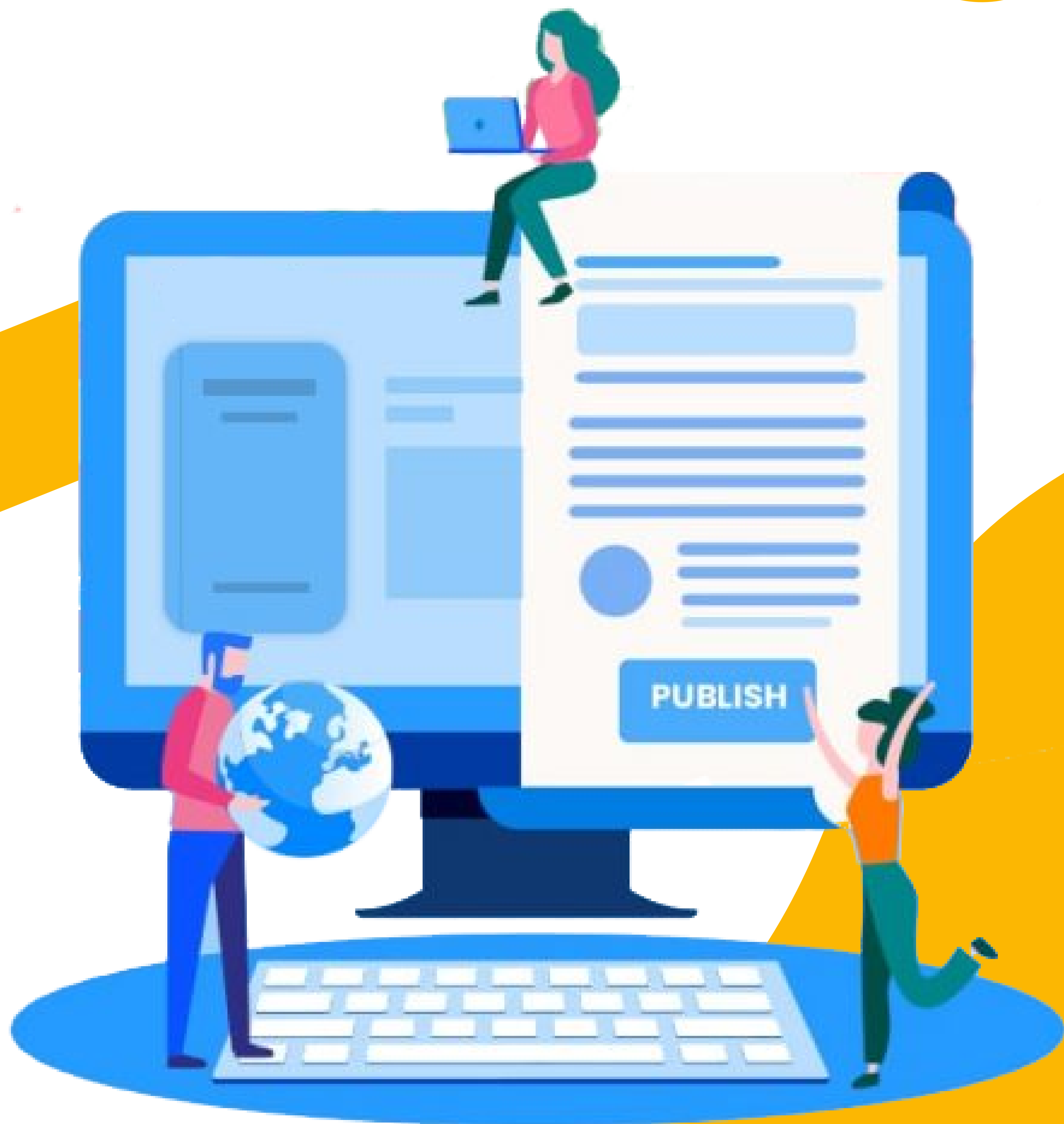


IS SELF-PUBLISHING JUST A PLAN B OPTION?



You have written a book, and now you want it published.

But how?

Should you go for a traditional publishing house or self-publish?

And is the latter not just something you do if your book is not good enough for a publishing house?

In other words: a Plan B option?

A lot of people think it is better to have your books traditionally published.

Most of the time, they do not know the pros and cons for each option: traditionally publishing vs. self-publishing.

Before you make up your mind, or before you dismiss self-publishing as a Plan B option, let us look at facts.

