



## October 2011

---

Whether you are a published author or a writer-wanna-be, this e-zine is for you. Here, you will find articles, book reviews, announcements, poetry, and information about the craft and business of writing, publishing, and book marketing written by our readers. <http://writersinthesky.com>

In This Issue:

<b>EDITOR'S CORNER.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>NETWORK WITH US .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>WITS BOOK REVIEWS FOR OCTOBER.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>WITS PODCAST.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>WE ARE ONE IN SPIRIT PODCAST .....</b>	<b>8</b>

### Editor's Corner

Another month has flown by and we are already enjoying autumn weather here in Nashville, Tennessee. It's hard to stay inside, knowing that this short season will lead into winter.

The 4-week telesummit hosted by Live-Spirit.com to train sensitive people to manage energy and emotions was a great success. We had more than 300 people signed up and the calls were well attended. The MP3 replays of all four calls (six hours of presentations by eight expert panelists) are available at <http://weare1inspirit.com/spiritual-audios.htm#All8>.

Live-Spirit will host a new and exciting telesummit each month, including a Halloween special on clearing your electromagnetic field and environment of negative energy. Sign up to be on my spiritual email list <http://eepurl.com/f2yE9> for future notices of this kind and get a free audio book based on *A Course in Miracles* titled *Bliss in Divine Oneness!*

May your path be written with success!

Yvonne Perry,  
Owner of Writers in the Sky Creative Writing Services  
<http://writersinthesky.com>

[Facebook](#)  
[LinkedIn](#)  
[Twitter](#)

## 6 Compelling Reasons Why Authors Need to Blog

by [Joel Friedlander](#)

In my day job, I help authors bring their books to completion and get them ready to go to press, whether it's through a digital print on-demand service, an offset print run, or going straight to e-Books.

One thing that's common with these authors: their dawning realization that after putting in months or years of work—usually in private—to finish their manuscripts, the real work of book marketing has only just begun.

This is one of the reasons I've become involved in author education, because many of these authors have made the exact same mistake: they waited too long to start building an audience for their books.

### It Doesn't Have to Be That Way

This is the reason I have the same answer to every author who asks about whether—or when—to start a blog to support their books:

1. Do you need a blog to help support your book? **Yes.**
2. When should you start blogging? **Now!**

Here's why I always tell authors that now is the best time to start blogging: it takes time to reach the goals that blogging will bring within your grasp, like:

- Finding readers who are interested in your subject
- Building anticipation for your book
- Networking with others in your field
- Establishing a base for your social media marketing
- Letting potential buyers sample your content, your style and your ideas

Sometimes it's a challenge when you first start out, since blogs have some moving parts you have to get right. But there's lots of help available, and it's possible for anyone who wants to start blogging to be up and running in 30 minutes.

### 4 Things You Need to Get Going

For a free blog, you don't need much. You can set up an account at [Blogger.com](#) or [WordPress.com](#) and be writing your first article in 5 minutes.

On the other hand, this type of blogging has been referred to by Brain Clark at Copyblogger as “digital sharecropping,” since you don’t own the property you’re basing your blog on. If you run afoul of the policies and procedures of the host, you may find yourself without a blog at all.

The alternative is to set up a blog that you own, where you have your own domain name and hosting account. I recommend this method for anyone who’s serious about blogging.

By owning your own piece of the internet, you can’t be banned, kicked or lose your blog because of a change in policies or even due to a mistake on someone else’s part. It’s like owning your own home.

Creating a blog you actually own takes a bit more work at the beginning, but not much. You’ll need:

1. **A domain name.** I’m paying \$10 right now to register domains, and it’s a one-time fee.
2. **A hosting account.** Rates these days will give you a robust account to host multiple sites for less than \$10 a month, billed to a credit card. This blog is hosted on Bluehost.com and it has been very reliable over the last two years.

Many hosts have an automated installation available for the WordPress blogging software. You push a button and it installs it for you in about a minute. You can also download this software, which is free and open source, at WordPress.org.

For either type of blog, you’ll also want to prepare by settling on:

3. **Your publication schedule.** You may not firm this up until you’ve been blogging for a little while, but it’s good to start off with a definite schedule. If you’re pressed for time, start with once a week or once every two weeks and grow from there.
4. **Your content focus.** This is more challenging than it might appear. Many of the best author blogs start with a laser-like focus on one aspect of one subject. Obviously, the subject matter of your book is the point around which your blog will form.

