

Self-Publishing Success

(excerpted from *Clicking with Clients* by Daniel Wendler and updated for this presentation)

Self-publishing a book can be a fantastic boon to your business. It can bring you new clients, provide a fresh source of income, and build your credibility as an expert.

It's true that writing a book isn't for everyone. You have to put in a lot of time, and there's no guarantee it will ever sell. If you detest the idea of writing, this might not be for you.

But I'd encourage you to consider it. If you had asked me a few years ago, I never would have thought of myself as an author. But I started writing anyway – and thousands of readers have purchased my books. You might have a best-selling book in you too.

This next chapter will walk you through the process of writing your first book, starting with my top five reasons for self-publishing.

Five Reasons to Write a Book

1) Refine your ideas.

As you write and edit your book, you will spend hours figuring out the best way to explain your ideas. You'll develop metaphors and stories that illustrate your points. You'll think through the implications of your advice. You'll hone in on the core ideas you want to communicate.

And guess what? All that work will pay off during your therapy sessions. Instead of explaining a concept to a client off the top of your head, you'll teach them ideas that you've spent hours refining. Instead of using vague examples to illustrate your point, you'll be able to draw on the metaphors and stories you've developed for your book. Even if you never publish your book, you will still benefit from the time you spent writing.

2) Encourage clients to choose you

Most clients will comparison shop before choosing a therapist. Therapy is a big commitment, and clients understandably want the best therapist.

A book gives you a serious advantage during this comparison process. While other therapists might have similar credentials to you, you're probably the only one who has written a book. That makes you stand out.

If the client buys your book and enjoys what they read, you stand out even more. If a client finds your book helpful, they will probably conclude therapy with you will be helpful as well.

3) Create speaking opportunities

Speaking opportunities are a fantastic way to attract new clients.

Let's say you speak at a local PTA meeting about warning signs of adolescent depression. Parents listening to your talk are likely to send their depressed teenagers to you. Even if people in your audience aren't directly interested, they might remember you and tell their friends down the road.

You don't need a book to seek out speaking opportunities, of course. But a book makes it easier. After all, there are many therapists in the world, but not many therapist-authors. That extra credibility goes a long way towards convincing event organizers to sign you on as a speaker.

Plus, remember how writing a book helps you refine your ideas? Your presentation will be much better because you're sharing ideas you've developed over the course of months. And the better your presentation, the more likely you are to be invited back for more presentations.

Of course, this requires you to be a competent public speaker. You won't attract new clients if you go on stage and bomb your presentation. But public speaking can be learned.

The best option for learning public speaking is Toastmasters (Toastmasters.org). Toastmasters is an international organization that runs clubs where members can practice their public speaking skills. Your

city probably has a Toastmasters club so sign up, and commit for 3-6 months of membership. I guarantee that you will be a competent speaker by the end of that time.

4) Make an impact

You probably became a therapist because you wanted to help people. A book provides a new way for you to do just that.

As a therapist, you have insights to offer that most people don't. You have years of graduate training and hundreds or thousands of hours of clinical experience. Ideas that seem second-nature to you could be a godsend to someone else.

If you take the time to write a quality book, it will be a conduit of that wisdom. Your readers will learn things from your book they might not learn anywhere else. And that matters. You might not see the impact your book makes, but your readers certainly will.

5) Earn more income

I put this one last because you probably won't make much money from your book. Sorry!

The average self-published book probably sells a few copies each month. If you get lucky, you might be able to sell a few each week. If you're unlucky, you might not sell any at all.

Of course, it's possible to sell a lot of copies. I sell several copies of my books every day, and plenty of other authors do as well.

But this is difficult to do, and takes a lot of effort. My sales are high because I work really hard at introducing new readers to my books. I spend hours each week marketing my books or responding to reader mail. I also have the advantage of a highly trafficked website (ImproveYourSocialSkills.com) which helps me attract readers.

I work hard to find offline opportunities to sell my books too. Many of my book sales come when I speak at a conference and sell books afterwards, or reach out to bookstores and ask to do a book signing. Some people suggest self-publishing a book as a way to build "passive" income, but trust me – there's nothing passive about getting your book in front of potential readers!

In other words, if you're willing to put a lot of work into marketing and promoting your book, and it's well-written, and you have some luck on your side.... then yes, you can earn some decent income from your book.

Otherwise, figure that your book is primarily a marketing tool for attracting new therapy clients. You'll still earn a little income, but it will just be a nice bonus, not a reason to write the book.

Your Book Writing Checklist

At this point, you might be considering starting your book. Here's what you need to do to make that book a reality.

