

I Did It and I'm Glad:

Publishing Decisions That Turned Out Well, Part 2

DOING IT ALL WITH A TEAM

Self-publishing *Shoe Print Art* became one of the highlights of my life. As a former kindergarten and first grade teacher, I began writing part time while raising my family. For 25 years I had written mostly craft articles, a picture book, and two educational books for teachers. Those two books and my workshops always included two activities children in my kindergarten and first grade classes loved—making a bunny and a chick from a footprint shape.



One day, I decided to see what else I could draw from the footprint shape. When I drew more than 95 items, I knew I had the basis of a unique book for kids. I started proposing the book to publishers in 2003 and I had collected many personal rejection letters by 2009, when a top publisher in New York loved it. The publisher asked if it could hold the manuscript while it restructured its preschool department. Unfortunately, a change of management occurred, and in 2010 my proposal was returned to me.

I had been so excited, dreaming of a drawing kit for kids that would sell worldwide. Encouraged by the fact that a top publishing company had shown interest, I decided it was time to become a publisher, and self-publish *Shoe Print Art*.

Fortunately, I found top experts to help me create *Shoe Print Art: Step Into Drawing Step by Step*. Mary Ann Kohl of Bright

Ring Publishing, who had been my friend for many years, became my editor, holding my hand and guiding me. Luckily, I was introduced to Sally Marts, a professional graphic designer who had worked in the children's market, and she loved the project.

MaryAnn suggested that I find children from across the country to do the drawings for the book. Such a brilliant idea! So, I coordinated a national search by friends and relatives for drawings from children ages 3 to 15. They were excited to be part of this project and they worked hard, using pencils as they followed the steps shown in the book and then adding their own creative touches with crayons or paint.

MaryAnn, Sally, and I were a perfect team of creators with different backgrounds and skills. We not only worked well together; we had so much fun creating page by page. Publishing is very hard work, and it should be fun. You've got to love your book because it's going to be with you a long, long time.

Previously, I had partnered with Leo Paper on a children's book project, and I trusted it for quality of work, so choosing that company to manufacture my book was easy.

Just a few weeks before the book went to press, it came to me that I should give a percentage of my profit to get shoes for children around the world who need them. I immediately researched relevant nonprofit organizations and connected with Soles 4 Souls. Together, we decided on text, photo, and logo to be included in the book.

What have I learned from this? I think the answer would fill another book. It has taught me so much. Believe in yourself. Life is short, so just do it. Find experts with the skills you need to complement yours, and choose people you'll enjoy working with. Strive for excellence in each step—endorsements, title, cover design, page layout, paper choice, color, type font, price, and more.

Although it was difficult to find a distributor that would take on a one-book publisher, being a member of IBPA and ►

Editor's Note: Many thanks to all of you who shared your stories about good decisions. See the October *Independent* for the first group of reports, and stay tuned for the third and final group, coming your way next month.

Judith Appelbaum

Book Publishers Northwest was helpful. And one of the biggest surprises of my thirty-year writing career was winning an IBPA Benjamin Franklin Gold Award for Best First Book.

Yes, I still have a lot of books to sell from my 5000-copy first printing, and I probably haven't made a profit yet. But I love sharing the book with others and I know generations of children will enjoy drawing from a shoe print shape step by step. Possibly some may even become famous artists.

This has been a dream come true.

Karen S. Robbins • *Shoe Print Art*
www.shoeprintart.com

SELLING A SERIES



One publishing decision I recently made that has turned out well was to write and publish a lengthy series of short Kindle books in a relatively brief time. Using Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing, I wrote and published one Kindle book every week between August and the end of December 2013—16 titles in the same series, *Author's Quick Guide*.

They range in length from 4,000 to roughly 20,000 words.

I had been wanting to write a series for a while, and I knew that the best way to get traction and attention from Amazon was to release titles in succession as quickly as possible. When I wrote the first (and shortest) book, my business coach asked me if I could challenge myself to write one every week. Thinking they would all be as short as the first, I agreed. She held me accountable throughout the project to ensure I did not give up, even when I was beyond exhausted.

My Kindle sales volume increased 878 percent within the first 12 weeks, and Amazon's marketing kicked in around Book 6. The books have been selling very well, with sales increasing every month. They cross-promote each other. My e-mail list is growing exponentially. And I've created a live Challenge that I now run four times each year to help authors outline their Kindle series and write and publish the first book in a series in 30 days.

One thing I learned is never again to write so much in such a short time. I burned out in a big way. Another is that this project elevated me and my business much faster than the path to success I had been on. I don't pressure my audience to do what I did. But I do believe that every author has the

potential to write a short Kindle book in 30 days and that almost every large title can be broken down into shorter series titles.

No matter what the genre or topic, a Kindle series sells a lot more books than a single large Kindle book, and it's less work to market a series. My book-a-week project was a great way to get traction as an author and a coach, to get a large chunk of my next print book completed, and to create the foundation for a trilogy of books that I'm currently writing.

Kristen Eckstein • *Imagine Studios, LLC*
TheBookNinja.com

LEAPING ON THE LEARNING CURVE

After chatting with a fellow I didn't even know who was out for a walk, I decided to take on the job of publishing my own book, *Toxic Staple: How Gluten May Be Wrecking Your Health—And What You Can Do about It!* I'd had some rejections of my book proposal, and since I'm not a doctor or health care professional (I should have two Ph.D.s by now in gluten), I felt I'd have a hard time getting an agent interested in it.

The gent's business-savvy words about self-publishing made so much sense to me that I trusted my gut and decided to take his advice. I surely didn't want to wait years to get vital life transforming information out to the public after finding an interested publisher and then reworking my book to the publisher's satisfaction, not to mention losing control over it. And from what I understand, I'd still have had to do most of the promotion.



I had a multitude of eye-opening research from around the world substantiating about 60 stories of lives being transformed by adhering to a gluten-free lifestyle. So I established Max Health Press, got a dynamite cover and a brilliant editor, and hired a talented woman to lay out the book and coach me through the publishing process. Every step of the way has been a new learning curve for me, but it has been most exciting. The book has garnered four awards and earned wonderful ratings, reviews, and endorsements—including some that say doctors should read my book.

The biggest challenge now is promoting *Toxic Staple* so humanity can benefit. I have an informative website, with a media page, video, table of contents, and a new blog offering