spent twenty years interviewing successful business people, presidents, royalties and entertainers in order to unlock the common threads of what makes people successful in life.

The first title of this book was *The Philosophy of Success*, which didn't sell well. Then he changed the title to *The Science of Personal Achievement*, which also didn't sell. Finally, Hill rewrote the title and focused on a core benefit that many folks secretly desired—how to get rich.

After switching the title over to *Think and Grow Rich*, the book went on to **sell 100 million copies**.

Hopefully this rant has demonstrated the importance of crafting a book title that stands out from the competition. Get this right and you'll generate a lot of interest in your book. Then "all" you have to do is to write something worth all this attention. So let's talk about that next.

Step #8: Write Your Book

I'm not going to lie to you — writing a book can be a time consuming process. But it's not too bad if you're willing to set aside 30 to 60 minutes a day to work on it.

So while "write your book" is only one step in this process, it actually involves a series of micro-steps that require their own explanation and process. That's why I recommend the following blog posts and podcast episodes that will detail the entire process:

Blog Posts:

1. [Publishing Basics: 10 Steps To Writing Your Book](#)
2. [How To Find Your Peak Writing State In 3 Simple Steps](#)
3. [How To Turn Your Blog Content Into A Self-Published Book](#)
4. [10 Elements Of A Good Nonfiction Book](#)
5. [30 Surefire Ways To Bust Through Writer's Block](#)
6. [How To Self-Publish A Book Without Overwhelm, Confusion, And Self-Doubt](#)
7. [How To Write An Unforgettable Book Title That Screams "Buy Me!"](#)
8. [Becoming A Better Writer Requires Constantly Improving Your Writing Skills](#)
9. [How To Write A Book For Kindle About Your Expertise Or Passion](#)

Podcasts:

If you want a few tips on how to write an effective nonfiction book, then I recommend including the following elements:

- Aim for that sweet spot of 15,000 to 25,000 words.
- Understand the core challenge and identify the specific actions a reader needs to complete in order to receive the benefit that's promised on the cover.
- Break down the content to around 8 to 12 sections.
- Start with an introduction that introduces the problem, provides a background on how you can help the reader, and a brief overview of what will be covered.
- Write in a conversational style—like you're explaining a concept to one of your friends over a few drinks. In other words: Short words, short sentences, and short paragraphs.
- Break down the content into bullet points, checklists, and sub-headlines, which makes it easy for a person to read OR (Just look at how this blog post is structured if you're confused with how this would look.)
- Provide action steps at the end of each chapter. Not only does this summarize the concepts being taught, but also it makes it easy for the reader to implement what you're teaching.

While it's important to work hard on this book (and have it professionally edited), don't waste time agonizing over whether it's good enough to publish. As long as you know you've provide value to the reader, then don't be afraid to hit the "publish" button.

Step #9: Offer a Lead Magnet Inside Your Book

The quickest way to hit the \$1,000 milestone is to sell your book to readers who are specifically interested in what *you* have to say. In other words, you need to build a following of what [Kevin Kelly](#) calls [1,000 true fans](#). These will be the folks who buy a book whenever you release them, leave positive reviews, and generally support your entire brand. Your goal is to create a free piece of content (often called a “lead magnet”) to turn your reader into an email subscriber. And ultimately you can turn these email subscribers into your true fans.

A lead magnet is simply a free piece of content that provides value to an audience. It can be a number of things:

TYPE	EXAMPLE
A topic-related quiz	Barrie's Self-Confidence Quiz
A list of valuable resources	200+ Sharing Economy Platforms
A detailed explanation of an important strategy	How to Increase Your Book's Ranking on Amazon
A challenge or mini-course	30-Day Green Smoothie Challenge
A another entire book	77 Good Habits to Live a Better Life
A short formula that explains a niche specific concept	Find Your Freedom Number

You need three things to build (and manage) an email list:

1. The free piece of content you're giving away (i.e. the lead magnet).
2. The page where people can sign up for your list (we use the [Lead Pages](#) software).
3. The email management software that stores the email address of readers. (We recommend services like [Mail Chimp](#), [Aweber](#), and [Active Campaign](#).)