Step 1: Test The Waters

Writing a book is a big commitment.

Writing will cost you many, many hours. Hiring an editor and cover designer will cost you hundreds of dollars. If you never finish your book, all that time and money is wasted.

So test the waters with a smaller challenge before you commit to writing a book. You wouldn't jump off a diving board without making sure you could swim first, right?

The best challenge to start with is the 30 day, 10 post challenge. It's based on a suggestion from marketing guru Seth Godin. Here's how it works:

1. Start a new blog somewhere, and don't put your name on it. This will give you the freedom to take risks without worrying about the consequences.
2. Write ten posts on this anonymous blog. Your posts can be about whatever you want. Experiment with different styles of posts, different topics, etc. If possible, write all ten posts within one month to maintain momentum.
3. After you've written ten posts, share a few with some trusted friends and get their feedback.
4. Then, decide what happens next. Do you feel ready to start writing a book? Do you want to continue writing for your blog? Do you want to give up on writing for the time being?

Writing this anonymous blog will teach you a lot. You might find that you enjoy writing and you're good at it. In that case, there's a decent chance you have a book in you!

Or, you might find that writing feels like a chore. Don't give up just yet!

Instead, put the blog on pause for a month or two, and read through one of the writing books that I'll mention in the next step. Then, give it another try. If it still doesn't work out for you, then probably writing a book isn't for you.

Step 2: Choose Your Topic

A reader takes a risk every time they buy a new book. Will they like the book, or will it be a waste of time and money? They're much more likely to take that risk if they have a clear sense of the value the book can offer them.

The easiest way to show the reader a clear sense of value is to pick a specific topic. If your book is organized around a specific topic, it's easy for readers to determine the value the book brings.

If you're not sure what topic you want to write on, here are two ideas.

Write about a specific condition

You might write a guide for a specific psychological condition, such as depression or anxiety.

There are already excellent guides written by experts for psychological disorders – but there’s also a lot of junk out there. I just searched Amazon for “depression” and the third result was a book called “Depression: The Depression Cure: Cure Depression Instantly and Become Happy & More Confident Starting Today!”

Needless to say, this book was not written by an expert. Yet lots of people are buying it. If you published your own book on evidence-based depression advice and were able to take some sales away from charlatans claiming to “Cure Depression Instantly”, you’d be doing the world a favor.

By the way, specific conditions don’t have to be mental illnesses. You could easily write a book on better sleep habits, stress management skills, or effective study habits. Any problem that lots of people struggle with is a potential topic.

You can also take a positive psychology approach and write about a goal many people have instead of writing about a problem. For instance, you might write a psychological guide to running a marathon. Or you might write some therapeutic tips that people can use for better workplace performance.

If you decide to take this approach, start by thinking of goals you find personally meaningful. This will help you connect with your readers, and give you more insight to share.

Write for a specific population

Another option is to write a guide that helps a specific population with a specific issue.

For instance, let’s say you work with a lot of geriatric patients, and you are skilled in treating depression. You could probably write a book of advice for elderly people who are depressed. Just take evidence-based advice for depression and combine it with examples and applications that are specific for the elderly.

The benefit of this approach is that you have much less competition. The more specific your topic, the fewer books there are written for it. There are many books written about depression in general, but very few written about geriatric depression. That makes it easier for your book to get noticed.

You also have a greater chance to make an impact. Someone searching for a general guide to managing their depression already have several excellent books they can choose from (as long as they can avoid the books peddling instant cures.) But your book may be the only good resource available for someone who needs help with elderly depression (or whatever topic you choose.)

If you’re not sure what approach to take, I recommend writing for a specific population. It’s the approach I took to this book – you’ll notice I wrote about online marketing for therapists, not online marketing for everyone.

An easy way to start is to list the 3-4 populations you have the most experience with, and then the 3-4 conditions that you have the most skill in treating. Then do a quick Amazon search and see what material is already available for those conditions and those populations. If you find a niche that doesn’t have many quality books, start brainstorming ideas for advice you could offer.

Step 3: Sit Down and Write the Darn Thing

Writing a book can be a bummer.

There's writer's block, of course. And the self-doubt that whispers, "You're a terrible writer – nobody will read this!" Even on days when your writing flows well and your confidence is high, there's no way around the long hours sitting at the keyboard.

But while writing a book is a bummer, having a book written is amazing. My life is profoundly better because I became an author. I think you'll also find writing a book is worth the sacrifice.

Of course, it takes more than sacrifice. You'll also need a writing strategy.

Some writers set aside a specific time every day to write. Other writers give themselves a specific quota of words to write every day. I find I work best in sprints – instead of writing a little every day, I set aside an entire evening to write once or twice a week. Experiment and see which strategy gets you the best results.