Once you’ve got your blog up and running you’re ready to reap the rewards. I promised 6 compelling reasons, and here they are:

- **Home base.** As your hub, your blog is a home base you can direct people to in your travels throughout the internet. When you post on forums, leave comments on others’ blogs, or participate in discussions, people who want to find out more about you need somewhere to go. There’s no better place to send people than to your blog.
- **Opt-in.** I encourage every author to start an email list, and the best place to do this is with an opt-in form on your blog. This is a great way to encourage greater engagement with your ideas.
- **Test bed.** A blog, by its nature, focuses attention on one article at a time. Each blog post pushes the older ones down toward your article archive. This allows you to experiment

with style, subject matter, and other aspects of your writing that you'd like to get feedback on.

- **Content collector.** It can be overwhelming to sit down and try to write a 50,000 word book. But that's just 50 1,000-word blog posts, isn't it? Chunking this task down to a manageable size can be a powerful force in helping you meet your writing goals.
- **Media focus.** You'll need a place to point media – like book reviewers and feature writers – to when they want to find out more about your book, you, or your work. A blog can easily host your media kit and all the materials needed to make you shine in stories and reviews.
- **Reader hangout.** There's nothing more valuable for authors than to be able to get into a conversation with their readers. The comment section on a blog can be the most interesting part of a blog post, where others weigh in with their own opinions, insights and experiences. This not only gives you great feedback, but it builds your community of readers, and that's a good thing.

I hope I've managed to interest you in blogging. The most successful author blogs I see are those in which the blogger is passionate about his or her topic, engaged with readers who want to know more, and innovative in how to offer more content and more fun to people who subscribe to the blog.

So get out there and start blogging today, if you haven't started already. Don't worry about how many people are reading your blog, just find a way to make it enjoyable for you and let people know that you've started blogging. You'll have an audience soon enough.

Joel Friedlander is a self-published author and book designer who blogs about book design, self-publishing and the indie publishing life at [TheBookDesigner.com](http://TheBookDesigner.com). He's also the proprietor of Marin Bookworks, where he helps publishers and authors who decide to publish get to market on time and on budget with books that are both properly constructed and beautiful to read.

## **Award Winning Author Barbara Techel's "Classy" How-To Takes the Sting out of Book Marketing**

Anyone who has written a book knows that one of the most daunting tasks is marketing. These days, whether you are self-publishing or have gone to a traditional publishing house, the business of selling your work will ultimately fall on your shoulders. Wouldn't it be great if someone took you by the hand and walked you through the process? Well, your prayers have been answered in the form of a new book by Barbara Techel.

Techel's new book, *Class Act: Sell More Books through School and Library Author Appearances*, is an excellent way for authors to promote their message while selling more books. Its step-by-step guide prepares authors for selling their books at schools and libraries, including choosing the venue, effective public speaking, and filling the orders resulting from the events. It also answers one of the toughest questions: how to price your book so that you are neither

charging too much, nor selling yourself short. In other words, it helps you to create a “win-win” situation for authors, children and school administrators.

A critical point Techel makes is that you are not only selling your book, but yourself. By visiting school and libraries, you have the opportunity to introduce yourself to both students and administrators. It shows you are serious about promoting your work and that you stand behind its quality. More importantly, the face time gives you a leg up in this age of social media marketing. Of course, it’s sometimes hard to get to places in person, but Techel has this covered as well: she teaches authors how to appear to use Skype for their appearances.

Techel is not giving armchair advice; she has utilized every method in Class Act to share her own message, and that of Frankie, her wheelchair-bound dachshund. Although she is physically disabled, Frankie’s spirit remains stronger than ever, and she and Barbara have brought their inspiring story to over 300 schools. They also visit hospitals and hospice facilities.

To learn more about Barbara Techel’s work, visit <http://joyfulpaws.com/promote/about-the-book/> or <http://www.facebook.com/sellmorebookstoschoolsandlibraries>

## Network with Us

**The Dream Quest One Poetry & Writing Contest** is open to anyone who loves expressing innermost thoughts and feelings into the beautiful art of poetry or writing a story that is worth telling everyone! And to all who have the ability to dream, write a poem or short story for a chance to win cash prizes. All works must be original. Visit our website for details: <http://www.dreamquestone.com>

~~~~~  
Check out the e-books designed especially to help authors promote their books online. <http://tinyurl.com/DanaWITS>.

