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Sample Interview with Book Designer and Blogger Joel Friedlander, author of A Self-Publisher's Companion

Authors thinking about self-publishing need an introduction to the best ways to profitably write, publish and market their books. A new book, "A Self-Publisher's Companion," provides expert advice and down-to-earth tips while explaining this new way to get into print.

Joel Friedlander, author of the new book *A Self-Publisher's Companion*, talks about the changing world of indie publishing today.

Q: Welcome Joel, and thanks for taking the time to sit down for this interview. Let's get right into it. Tell me, what's the state of self-publishing today? We hear about authors like Amanda Hocking and Joe Konrath selling huge numbers of books. Is that the way to go?

JF: What's happening is that the influence of the internet, combined with new technologies to make it faster and easier to produce print books has caused an explosion of interest in self-publishing. Tens of thousands of books that might not otherwise have been published, have gone to press.

Q: Well, the common wisdom is that most of these books will sell 100 or fewer copies, so is this really a good thing?

JF: I think this development is a positive one with virtually no downside. Keep in mind that many of these books are virtually private publications, done by the author for the consumption of just a small group of people, family and friends, or a professional group, or as giveaways. Since other people never see or hear of these books, I don't see why this great outpouring of stories, history, imagination and fantasy can be a bad thing.

In some ways self-publishing reminds me a bit of the great project StoryCorps that collects live recordings of people telling, in their own voice, significant stories from their lives. It's this recording of history and ideas that have traditionally been lost that really fascinates me. Get those books out from under the bed, or out of the bottom drawer of the desk and publish them. Enrich the world.

Q: Okay, we can see you're a real advocate for self-publishing. What about the cost involved? Don't these self-publishing authors want to make money from their books?

JF: This might come as a surprise, but after producing books for dozens of self-publishers over the years, I've found that money or profit is often a very distant consideration when an author decides to publish her own book.

Q: Well, if not for money, why do they do it then?

JF: To leave a record, or to promote a new idea, or to support a charity, or to enhance the author's standing in a professional field. There's still nothing like the esteem you get from people when they find out you're the author of a book, whether you published it yourself or not. And some studies have shown that the value of being the author of a book can top \$100,000 to a consultant or business person.

Q: A lot of authors we're hearing about these days are publishing ebooks, and we keep reading about new readers, tablets and other devices coming onto the market. Is this a fad, or should authors be learning about this new world of ebooks?

JF: It's not a fad, it's the future. There are a lot of forces at work right now that are propelling ebooks into a prominent place in book publishing, and those forces aren't going to change soon. The internet itself, by making communication between writers and readers easier, is having its own effect. It's because of our networking and the connectivity that the internet provides that Amazon.com, for instance, can lure people with the idea of downloading an ebook in minutes, rather than getting in the car to go visit a bookstore.

Between the economic advantages of ebooks, the improving quality and lower price of new ebook readers, and the advantages to publishers who never have to worry about reprint costs or inventory stocking levels or shipping---books are quite heavy for the retail price they command---ebooks are going to be the dominant form of books in some genres very soon.

Q: Wow. Well, what's the best way for authors to get involved with ebooks?

JF: Most self-publishers these days are using print on demand to produce print books economically. It makes sense to plan your ebook production as an extension of your print book. Partly this means a bit of extra planning in the production phase to make sure the book will translate well for ereaders, and partly it means using the final, corrected version that's developed for print as the document from which the ebook will be created.

Q: What about all these different formats, do we have to worry about those? It's all very confusing.

JF: Almost all the sales of ebooks right now are in two formats, Kindle and ePub. You should get your book converted into both formats. The Kindle format will work for the Kindle store, the largest vendor of ebooks at the moment, and your ePub files will work for almost all other ebook readers.

Q: Any tips on getting your book ready to be made into an ebook?

JF: Sure, you want to finish your print edition first, then use those final files for conversion to ebook formats. All the graphics have to be inline, and a lot of formatting needs to be simplified. Other than that, the most important thing is finding the right person to do the conversion for you.

Q: So, Joel, how do you see your new book, A Self-Publisher's Companion, helping authors?

JF: Hey, I'm glad you asked. When I put A Self-Publisher's Companion together, it was specifically for authors who are interested in going the independent publishing route but who want to know more about what's involved in self-publishing.

Rather than include a lot of information on the nuts and bolts of publishing like where to buy ISBNs and how to layout your book pages, I concentrated on the bigger view. I wanted authors to get an idea of what's involved in publishing their own book. It seems like most of the self-publishing books include so much information on so many topics they don't act as a good introduction to the field.

Q: Interesting. Are there some authors who you advise to not self-publish?

JF: Well, it's rare. I love the way that people can publish their own books now. Occasionally I'll talk to an author who thinks they're ready to go into production but their book still needs work. Rather than tell them not to publish, I encourage them to find the help they need to get their book ready to go. Sometimes this can delay a project substantially, but it's a better solution than going to press with a book that's not ready.

Q: Well, this has been very informative. Thanks for your time, today Joel. How can people find out more if they are interested in self-publishing?

JF: It's been a pleasure. The best way to keep in touch is to stop in at my blog at www.TheBookDesigner.com. Sign up for a free blog subscription and new articles will be delivered automatically to your inbox.

I'd also like to mention that this year I'll be revamping my newsletter to bring readers even more education on self-publishing and tips and resources that can help make the publishing process easier, more fun and more profitable. So while you're over at my blog, think about signing up for the Self-Publishing for Smart People Newsletter, too. And thanks for reading.

For more information on "A Self-Publisher's Companion" visit the website at <http://www.TheBookDesigner.com/Companion>

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About the Author

Joel Friedlander is a book designer, blogger and the proprietor of Marin Bookworks in San Rafael, California, a publishing services company where he's helped launch many self-publishers since 1994.

Joel has owned businesses in graphic arts, design and book publishing. He was Production Director of Aperture Books, where he produced award-winning photography books. He founded Renaissance Press in northern California, a private publisher of handmade letterpress books. As the owner of Globe Press Books in Yorktown Heights, New York, he published books of memoirs and east-west spirituality. His blog, <http://www.TheBookDesigner.com> has become a popular gathering spot for authors, publishers and designers.

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