The good news is that there are a lot of resources for helping you to become a better (and more prolific) writer. My four favorites are:

- "The War of Art" by Stephen Pressfield
- "Bird by Bird" by Anne Lamott
- "On Writing Well" by William Zinsser
- "You Are a Writer" by Jeff Goins.

You can also find people to help you along the way. Many cities have writing groups that meet periodically (just check Meetup.com). You can also ask a friend to hold you accountable to your writing goals.

You might also try some software tools to help you write. I use FocusAtWill.com to – you guessed it! – help me focus. It's fantastic for helping me get into a flow. My sister wrote her dissertation in Scrivener (Literatureandlatte.com/scrivener.php) which has a lot of helpful book writing features. Feel free to experiment and find out what works for you.

Whatever support system you set up, make sure you commit to working on your book until it's done. There are a lot of would-be authors with unfinished books on their hard drive that will never be published. Don't be one of them.

Step 4: Edit, Edit, Edit.

If you want a book that people will enjoy reading, you need to invest a lot of time into editing it. So once you've finished your first draft, go back and edit.

Make your ideas as clear as possible. Make your writing flow smoothly. And for the love of Sigmund Freud, fix all your typos and grammar mistakes! Nothing kills your credibility faster than frequent typos.

The easiest way to edit your writing is to read it out loud. If it sounds awkward coming out of your mouth, it's probably awkward on the page too. Reading your writing out loud also forces you to slow down enough to notice grammar mistakes or other flaws in your writing.

You should also get others to help you during the editing stage. Asking friends to read your writing is a great option (as long as they know you want honest feedback, not compliments.) There are plenty of writing groups either in person or online where you can submit your writing for critique.

I recommend you also work with a professional editor. In general, you'll want to ask an editor to look at your first or second draft (to make sure you're on the right track) and then your final draft (to make sure everything is as polished as possible. You can ask for help throughout the process, of course, but first and last draft is usually the minimum to make sure you produce a quality book.

My suggestion for an editor and writing coach is my friend and colleague Kyler Shumway (KylerShumway.com). Kyler has helped a lot of therapists with their writing and he's a great choice.

Step 5: Design Your Cover

You're not supposed to judge a book by its cover, but your readers definitely will.

The more professional your cover looks, the more credible you'll appear to potential clients. So the better your book cover, the more clients you attract and the more books you sell.

If you're a talented artist, you might try designing your own cover. However, most people will need to hire someone to help them.

I recommend Phillip Gessert (PhillipGessert.com). He designed the cover for my most recent book and also helps with the internal manuscript.

Hiring an expert cover designer is expensive, but But you get what pay for. Cheap book covers are usually made using stock photography and look generic and low-quality. While a low-quality book cover isn't the end of the world, it reflects poorly on your book content (and the book author – you!)

Of course, it's possible to find a cheap book cover that still looks great. If you want to try your luck, the best place to find cheap books covers is reddit.com/r/forhire. You'll get lots of up-and-coming designers looking for work, so you might find a talented newcomer who doesn't charge much yet. If you don't care about quality and just want the absolute cheapest cover you can get, try Fiverr.com – you can find covers for as low as \$5.

Regardless of the designer you choose, make sure the cover looks good in small size. Amazon displays a tiny thumbnail version of book covers in the search results. If your book doesn't look good at small size, it's less likely that people will buy it.

Step 6: Publish Your Book!

Congratulations! Your book is written and edited, and you have a shiny new cover. Here's how to get your book into the hands of readers.

Kindle Direct Publishing

The first stop for self-publishing is Amazon Kindle. Amazon has a massive reach, lots of tools, and generous royalties. Most people have a Kindle (or at least the Kindle app), so Kindle is your best bet for reaching lots of readers.

Your first step is to sign up at kdp.amazon.com. Then, submit your book. There are a few stages to this:

Put in Your Book Details

You'll need to fill out the book title, description, etc. Most of this is pretty obvious (put your name in the "author" box, for instance), but there is one tricky part: The description.

Many novice authors write a sentence or two for their book's description. Don't fall into that trap. Write at least a few paragraphs and make a case for your book. Why would someone want to read it? Why are you qualified to write it? If you're not sure what to say, read the back covers of a few of your favorite non-fiction books for inspiration.

Also, use good formatting. If you clump everything together in one big paragraph, your description won't be very readable. Break your ideas up into small paragraphs and put spaces between your paragraphs. If your description doesn't look good once the book is published, go back and edit it (you can update your description as often as you want.)

