

The
Wow

e-newsletter

by Ken and Dahlynn McKowen

Principles

Volume 4 No. 6 June 2008

www.PublishingSyndicate.com

Why, Oh Why?

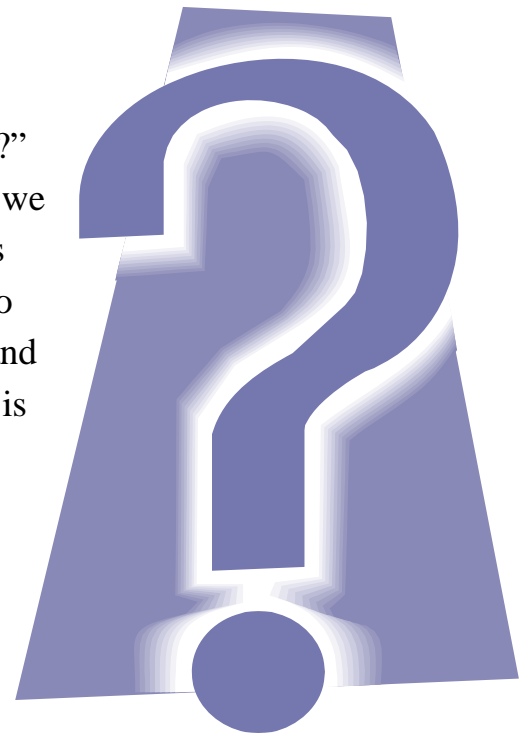
“Why can’t I get my books into more bookstores?”

The above question is a reoccurring complaint we hear from so many authors (periodically, ourselves included). But they primarily come from those who either self-publish their work, utilize print-on-demand (POD) or publish via very small publishers. There is no one correct answer to this question, and in this issue we’ll explain a few of the reasons behind the difficulties in getting a self-published and/or POD book into a mainstream bookstore.

Physics is responsible for a large part of the problem. According to Bowker, the exclusive distributor of all ISBN numbers in the United States (www.Bowker.com), last year a staggering 400,000 books were published! This includes all publishers, self-publishing and POD. Even large bookstores that stock 500,000 titles can’t possibly bring in 400,000 new titles each year. There simply isn’t enough display space, staff power or immediate warehouse space. Even the giant, multi-floor Powell’s Bookstore in Portland, Oregon, carries only one million titles (new and used) in its insanely huge 68,000-square-foot store.

Another issue, at least for those who are publishing with “print-on-demand” (POD) publishers, is returns. Bookstores, especially the larger chain stores, seldom purchase books that can’t be returned to the publisher for credit or refunds. POD publishers generally don’t take returns; it’s not part of their business.

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P . S . 

Published by *Publishing Syndicate*
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There are ways to get around these roadblocks...sometimes. Bookstores purchase most of their titles from major distributors such as Ingram and Baker and Taylor. If you manage to get one of them or another big distributor to carry your book, great! But remember—distributors are not PR agents. They merely distribute and, at best, can tell bookstore buyers what is the hot seller at that time. Also remember that distributors need discounts from your “suggested” retail price of approximately 50- to 60-percent. So if your book has a \$24.95 cover price, you’ll have to sell near \$11 and still allow returns. Granted, there are smaller,



independent distributors who might be interested in selling your book to the bigger stores, but they will still require discounts and a return policy.

If you want to cut out the distributor and do it yourself, check with some of the smaller independent bookstores in your area. Many will have a small display area with “local” authors’ books displayed. But again, POD books in the mainstream market are at a disadvantage because most have a higher selling point compared with that of non-POD books, and

booksellers will want at least a 50-percent discount and most will insist on returns.


Web stores, such as Amazon, are also driving changes in what titles the remaining brick and mortar bookstores carry. To stay competitive, bookstores must stock the fastest moving titles; few can afford the luxury of keeping their shelves cluttered with copies of titles that gather dust (that’s the job of libraries). Once a title has outlived its useful, and profitable, bookstore shelf lifespan, it is returned to the distributor or publisher and a new title takes its place. So without the PR and marketing that the bigger publishers offer, as limited as it often is, bookstores aren’t interested in titles that few people except your closest friends will ever hear about. Even with books such as the *Chicken Soup* and *Dummies* series, few bookstores have enough self space to carry every one of their separate titles. As altruistic as we may think bookstores should be, they must be well-run, profitable businesses first if they still want to be around when your best seller finally comes out.