~~~~~  
*Whose Stuff Is This? Finding Freedom from the Thoughts, Feelings, and Energy of Those Around You* is a guidebook for empathic people who have been unknowingly carrying energetic burdens that belong to someone else. See all purchasing options at <http://whosestuffisthis.blogspot.com/p/purchase-book.html> .

~~~~~  
A Writers' Retreat on a Cruise to the Mexican Riviera from Los Angeles  
Save your seat for a one-of-a-kind WRITERS' RETREAT on a cruise ship to the Mexican Riviera: Sunday Feb. 5-12, 2012. Our Award-winning teachers will guide you to produce personal essays to be published in an upcoming anthology under the title of "Shades of Culture" We have negotiated the best prices. Learn more at <http://www.loveboatretreat.webs.com/> or contact Catherine Yesayan (Program director) at 818-497-0707. Email [cyesayan@gmail.com](mailto:cyesayan@gmail.com)

~~~~~  
Each story in *The Sid Series ~ A Collection of Holistic Stories for Children* focuses on life skills such as environmental awareness, helping others, being true to one’s self, overcoming fear, and following inner guidance. <http://TheSidSeries.com>

~~~~~  
Read the first chapter for free and then decide if you want to download the 3-hour-long mp3 audio book of *More Than Meets the Eye ~ True Stories about Death, Dying, and Afterlife* for only \$7.00 <http://deathdyingafterlife.blogspot.com/p/chapter-1.html>  
~~~~~

## WITS Book Reviews for October

Title: On Being God: Beyond Your Life's Purpose

Author: Carl Bozeman

ISBN: 978-1439244845

Available on [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)

Reviewer: Yvonne Perry, owner of WITS

This book is filled with some of the most profound statements and insights of any book I have read regarding the limitations we place upon ourselves.

The book opens with a new interpretation of what the story of Garden of Eden really implies. Carl's take on this is right on and makes complete sense that the alleged serpent is actually our ego, which deceives us with endless mind chatter that keeps us from knowing we are gods. There was no serpent beguiling eve. Her own thinking deceived her and she shared with Adam her logical conclusion that we are something other than god. We are so much greater than we have realized. We are individuations of the divine source. We were not created in God's image; instead many times we create our own image of god. We limit him as we have limited ourselves with our egoic thinking.

“The idea that within each of us is the god we seek is so contrary to what we have been conditioned to believe that the mention of it is to blaspheme against the finite god we think we know and believe in,” writes Carl on page 22. “Our reasoning protects us from the awesome power and responsibility of being god and accepting our divine nature and seeing beyond the reality we have come to know. . . We yield our divine nature to the reasoning of others who think that what they know is what we should believe . . . The judgments we make are the essence of all our sorrows, suffering, and sadness in this reality.”

Another strong point the book makes is that there is no sin, hence we are sinless. Some readers may have a hard time grasping the fact that there is no good and evil, right or wrong, but if Christ paid for our sins then how is that different from the idea that there is no sin? Unless we throw out the Bible and dismiss it entirely, we must admit that this is the major theme in Jesus' teaching: don't judge. “Forgive everyone” is the same as saying, “if you cannot accept the idea that there is no sin, forgive everyone of what you think or claim to be sin.” Gods do not judge at all. Only man in his current ego-ridden state of assessing what is good and evil judges in any way and then places such characteristics on god. Gods can only exist in neutrality that makes no judgments about anything and accepts unconditionally every act or event as part of the infinite range of possibilities.

For me, the highlight of the book was Bozeman's interpretation of the parable of the talents spoken of in the New Testament where Jesus tells of a man traveling to a far country, leaving his wealth with his servants to manage until he returns. Removing judgment from the equation as Carl so eloquently does, we see that the man, who hid his talent because he was afraid of his master's reputation, is actually afraid of his own divinity. A lesson for all of us who are afraid to step into our power.

Lastly, the book anticipates that some people will refuse to change their minds or believe differently even when they know that what they currently hold as truth is to their own detriment. That is the working of the ego at its self-protective core. The ego knows that anything we ascribe to god we have within ourselves. In order to realize our god-like nature we must overcome our need to judge others. The more we get rid of judgment, the more of God we will see in ourselves. Naturally, in order to continue its own existence, the ego will show us creative ways to keep judgment alive. It's our choice. Are you a god or not?