The Pros and Cons of Traditional Publishing

Traditional publishing has advantages and several disadvantages that most people are not aware of.

If we start with the advantages, then the biggest is the prestige you get from being able to tell people that your book is published by so-and-so.

A traditional publisher will typically print between 100 and several thousand copies of a book. That means expenses that will only be covered when the book sells.

If a publishing house chooses to take the economic risk of publishing your book, it means it is good. More than good, it is great.

Telling your friends and family that such-and-such publishing house accepted your book will make you raise your chin. You can, rightfully, feel proud about what you have accomplished.

Besides, all you have to do is write the book, edit it according to in-house editors, and correct your spelling and grammatical errors, again following guidelines from an in-house proofreader.

You do not have to worry about book cover, book description, sometimes not even the title. All those are issues that your publishing house takes care of.

They do not do so for free, though. When you publish traditionally, the publishing house takes a big share. It is normal for an author to earn between four and 15 percent of the net book price as royalty. (The net price is the price of the book, minus print expenses, VAT, and similar.)

Most publishing houses have a distribution system, which is a significant advantage for you. That means they take care of contacting bookstores and delivering your book to them. On the other hand, a bookstore is free to order, say, ten copies and return them all ten, because they did not sell out in a week. Space in a bookstore is not free.

Many writers believe that publishing houses will do the marketing for them. Sadly, in most cases, they do not. Or they do only very little marketing. Unless your book is one of the best-selling ones for that publishing house, you should be prepared to do your own marketing.

In many countries, you cannot contact the publishing house directly yourself. You need to hire an agent. Those can be expensive. Some have even been found to run away with their clients' money. And it is an extra time-consuming step from finishing your book to having it published.

The biggest disadvantage, though, is that most publishing houses will buy the rights to your book and keep it forever. That means that you are not free

to publish it yourself under another title, even if the publishing house has stopped selling it.

Still, you can call yourself a “published author,” but is it worth it?

The Pros and Cons of Self-Publishing

Self-publishing also has its advantages and disadvantages.

You are left to do it all yourself or to pay others for issues you cannot handle. That means you must write the book, edit it, proofread it, take care of cover and description.

You need to market your book, but this is—in most cases—no different from traditional publishing.

If a book does not sell, you are free to change its title, its cover, or its description.

Is there less prestige attached to self-publishing? Do people still see it as an example of yet another author who wrote so badly that they could not even find a publishing house?

Yes, some do. And that used to be true when there was only two options:

1. A traditional publisher.
2. Vanity publishing.

Vanity publishing still exists. It is when the writer has no other option than to pay to have their book published.

Today, this is no longer necessary, thanks to Amazon, Lulu, Draft2Digital, Smashwords, and other services that will publish your book for you for free. They will only charge a minor percentage when you sell a book.

That means that for eBooks you self-publish, you will make up to 70% of the book's gross price, and around 60% of a paperback's price after print expenses. While you are only making a few cents of every traditional book sold, you can typically make up to \$7 per sold self-published eBook, and even more from paperbacks, because you can sell them at a higher price.

Furthermore, when you self-publish a book through Amazon's KDP (Kindle Direct Publishing), you can still self-publish it through one of the other services and have your book in major bookstores like Barnes & Noble, Apple, Kobo, and more. You do not sell your rights like you do when you sign a contract to sell to a traditional publishing house.

Any time you want to remove your book from a store, you can do so. And you can publish it elsewhere or even sell it from your own site.

So, What to Do?

Does self-publishing still sound like a Plan B to you?

I think that the advantages of self-publishing outweigh the advantages of traditional publishing. And the disadvantages of traditional publishing weigh way heavier than the few advantages they bring.

Prestige? There is much prestige in showing your book to your friends and family when it is available in big bookstores like Amazon, Kobo, Barnes & Noble. Much more than in a local bookstore where it is hidden in the back for a couple of weeks, before it is returned.

Whether you choose self-publishing or traditional publishing, you will have to learn how to market your book. And as for proofreading and having a cover made... the expenses you will get here are much lower than the difference in royalties between the two options.

References - self publishing:

Amazon KDP: <https://kdp.amazon.com>

Lulu: <https://lulu.com>

Draft2Digital: <https://draft2digital.com>

Smashwords: <https://smashwords.com>

References royalties:

Amazon KDP: https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/help/topic/G202181110

Lulu: <https://www.lugaru.com/lulucalc.html>

Draft2Digital: <https://www.draft2digital.com/faq/> (under **What's all this going to cost me?**)