This email list *won't be* immediately important to your success as an indie author, but as you publish additional books, it will become the #1 way to market your books. So I recommend that at a bare minimum, you create a small lead magnet and give it away in the front of your book. That will kick off that snowball effect where you find those first few true fans who will go on to buy your other titles.

Once again, there is a lot more to learn about email marketing, so I recommend checking out the following pages:

Blog Posts:

Podcast Episodes:

Step #10: Outsource a Killer Cover Image

As mentioned in step #7, the two key components to grabbing the attention of a potential reader is with a compelling book title and an eye-catching cover image. We've already talked about your book title, so now let's talk about your cover image.

To put it bluntly if your book looks like it was designed by a third grader using Microsoft Paint, then it...

Will. Not. Sell.

One of the most frustrating things I encounter in teaching these skills is an author who spends weeks, even months, on a book and then wastes his or her efforts by failing to invest in a quality cover image.

Please, please, PLEASE don't make this mistake.

Instead, take the time to understand what good cover design looks like for *your* market.

That's why I recommend the following exercise:

- Go to the [Top 100 Best Seller's list on Amazon](#).
- Find the category page for your niche or genre.
- Scan through all 100 books in this category.
- Identify the covers that catch your eye.
- Click on these book listings and copy the URL into a text document.
- Rinse and repeat for every great book cover you find.

If you do this exercise, you'll have a list of great covers that work for your market. The logic here is if a book with a certain look already sells well, then you can hire someone to create a cover that's thematically similar that will *also* sell.

Now... when I say "thematically similar," I'm not recommending you rip off the design from another author. Instead, use these covers as a starting point for the cover designer to create something completely unique.

Once you have a solid idea of what you want, take these concepts and **hire a professional cover designer**. There are a few websites that I recommend for finding good cover design (and I also recommend listening to our podcast episode on [how to hire a designer](#)):

One last thought on cover design...

I know some authors successfully use Fiverr for their cover needs. So while I personally *don't* recommend this strategy, I do recognize that it is possible to get decent cover work for a small amount of money.

Dave Chesson has [a great article on this subject that's worth checking out!](#) If you are on a limited budget and can't afford to spend much on your first book, then you can use Dave's process to hire designers on the cheap.

Step #11: Research Similar Books in Your Market

Successful indie authors truly understand their market. Not only do they know the benefits their audience is seeking, they also know the other major players in their niche. You can figure this out by researching your market *before* launching a book.

The purpose of market research is to identify similar books and authors. This is important because when you know someone already likes a book from a specific author, then you can tap into these existing audiences and offer your book as an additional reading option. (We'll talk more about this in steps #15 and #16.)

There are a few places you can for your market research:

- [The Top 100 Best Seller's list on Amazon](#).
- [Book Bub's Popular Author list](#).
- The *Customer's Also Bought* section on any Amazon's author page (here's what this looks like.)
- Google: Best Books on ____ (Your topic).

With these research options alone, you will quickly discover dozens of authors who write similar books. That will make it easier to scale up your book business as you publish the next few books in your catalog.

Step #12: Upload Your Book and Enroll in KDP Select.

Once your book is completed you'll upload it to Amazon. This is a pain-free task that takes under ten minutes to complete. In fact, I recently recorded a video that will walk you through the uploading process:

If you're a new author *without* a large platform, then I recommend enrolling your book in KDP Select. This program offers a number of benefits ([which we cover in this podcast episode](#)), but the main reason to sign up for KDP Select is the program offers a number of tools to market your book and grow an audience. It might not be the best long-term solution for your book-based business, but it'll help you get that extra visibility you need as a new author.

Step #13: Get at Least 5 Reviews

Reviews are the first thing readers look at after the title, description, and book cover. So you need land at least five reviews before your launch.

I won't lie to you — it has become increasingly difficult to generate reviews. That said, there are ten strategies I've personally to get the ball rolling:

Strategy I. Leverage your platform.

If you have a following through a blog, podcast, YouTube, or strong social media then these are the first people you should reach out for a review. This is my favorite strategy because these are people who already know, like, and trust you, so they are usually willing to take a few minutes out their busy day to help you out. And if you combine with this with strategy #3 (i.e. create a Facebook launch group), then you'll have a powerful one-two punch for getting consistent reviews.

