

## **CHANGE @ WORK: Publish and prosper? Paying to get a book in print could enhance your business prospects**

*[ALL EDITIONS]*

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### **Document Text**

When Constance Brown-Riggs was writing a book for African-Americans at risk for diabetes, she first looked into traditional publishing routes.

But after conversations with colleagues and reviewing a spreadsheet on the costs and services of an array of print-on-demand services, Brown-Riggs decided to bypass the search for an agent and book deal. Instead, she invested close to \$1,000 to have her book, "Eating Soulfully and Healthfully with Diabetes," published through print-on-demand service iUniverse.

In June 2006, about six months after she submitted her 40,000-word digital manuscript, the finished product was available online for \$17.95 a copy through not only iUniverse, but also the Web sites of Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Brown-Riggs' own Web site. The title got an extra boost when iUniverse, partly owned by Barnes & Noble, named it a "publisher's choice" selection, which put it on special display in several brick-and-mortar stores.

"You can't imagine the thrill," says Brown-Riggs, a nutritionist and certified diabetes educator in Massapequa, of seeing her book displayed at the Barnes & Noble in Carle Place. She says she told a friend, "This is taking self-publishing to a whole 'nutha' level" - from what she imagined would be primarily sales online or at her speaking engagements.

Plenty of other professionals - financial planners, life coaches, psychologists, health experts - are taking this print-on-demand route through iUniverse and other services such as Xlibris, Lulu, BookSurge, Llumina Press and AuthorHouse. And depending on which service they use, authors can get editing help, art direction and marketing through various online outlets. Authors then get a percentage of the sales: Brown-Riggs says she's getting 20 to 25 percent.

Overall submissions to iUniverse, which publishes about 250 nonfiction books alone each month, are up 20 percent over last year, says Susan Driscoll, president and chief executive.

But an easier way to get published does not necessarily translate into big sales or calls from Oprah. Though some of their authors sell in the thousands, the average first-year sales for a new title is 120 to 150 copies, according to iUniverse.

It's one thing to get a book printed, but quite another to get it in the distribution chain that will then get it onto book shelves, says Terry Nathan, director of PMA, the Independent Book Publishers Association in Manhattan Beach, Calif. He and others advise authors to learn about the publishing and distribution process, so their expectations fall within a realistic range of outcomes.

While most print-on-demand authors may not be raking in big bucks through online sales, there are plenty of other reasons a business professional would want to have a published book in hand, says says Albert N. Greco, professor at Fordham University's graduate business school and senior researcher with The Institute for Publishing Research, a consulting firm in Bergenfield, N.J. For one thing, he says, a book can be "the ultimate marketing tool," almost like "a second business card" to pass along to prospective clients.

And a potential employer or client doing a background check of you may well be impressed to find your book title. In academia, of course, a print-on-demand book that has gone through no vetting process "has, in

essence, no value," he says - but "in the business world it has all the value an individual places on it."

Driscoll likes to say that it's not just about selling books, it's also "about opening doors." She tells of one iUniverse author who wrote about charter yachts. That led to the author's being noticed by a Hollywood producer, who subsequently hired her as a consultant for a film with scenes set on a yacht.

For Deborah Brown-Volkman, a career coach in East Moriches, about one in four of her clients finds her through one of the five career coaching books she's published - all through iUniverse. She tells of one prospective client who liked her approach, called and said, "Unless you say something really stupid on this call, I'm going to hire you."

After her first book was published in 2003, she was invited to speak at a coaching conference - to some 400 of her peers. A book is a great way to build credibility, get your message out and set yourself apart from the competition, Brown-Volkman, 41, says.

Her bestseller so far is "Four Steps to Building a Profitable Coaching Practice," with about 10,000 copies sold. Her newest title is "How to Feel Great at Work Every Day: Six Steps for Creating a High-Energy Success Plan for Your Career."

Brown-Riggs, 56, who hired an outside publicist, has sold more than 600 copies of "Eating Soulfully and Healthfully with Diabetes."

But she says her visibility and credibility as a writer have been boosted. She's been asked to speak at professional events and to write an article for a newsletter that's sent to 5,000 registered dietitians. She's been named diabetes educator of the year by a group within the American Dietetic Association. And the American Diabetes Association is publishing her second book, which will delve deeper into the subject.