Book Title: *The Calendar: A New Cyber Genre for a New Cyber World*

Author: Romina Wilcox

ISBN: 978-1432774042

Publisher: Outskirts Press (June 28, 2011)

Link to purchase: [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)

Reviewer: Dana Micheli of WITS

The Internet, as well as the technological advances that have flowed from its creation, has undoubtedly made our lives easier in countless ways. The world is smaller and business faster; vast libraries of knowledge are now only a Google search away. But this progress is not without a price, for it has also created a new type of criminal, and turned the rest of us into his potential victims.

We have all seen the commercials for companies offering protection from identity theft; we have all seen the news stories about our government agencies, hacked into by internet pirates. Like it or not, cybercrime has become part of our daily reality, and this reality requires a different kind of hero. In the world of novelist Romina Wilcox, that hero is the young software architect and amateur sleuth, Joanne Gravitiz.

Gravitiz, who Romina Wilcox refers to as "an ordinary woman placed in extraordinary circumstances", first made her appearance in the 2007 thriller, *Cold Eyes*; where, after creating security software of the same name, she helped the FBI find the computer hacker who had brutally murdered a college professor. Now, in Wilcox's much-anticipated follow-up novel, *The Calendar*, Gravitiz is back to stop a tech-savvy terrorist from staging another attack against OmegaSoft, the corporation for which she works.

As the story opens, Gravitiz has it all: a loving fiancée and a recent promotion to manager of OmegaSoft's Critical Security Department. Now, as the company competes for a highly lucrative contract with the Department of Homeland Security, a terrorist with an agenda known only to

himself blows up one of the company's facilities. Joanne Gravitz is charged with conducting damage control with the now-skeptical Homeland Security Department, but she decides that while she's at it, she's going to find out who is targeting OmegaSoft—and its employees—for destruction. As she races against time to find the killer before he can strike again, she learns that he is tracking her movements. Vitz and the deadly opponent knows how to manipulate the technology as well as she does.

In creating the world of her gripping suspense novels, cybercrime expert Romina Wilcox has combined her training in computer forensics with her fifteen years of real world experience in Silicon Valley. One thing's for sure, *The Calendar* is so good that it will have everyone "marking the days" until her next novel.

## WITS Podcast

**October 7:** Wilson Awasu – Sarah?

Join WITS podcast on **October 14, 2011** for an interview with author Barbara Techel, as she shares her marketing experience and her new book, *Class Act*. Barbara shares a wealth of information about accessing and selling books through school and library author appearances. The information she has to share is not just for children's book authors: It's the ultimate how-to manual for authors of any title of interest to these audiences.

**October 21, 2011**, author Louis Winslow visits Writers in the Sky Podcast for an interview about, *Good Tales*, a collection of short stories. The *Good Tales* collection is comprised of twenty believable yarns, ranging from horror, thriller, and action adventure to family in orientation. Each story has been written to draw the reader in, all have something to ponder, be it a moral issue of an unexpected twist at the end. During the interview, Louis will be reading an excerpt from "Charade," his favorite story in the collection.

**October 28:** Kenneth Williams will speak with Dana Micheli about his fascinating how-to, *Applying Mathematics in Construction*.

## We Are One in Spirit Podcast

**October 6:** Transition, Expansion, and Transformation—a face-to-face discussion with LavendarRose and **Vickie B. Majors**. Learn some easy ways to transform your life as you raise your soul's vibration.

**October 13: Dr. Andrew Cort** will be discussing his new book, *The Purpose of Religion: Enlightenment, Meaning and Love in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Symbolology*. In a world where religious differences often trigger hatred and violence, here is a book that celebrates the Decency, Wisdom and Unity of our traditions.

**October 20 Dr. Susan Allison** joins LavendarRose to discuss Allison's new book, *Empowered Healer: Gain the Confidence, Power and Ability to Heal Yourself*. The overnight disappearance of a diagnosed cancer nodule in the larynx, shrinking lesions in the brain, the healing of cervical cancer, the recovery from throat cancer and hepatitis C, excruciating pain gone virtually instantly, peripheral eyesight restored, blocked arteries cleared, depression and anxiety released in one session! Are they miracles? No. They are the work of the empowered healer—YOU! These are actual healings performed by the average person and documented by medical examination. And they are the result of the step-by-step formula for self-healing in Dr. Susan's new book!

**October 27:** Author **Jackie Lapin** will be joining Lavendar Rose to discuss Jackie's newest book, *Practical Conscious Creation: Daily Techniques for Manifest Your Desires*. This book teaches you how to use the Law of Attraction with conscious visualization to proactively choose your future, rather than merely passively waiting for something to happen.