Strategy II: Explain why reviews matter.

Most readers don't understand the importance of reviews. That's why you need to explain the value of them and how they help other readers find your books.

Strategy III: Make it simple for readers.

Be sure show *how* to leave a review (maybe with a short video) and then provide a direct link that leads directly to the review section of your book listing. ([Like this one.](#))

Strategy IV: Create a Facebook group.

If you have an existing audience, then *you* can supercharge your review efforts by creating a Facebook group where followers can gather and talk to one another.

There are two ways to do this. The first is to create a Facebook group with the sole purpose of helping you launch your book. Here, you would build buzz around this event, involve followers in the process, and drip out valuable pieces of content.

The second method is to build a long-term community of folks interested in your topic. This is a great method if you teach a concept that people use every day to improve their lives. A great example of this is what Hal Elrod does with his [Miracle Morning community](#).

Creating a Facebook community can be a time-consuming task that requires you to post quality content and interact

with members. However, this effort is worth it because whenever you have a new book, you can tap into this community and ask for reviews.

Strategy V: Leverage your existing network.

Look at the people you already know, and ask if they would be willing to leave a review. A simple way to do this is to go through email contacts and past conversations. Odds are, there will be a few folks who are willing to help. I *don't* recommend this strategy for every launch, but it can be useful for your first book or two.

Strategy VI: Leverage your social media contacts.

The same principle applies here. Perhaps you have a few friends and followers on social media who might be interested in leaving a review.

One technique that I've used on Facebook is a "cover reveal" a few weeks before launch. When someone seems interested in the book, send a private message to see if he or she is interested in a free copy in exchange for a review.

Strategy VII: Reach out to bloggers and authors in your market

If you have contacts in a market related to your book topic, then you approach these people and ask for a review. For now, I would focus on existing contacts instead of "cold-emailing" someone you don't already know.

Strategy IIX: Approach Amazon reviewers.

You can find books similar to yours and contact anyone who left a review. This tactic doesn't work for everyone—only the people who include their email address, website URL, or social media handle in their profile. But this is a great strategy to generate reviews because these folks usually don't mind being approached for a review in exchange for a free copy of your book.

While I love this strategy, it's also a very labor intensive process. So one tool that I've been using lately to streamline this process is [Debbie Drum's Book Review Targeter](#). You still need to email each person and send them review copies, but this software program has eliminated the headache of having to scroll through numerous book pages to find qualified reviewers.

Strategy IX: Leverage your existing books

To maximize the previous strategy, you should also build a database of people who have left previous reviews on your books (and have agreed to be contacted for any future launch.) This is a powerful tactic because you know these people already like your previous books, so it's not hard to attract their interest in your latest title.

Strategy X: Pay for a review service.

I want to be very clear here: when I talk about "review services," I mean the websites that aggregate readers who are interested in reading quality, free books in exchange for an honest review. These *aren't* review swaps which are against Amazon's terms of service. Here are three examples of websites that aggregate potential book reviewers:

Just to be clear, it is still legal to offer your book in exchange for a review. [Lately Amazon has been cracking down on "pay for reviews" services](#). The above websites are different because they make no promise that you'll receive a

certain amount of reviews or that you'll only receive 5-stars. Users are free to be as honest as they want to be. Finally, whenever you use one of these services, be sure to ask them to include the following sentence with their review: *"I was given a free copy of this book in exchange for a review."*

You don't have to agonize over the review process. Usually 5 to 10 is good enough for a book launch. Then when you book starts to sell and you interact with readers, you can ask them to leave a review. That's what I've done for all of my books.

Step #14: Launch Your Book (For Free)

At last, we've come to the launch of your book! Since you probably don't have a large following, I would recommend using **Amazon's KDP Select program to schedule a five-day free promotion**. Here's what this looks like in your KDP dashboard:

Overall, I recommend using a "free launch" as a regular strategy. It's great to build that initial buzz as a new author, but once you have an established following then you should use [the \\$0.99 launch plan](#). The rule of thumb that I recommend is to do a free launch until you have 500 or more email subscribers.