Things may not happen all at once, she says, but when you have a book title out there, "one thing does lead to another."

## DO-IT-YOURSELF BESTSELLERS

While hitting it big with any book may be a long shot - make that a real long shot - just look at the titles that Dan Poynter, author of "The Self-Publishing Manual: How to Write, Print & Sell Your Own Book," says got their start through the self-published route:

"Life's Little Instruction Book," by H. Jackson Brown

"In Search of Excellence," by Tom Peters and Robert H. Waterman Jr.

"The Elements of Style," by William Strunk Jr. and E. B. White

"The Joy of Cooking," by Irma S. Rombauer

"The Celestine Prophecy," by James Redfield

"The One-Minute Manager," by Ken Blanchard and Spencer Johnson

"Embraced by the Light," by Betty J. Eadie

"What Color is Your Parachute?," by Richard Nelson Bolles

How print-on-demand publishing works

You make an initial investment, perhaps several hundred dollars, and up if you're working with a full-service

company like iUniverse or Xlibris that provides editing, layout and marketing support, it may keep 75 percent to 80 percent of sales revenue. If you choose a no-frills, self-service resource like Lulu.com, you pay nothing for the basic setup, and Lulu keeps a 20 percent commission on each book ordered.

By contrast, if you pursue the traditional book publishing route, you need a literary agent to help get your proposal accepted by a publisher - yes, easier said than done - who, in turn, would give you a financial advance on expected book sales. Typically 15 percent of the advance, and of future royalties you get from sales, goes to the literary agent.

Constance Brown-Riggs, who published "Eating Soulfully and Healthfully with Diabetes" through iUniverse, paid an initial \$1,000 and also opted to hire an outside book publicist at a cost of \$3,400.

Brown-Riggs keeps 20 percent to 25 percent of the revenue from online sales of her book, which is priced at \$17.95.

If she wants copies for her own use to sell at a conference or speaking engagement, she can order them at a 45 percent author discount.

Certainly, paying to have a book published is nothing new. Many authors have gone to vanity presses to get their work in print. One major difference is that, with print-on-demand, you no longer receive 5,000 copies that need to be stored in your attic or garage.

Not so fast! Get to know the book biz

Getting a book published these days may be easier, but that doesn't mean you can be cavalier about the process.

If you're looking to enhance your career or business, you don't want to rush the writing process, said Susan Driscoll, president and chief executive of print-on-demand service iUniverse.

"A book will be out there for a very long time," she said, so don't try to write it in a weekend. "Take a little longer, please."

Further advice:

Determine what information void exists in your specialty, says Deborah Brown-Volkman, a career coach in East Moriches, whose five books have been published through print-on-demand.

She wrote "Four Steps to Building a Profitable Coaching Practice" when she found herself repeating the same tips over and over in conversations with other coaches.

Educate yourself about the publishing and book distribution processes overall, as well as the services provided though various print-on-demand companies.

Constance Brown-Riggs, a nutritionist and diabetes educator in Massapequa and author of "Eating Soulfully and Healthfully With Diabetes," had her assistant create a spreadsheet of various publishing companies so she could compare their services.

You may not be up to writing an entire book yourself. So, Brown-Volkman said, consider collaborating with others in your profession - each of you could do a chapter.

That's how she and 14 others created "The Essential Coaching Book: Secrets to a Winning Life from the Professional and Personal Coaches of the United Coaching Associates," published in 2004 through iUniverse.

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**Abstract** (Document Summary)

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1) Newsday Photo / Alejandra Villa - Career and life coach [Deborah Brown-Volkman] of East Moriches, who has self-published five books and since acquired new clients, says a book can set you apart from the competition. 2) Newsday Cover Photo/Julia Gaines - Nutritionist Constance Brown-Riggs has sold 600 copies of her book on diabetes after publishing it through a print-on-demand service. PHOTOS - Books - 3) "The Joy of Cooking," 4) "Embraced by the Light;" CHARTS - 1) DO-IT-YOURSELF BEST SELLERS 2) How print-on-demand publishing works 3) Not so fast! Get to know the book biz (SEE END OF TEXT); Time to write a book? How getting published can propel your career even if you pay to get into print. Newsday Cover Photo/Julia Gaines - Nutritionist Constance Brown-Riggs has sold 600 copies of her book on diabetes after publishing it through a print- on-demand service.

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