## **The Quickest Way to Kill Your Online Success**

I have a friend who lives in San Diego. She and her boyfriend rented this lovely home outside of the city. They have tons of land, a great house. It was really a fantastic deal. Since they were in such a good place, the rent was cheap and they had no intention of moving anytime soon, they decided to do some minor renovations to the house. This became their "weekend warrior" project. They'd paint, tinker, plant and in the end, they had a great and slightly improved property. Then one day the owner stopped by for a visit. "Bad news," he said, "I need to sell this property and I have a buyer who wants to offer top dollar, in a market like this I'm sure you understand why I need to take it." They had 30 days to move out.

Now, you might think this is a very sad and unfair situation, but it happens all the time. And it doesn't just happen to real estate, it happens online too. It's a great thing, this social networking, but what a lot of people forget is that you don't own the sites you are populating. While Facebook owns the world (pretty much) right now, things could change. But more than that, sometimes a slight "uh-oh" from you and a slight violation of the site's terms of service can cause you a world of grief. We had a client several years ago who built up 5,000 friends on his personal profile. I kept cautioning him about doing promotion on that page as Facebook has rules against doing promotion on a personal profile. He continued to do promotion (though not heavy) and lost his page. He never got it back. His entire tribe of 5,000 people was lost in the minute it took Facebook to pull down that page.

Don't get me wrong, it's great to utilize these tools and promote yourself, but just remember: as much as you might feel "at home" on Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, YouTube, and Twitter, you don't own these properties. They do. Be smart and make sure you aren't making these sites the center of your success. Here are a few tips to help you own your real estate:

**Website.** You should always, always, always have a website. I know some authors who use Facebook as their websites. Big mistake. I know other authors who get a website that doesn't belong to them, meaning they are part of a community of free sites they don't own. If the

community decides to stop doing websites and goes away, guess what happens? So does your content.

**Smart Social Media.** One of the things I really recommend is that you center all of your content around your website. That's partially why I suggest linking your blog to Facebook and Twitter. The content starts on your site and gets funneled from there, rather than in reverse.

**Other ways to promote.** Consider other ways to promote your stuff that isn't social media centric. Interviews on (other) blogs or websites, for instance. Yes, you are still putting stuff out there on other sites, I'm not saying not to. I'm saying that you need to make sure that whatever content you put out there is reflected on your site as well.

**Duplicate content.** There's a problem with posting huge amounts of duplicate content online, but unless you are pushing hundreds of pieces out a month, I doubt you have anything to worry about. However, the flip side is that you want to make sure you have copies of all the content you put out there. If you're uploading a video on YouTube, don't delete it off of your computer because you think it's "safe" on this site. It may very well be, but if you lose your page or YouTube gets bought (again) and morphs into something else, you're in trouble.

**Enhanced website.** When I talked about having a website, I'm not just talking about having a one or two-pager. I mean have a robust site packed with content. Make sure that you have a blog, and you might consider adding a resource section, etc. All information about your books should be on the site (don't rely on Amazon to house this for you) and be sure that any ordering information is on your site as well. Wait! You might ask, is Amazon in danger of going away? Not likely. But as they've shown in the past by pulling down books and buy buttons without warning: Amazon can do whatever it wants.

**Traffic.** So, the nitty gritty of promotion is what? Sales, right? Sure, and exposure too (though I think you should target exposure first, then sales, but that's another article). If you're sending all of your traffic to social media sites, guess what? Your website traffic is probably pretty low or non-existent. If you send traffic to social media sites guess who benefits? Well, certainly you do in the way of exposure, but long-term this isn't a good plan. Let me explain why.

If you aren't promoting your site as the center of the universe, and instead pushing people to social media sites, then your website isn't getting those super valuable incoming links from blogs, websites, etc. that you are promoting yourself to. As a result, your site will sink in Google rankings. That means if you lost one or more of your social media sites, you could certainly pick up the pieces and start sending people to your site, but that will be a long, hard haul. Better to focus on that now and gather that traffic, along with the buzz you create in social media, so you aren't caught with a zero starting point if anything happens.

You might think that the moral of this story is a slightly paranoid "trust no one" mantra but it's not. It's about protecting your stuff and being a smart and savvy author. You would never open up a store in a mall without a lease that locked you in for a certain amount of time, right? While there are no guarantees in anything, you need to be smart about all of these wonderful, free, not-owned-by-you social media sites. You might do a fantastic job of driving traffic, fans, and likes

to various pages. But the reality is that you should focus on what you own, your website. I love my social media sites and yes, it's a widely known fact that I'm addicted to Twitter. Yet they aren't the center of my online universe, my website is. Yours should be, too.