Now, I'll be honest here...the self-publishing landscape has become *extremely* competitive. Once upon a time, you could give away a book for free, get thousands of downloads, and then get lots of visibility on Amazon (i.e. sales) after the launch. Those days are over! The only way to compete in 2016 (and beyond) is to hustle and work hard to stand out from the competition.

In the last four years, I've interviewed and talked to dozens of authors about *their* successful launch strategies. The common thread I found from all of these conversations is they worked really hard during their launches. And here are the proven promotional strategies they've used:

Promote to your existing platforms.

Just like it's important to get reviews from your existing platforms, it's equally important to promote your biggest fans. I recommend starting with these folks by promoting your book leading up to the launch, during it, and then when your book is about to go up to its permanent price. (We'll talk more about this in step #16.)

Promote in select Facebook groups.

There are a few ways to promote a book using Facebook. What you *shouldn't do* is spam every group related to self-publishing. Do this and you will be ignored or even banned. Instead, leverage the groups where you've already provided value (if you completed step #6.) If people were interested in your book during the research phase, then you go back to these groups and let members know that it's now available.

You can also promote a book on Facebook by doing the following:

- Type "*promote your book*" in Facebook and post a link to your book in every group that allows self-promotion.
- Post your book in the [Manic Mondays thread of our Facebook group](#).
- Find large Facebook groups in *your* market, private message the owner talking about the value of your book, and ask if he or she will allow you to post a thread that promotes your book.
- Launch your book to any group that you own (or manage). You could also ask for support with spreading the word by sharing it on their preferred social media accounts.

Facebook can be a powerful tool to launch your book, or it can be a complete waste of time. The authors who get real results with it focus on quality over quantity. They aren't wasting hours pasting their links to hundreds of groups (that nobody ever checks.) Instead, they take the time to build relationships in active communities and then they ask for a "little" support whenever they have something new to share.

Purchase Fiverr book promotion gigs.

Normally, I'm not a fan of Fiverr when it comes to publishing or marketing a book. But there are a few gig providers who can help you promote a book and generate a few hundred extra downloads. This is one of those cases where you should do your due diligence before buying any gig.

That said, [one Fiverr gig provider does a good job with marketing free books](#). I wouldn't expect massive results for \$5, but every little bit helps when you're trying to spread the word during launch week.

Do a podcast interview tour.

It's a perfect value proposition—many podcasters need quality content to fill up their queue and *you* need a place to promote your free book. So you can spread the word before (and during) launch week by doing a round of interviews on podcasts related to your topic.

I prefer this strategy over any other form of outreach because it's more scalable than writing guest posts. All you have to do is craft a series of talking points, understand the style of each podcast, and then tailor the interview to provide value to the audience of that show. To learn more about this strategy, [check out this podcast episode where I go over the finer points of how to do a series of podcast interviews](#).

Network with Authorities.

Take time to fully research your niche, identify the top experts and build relationships with them. This should be done *long before* you launch a book. And like other strategies, it's better to focus on quality over quantity. But once you have a solid network, you can reach out these people and ask them to share your book. The benefit to them is if you have a free book, it'll be easy to recommend because the authority is providing value to their audience.

These are just a few strategies to promote your free book. Like everything else in life, if you work hard on your launch, you will be rewarded with lots of downloads, reviews, and hopefully sales (when your book goes up to its normal price.)

Step #15: Switch Over to \$0.99

I know, I know... you've already given away your book for five days. So why am I recommending that you price it for just \$0.99? You might wonder: "Won't that eat into my sales?" Or even: "When will I actually start to make money with this book?"

Well, the short answer is that Amazon uses two separate charts to rank books:

Free *and* paid.

By giving away a book for five days, you'll get lots of downloads, reviews, and email subscribers. This will improve your long-term success as an author because you're starting to build a following. But a free promotion doesn't help all that much when it comes to generating sales. So the logic of selling it at \$0.99 (for about five days) is these sales will help you land on top category charts on Amazon which leads to ... more visibility... which leads to additional sales from people who regularly scan these listings.

Now, I don't recommend just switching over to \$0.99 and *assuming* it will sell. Instead, I recommend making two small financial investments to kick-start your success:

Investment I: BookBub Ads

Without a doubt, a BookBub featured deal is the *crème de la crème* of all promotional services. But you probably can't land one of these deals with a brand new book. Instead what *might be* available is their [ad network](#) that you can use to target readers who are fans of certain authors.