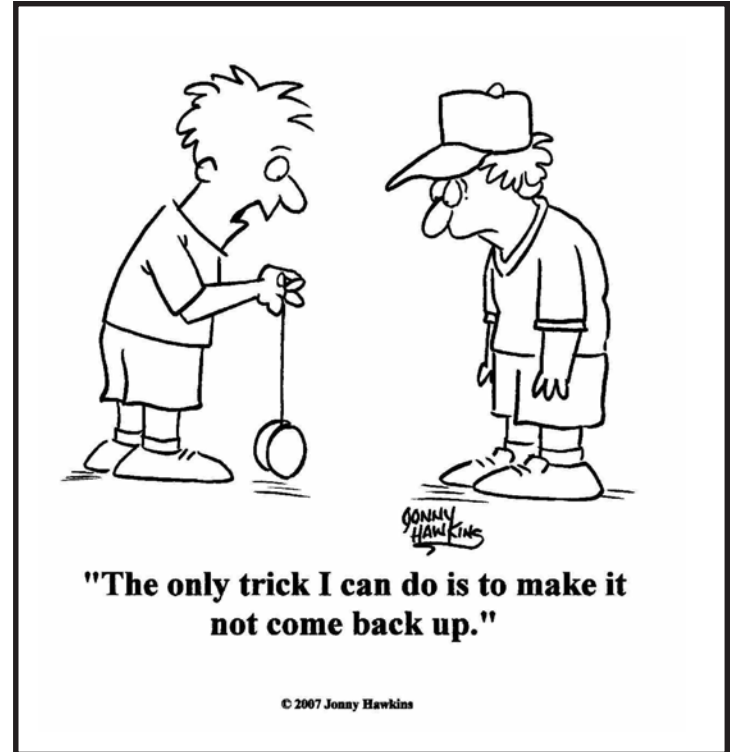
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With the present economy, book prices are going up and book sales are headed down. Couple this with the fact that books are competing for our time with movies, television, the Internet, video games, and more. With all these distractions, it's no wonder that, according to the National Endowment for the Arts, only 53 percent of Americans managed to read at least one book during the past year. As full-time authors ourselves, this number makes even us cringe.

Can you make it in this this up and down, crazy yo-yo of a business? Of course you can! All it takes is passion, hard work, perseverance, research, a solid product, good marketing, great timing...and a little luck never hurts! 



According to the Wisconsin Paper Council (www.WIpapercouncil.org), the following can be made from a cord of wood:

- 250 copies of the Sunday *New York Times*
- 942 one-pound books
- 1,200 copies of *National Geographic* magazine
- 2,700 copies of an average 36-page daily newspaper
- 61,370 standard #10 envelopes
- 89,870 sheets of letterhead bond paper
- 460,000 personal checks
- 4,384,000 postage stamps
- 7,500,000 toothpicks

Did You Know?

HOT STUFF! HOT STUFF! HOT STUFF!

Story Call-outs!



Don't miss these deadlines!

A Cup of Comfort

For Fathers: Deadline 8/1/08

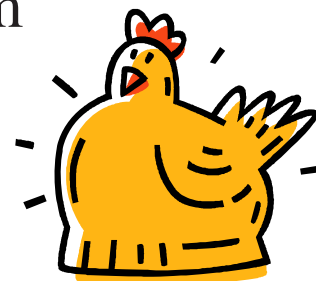
For Parents of Children with Special Needs: Deadline 8/15/08

www.Cupofcomfort.com



--and--

Chicken Soup for the Soul



Resolution stories: Deadline 8/31/08

Cancer stories: Deadline 9/1/08

Stay-at-Home Mom stories: Deadline 9/1/08

www.ChickenSoup.com

Publishing Syndicate needs stories starting 8/1/08

For all of the wonderful anthology writers whom we have worked with over the years, Publishing Syndicate is launching an exciting new book series! Even though we can't share the name of the series with you at this time, we can give you a sneak peek at the structure: It will be an anthology series (with stories from you!) combined with interviews from experts, inspiration on par with that found in books such as *The Secret*, and how-to tips and advice, similar to the *Dummies* series. These books will allow our readers to "see, identify, and do" and become an active participant. Once we have the publishing contract in place, we can release the title of this series. But in the meantime, we'll start accepting great stories from people like you beginning August 1, 2008!

To learn more about our new series and titles, go to www.PublishingSyndicate.com and **READ** and **FOLLOW** the story guidelines, as they are different than that of other anthology series!

IMPORTANT: Stories will not be accepted until August 1, 2008.

Go for it! Get published!