Finally, make sure you choose good categories for your book to be listed in. Readers might discover your book by browsing the Amazon directory, so putting it in the right category makes it easier for it to be found. You'll also want to add some keywords to increase findability.

Set Pricing

You'll have to choose how much to charge for your Kindle book. Amazon pays you a better royalty (70% instead of 30%) when your book is priced between \$2.99 and \$9.99. So most of the time, you should choose to price your book in that range.

Here's a basic strategy for choosing your price:

- If you're not sure how much to charge, you should charge \$2.99. That way, you get the 70% royalty, but it's still cheap enough to be an impulse purchase for most people.
- If you want to use your book primarily as a marketing tool and not as a source of income, price your book at 99 cents. You'll earn very little from each sale, but you'll maximize your readers – and hopefully some of those readers will become therapy clients.
- If your book is high quality and full length (100+ pages), you might charge \$3.99 or \$4.99. If you are going to charge this amount, you should plan to work hard marketing your book.

Also, Amazon will ask you if you want to sign up for KDP select. You should almost always say yes, because this gives you access to extra marketing tools (like running giveaways). The downside is that Kindle Unlimited subscribers can download your book for free, but the sales you lose from the free downloads is more than made up for by the benefits.

Format & Upload Your Book

You can upload a regular Word document to Kindle, but you need to make sure that it's formatted correctly. Search for "Formatting Book for Kindle" and you should find Amazon's official guide to making sure your book is formatted correctly. You can also hire a professional to do this for you.

Once you've uploaded your book, you should use Kindle's proofreading tool to make sure it all looks good. If you formatted the book yourself, you should go through page by page and check for errors. If you're hired a pro, just do a general once-over to make sure it all looks okay. If you find errors, fix them and resubmit.

You'll need to upload your cover as well, but this should be uneventful. Just make sure that your cover designer knows the right specifications for a Kindle cover. If you also want to publish a paperback version of your book (and you should) you'll need a special version of the cover for that too.

Publish!

Once you hit publish, your book should be live on Kindle within a day or so. Congrats!

ACX

Acx allows you to produce an audiobook version of your book. It's also run by Amazon (see a theme here?), and automatically distributes your book to Amazon, Audible, and iTunes. Since lots of folks prefer audiobooks to reading, this expands your pool of potential book buyers. You can sign up at Acx.com.

You'll need to hire a narrator to produce your audiobook. ACX has an audition system where you can post your book and narrators all around the world will record a short sample so you can gauge their talent. Then you pick your preferred narrator and you are off and running!

While ACX itself is free, you need to pay your narrator. ACX narrators are paid in one of two ways.

First, you can agree on a royalty share plan. In this plan, the narrator doesn't get paid anything up front, but they take 50% of the money you earn from the audiobook – permanently. You should choose this option if you're concerned your audiobook might sell poorly, or if you just don't have enough money to pay a narrator up-front. Keep in mind that not all narrators are willing to do royalty shares, so you might not be able to use this option with your preferred narrator.

Otherwise, you can agree to pay the narrator a flat rate per finished hour of audio. If your audiobook ends up being three hours long and your narrator charges \$200 per finished hour, you would pay them \$600. The rates that narrators charge can vary from \$50 per finished hour for narrators that are just starting out to \$400+ for very experienced narrators.

Step 7: Use Your Book to Promote Your Practice

Once your book is published, you should celebrate! But you're not quite done yet. Remember, you wrote the book as a marketing tool, so make sure you use it to market your practice.

The easiest way to do this is to feature the book prominently on your website. Ideally, you should put the book on your front page, although you might also include it in your menu. You might link people directly to the book's Amazon page, or you might offer them a free download of the first chapter in exchange for joining your mailing list.

You should also include a mention to your book in your online profiles. Update your social media accounts to include a link to the book, and if there is a biography of you on any professional sites (for instance, perhaps you are a professor at a local college) see if they can include a mention of the book. Again, your goal is to build credibility and increase the chances that someone might choose you as a therapist.

You can also use the book offline to build your practice. As I mentioned earlier, a book is a great way to convince event organizers to let you speak – and speaking gigs are great for building your practice. You

might also consider seeing if the local newspaper is interested in interviewing you or running a story about your book, or if a local bookstore is willing to feature you for a book signing. All of these opportunities put you in front of potential clients – and help you sell some books too!

Oh, and consider giving some free copies to doctors, social workers, etc, and encourage them to give the books to the people they work with. This can backfire if you force books on people that don't want them, so ask before showing up with a crate of books!

These are not the only ways your book can help market your practice. Keep your eyes open for opportunities where your book might boost your credibility and increase your referrals. Good luck!