Back in step #11, I asked you to research your market to identify popular authors related to your title. Now you want to take this list of names and create a BookBub ad that targets readers who are interested in this author. The logic here is if they like one of your competitors, they might like yours as well.

BookBub ads are still in beta, so it might a while before they accept new advertisers. But if you get accepted, then I recommend running a few ads when your book is at \$0.99.

Investment II: Book Promo Services

There are hundreds of services that promise to promote your book. Some are great, others are a complete waste of money. Since you've just launched your book, my advice is to focus on just the low-cost services. Later, you can test the more expensive options, but all you should be concerned with now is generating enough sales to "goose" your visibility on Amazon.

Like I said, there are many options when it comes to promoting a book. Here are a few of my favorite that will cost around a total of \$30 to \$100:

Again, you won't get that many sales from these sites, but they will help generate that initial visibility that's important on Amazon.

Step #16: Increase to a Your Regular Price

After running giving away your book for free and then selling it for \$0.99, you're finally ready to increase the price to \$2.99 (or higher). The price *you* choose is a personal preference. With the \$2.99 price, you'll sell more units, which means you'll rank higher in your category. On the other hand, with the \$3.99 to \$5.99 price point, you'll generate a better profit per unit sold. You should ask yourself what is more important: *generating more revenue in the short term or laying the foundation for a lasting author business?*

Personally, I like the \$2.99 price point because it maximizes the number of units sold and email subscribers. My logic here is that I have lots of *other books* to sell, so there's nothing to lose by giving discounts to readers who might join my email list and find out what else I have to offer.

After increasing the price, there is one last strategy that I recommend—sign up for [Amazon Marketing Services](#). Specifically, you should create a **Sponsored Products ad** that will be displayed on the pages of similar books.

You can see what this looks like here:

What books should you target?

Well, once again, I recommend going back to the market research list you created back in step #11. You should take the book titles, author names, and related keywords to create an ad that targets the specific interests of Amazon readers.

Now, the reason that I recommend running ads *after* your launch is you want to generate as many sales on a book at its highest price. That way, you'll get extra visibility that will lead to even more sales.

If you'd like to learn more about Amazon Marketing Services, then you might want to [check out our webinar with Derek Doepker where he details his strategies for increasing book sales](#).

Step #17: Rinse and Repeat

Well, we've covered 16 steps to generate your first \$1,000 as a self-published author. So maybe you're thinking that all you have to do is follow this process one time, and then you'll make a pile of money, right?

WRONG!

The truth is indie publishing is an iterative process. Your first book might be a bestseller, or it could be a complete flop. The important thing to remember is once you've gone through this process one time, you'll start to understand how it all works. Then you can take all this experience and make your second book even better. In fact, I feel the true pathway to generating a full-time income from self-publishing happens when you keep improving your process and **keep publishing new books**.

With that in mind, I recommend you go back to your audience to discover:

- What other problems do they have?
- What strategies from your first book need to be fleshed out?
- What ideas did you find in step #3 that can be covered?
- What challenges are you seeing in Facebook groups or forums that haven't been answered?

The topics for your next dozen books are probably right in front of you. All you have to do is play close attention to what people are saying, and you can easily come up with a number of compelling ideas. Then all you have to do is repeat the process that was outlined in this article.

Conclusion

We know this is a lot of information to consume, and you might feel overwhelmed by all the steps outlined here. We can tell you from experience, it's not as daunting as it might feel right now. Just take it one step at a time, follow the process, and do your best. With each successive book, you'll learn more and continue to build on your experience.

If you follow the process outlined here, then it's certainly possible to hit that important milestone of earning your first \$1,000. You'll need to sell about 335 Kindle copies of your book at the \$2.99 price to reach that goal. But you don't be upset if you don't reach that milestone in the first few weeks or months of launching your book.

Sometimes you can work hard on a book, and it doesn't do as well as you thought it would initially. There are so many variables, and it does take some trial and error (as well as building your own list of fans) to discover what works for you, your niche, and your readers.

The good news for you is that every book is an asset that will continue to promote your brand, build your email list, and generate an income for years to come.