



LINDEN PUBLISHING

# What's right for you — a Traditional Publishing Contract or Custom Publishing?

You have a manuscript that is very important to you, a message you want to get into the world, or some memories you want to put in a permanent book form. You're looking for a publisher. But what kind of publisher are you looking for? A **traditional publishing contract** or **custom publishing**?

## Traditional Publishing Contract

A traditional publishing contract is the same way books have been published for decades. The publishing contract means that the author is selling their work to the publishing company. The publishing company then creates a book product out of the manuscript and sells it for profit. The author will receive royalties (usually around between 6–12 percent of the sales) as payment for their work. Traditional publishing contracts tend to have more credibility in the professional world.

- An author has a manuscript (or an idea for one),
- She writes a proposal and submits it to a publishing company for consideration.
- If the publishing company likes the idea and has the time and space in their schedule to produce it for profit, they'll accept the proposal and draw up a publishing contract. If not they will reject the proposal and the author can send the proposal to another publishing company.

### A few things to note with a traditional publishing contract:

- The publishing company owns the book and is looking to sell it for profit.
- The publishing company does the layout and design of the book.
- The publisher organizes the printing of the book (usually with a separate printing company).
- The publishing company edits the book—meaning they will make corrections, they expand or delete material in the book as needed, and do what they can to make the book as attractive to as many book buyers as possible.
- The publishing company handles the distribution of the book to bookstores and retailers and to places like Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com. They also help convert the book into Kindle and EPUB formats.
- The publisher puts up all of the money for the production, the printing, and the distribution.

### Once the book is produced, the author has the responsibility of:

- Publicizing the book at book events, online, to personal and professional contacts, etc. (The publishing company will also provide a wide range of publicity and marketing support.)
- If the author wishes to sell some of their book at events, they will purchase copies from the publisher (usually at a 50 percent discount) and then sell the book for full price to make some extra money.
- The author will usually receive an advance payment on their royalties when the contract is signed. The author will receive royalty payments on the sales of their book once every six months after the advance payment is returned to the publisher. Royalties are paid for as long as the book remains in print and is sold.

With a traditional publishing contract, the publishing company takes all of the financial risk on the book and therefore has most of the control over the product, how it is packaged, distributed and sold. *The publisher also has the right to refuse a proposal for a book* if they do not feel it is right for their company.

## **Custom Publishing (also known as “Self-Publishing”)**

Custom publishing has received a lot more attention in recent years as access to tools to publish for oneself have become more accessible. Custom publication puts the financial responsibility—and all of the control—in the hands of the author. With custom publishing, an author can create a great-looking product to sell on their own, give to family members or organizations, or use to spread their message. The publishing company acts as a service provider and consultant, and isn’t likely to turn down a job if they have the time to do it and the client pays for it.

- An author has a completed manuscript, typed and ready to go.
- The author makes arrangements with a publishing company to get a custom publishing quote for the manuscript.
- If the author accepts the quote and agrees, the publisher will take the job for hire. A payment schedule is usually arranged.
- The publishing company oversees the layout and design of the book by their staff. Things like copyediting and cover design can also be negotiated.
- The publishing company uses their network to have the book printed by a professional printer.
- The fully, professionally designed and printed books are then handed over to the author in full and complete payment is made for the job.
- The author is now in complete charge of the sales and distribution of his books.

### **With custom publishing, the author receives:**

- Complete ownership of the book.
- Final say over the design and layout of his manuscript.
- Complete control on pricing the book and where it will be sold.
- Complete control of the contents of the book—nothing added or taken away. His message remains exactly as he wrote it and wants it delivered. He can also print as many or (almost) as few books as he likes.

### **The author is also responsible for:**

- The financial risk of the costs of making and printing the book. For marketing and publicizing the book.
- For distributing the book—either through selling via a personal website, asking for placement in bookstores or other places for books to be sold, listing and sending the item to Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com, or converting the item to Kindle or EPUB.
- For storing the books or paying for any reprints when the book sells out.

Some companies who offer custom publishing may offer other services for a fee, like storing the book in a warehouse (the author would pick up the books needed as they are needed) or doing some basic distribution to other retailers.

### **So, which is right for you?**

Most people who have a memoir for their family, a guide for a specific and local group of people (like a church or a school), personal unpublished poetry, or a unique following locally or online, will look at custom publishing first.

If an author is writing on a topic with a potentially wider audience (regional or national) or of more wide-reaching interest, or is related to her professional expertise, she may wish to write a book proposal and submit it for a publishing contract.