Reprinted from "The Book Marketing Expert newsletter," a free ezine offering book promotion and publicity tips and techniques. <http://www.amarketingexpert.com>

## **Becoming an Empowered Self-Published Author – Ethics & Practice**

By [Lynn Serafinn](#)

Over the past few months, many authors have been writing to me all in a fluster over a controversy that apparently has arisen between Amazon and Lightning Source. I wanted to address this controversy because, frankly, I think a lot of people are having a knee-jerk reaction to what I think is basically an ethical issue, and I would like to show what I think might be a more 'holistic' response to it.

First of all, you need to know a bit about the parties involved and what is going on. Before we do that, let's take a quick look at the flow that is involved in the production of any product, including your book:

- 1) It starts with the creator
- 2) It goes to the publisher
- 3) Then it goes to the manufacturer
- 4) Then to the distributor
- 5) Then to the retailer
- 6) Then to the consumer

**STEPS 1 & 2:** When you are truly self-publishing a book, YOU are also the publisher (so steps 1 and 2 are combined). But if you are going through a subsidiary press (such as iUniverse, Balboa Press or Create Space), you are not 100% "self-published." On the one hand, you ARE self-published in that you don't need a publishing deal and you retain all rights to your work. On the other hand, you are NOT self-published in that your subsidiary publisher is entitled to (usually) around 50% of your royalties as long as you print through them.

**STEP 3:** In printing, the 'manufacturer' is the printer. The publisher (even if that means you) then sends the book to the printer. Either we get a quantity of books printed in advance, or we use a "print on demand" (POD) service. Back when I first started out in the published world (and also when I ran a record company), you typically have to order 1000-2000 copies of your book (or record/CD) in order to get a decent price. Then, you always ran the risk of your publication sitting around collecting dust because you couldn't move 2000 copies. Since the rise of POD in the publishing industry, that risk and investment has been removed for self-publishing authors. Lightning Source is one such POD service, certainly the most known in the world, and the one I

use and recommend to my clients. Instead of having to buy 2000 copies of your book and the ship them to distributors, they print them ONLY when you have a customer for them (whether wholesale or retail), so you only pay for what you know you are going to sell.

**STEP 4:** The next step is to send the books to a distributor who then sells the books to retail shops. Of course, this saves the publisher a heck of a lot of time and energy, so the distributor is one of the most important pieces of the sales puzzle. Distributors typically buy your product between **50-60% off the retail price (55% is the most common)**, so they can sell it on to retail shops, and the retail shops can make a profit. That means if your book is selling for \$10, they will pay around \$4.50 for your book. From that price, you deduct your printing costs (I spoke about this in another article – [Click HERE if you'd like to read it](#)), and that is your profit.

Now what is so cool about Lightning Source is that they will also distribute your book for you via Ingram Book Company. Mind you, that does NOT mean that retail shops will necessarily BUY your book. It just means that they can supply them with your book if they order it.

**STEP 5:** The next step is the retailer. The retailer is the 'shop', whether online or on the ground, that sells your book to the customer. Typically, in my experience, retailers in the book and record industry buy your product for between **35-45% off the retail price**. That means they will pay about \$6.00 for a \$10 book, which means the distributor makes about \$1.50 per book sold, and the retailer makes about \$4.00. However, as we all know, retailers like to be able to have a good profit margin so they can LOWER the price, to be able to entice customers to buy your product OR to get RID of a product that isn't selling (let's hope that doesn't happen to OUR books!). Back when I was a retailer, I often had to sell "dead stock" at cost or even BELOW the price I paid for it. It's the only way to keep cash flow going. So retailers take a risk every time they buy something. They want to know they can sell it.

**STEP 6:** The last step, of course, is the customer. The customer likes to get a good deal on a product. That's why, if you give your distributor a good discount in the first place, the retailer will have the freedom to lower his price and get more people to buy your book.

## SO WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

The thing that confuses me is how Amazon fits into this picture. Now I have a close connection to Amazon in that much of my business depends upon it as I work with authors. And as a customer, I have also found them to be both reliable and convenient. Authors love to see their books on Amazon because they can reach a wider audience much more quickly than they could by going only through traditional distribution routes to retail shops. All in all, Amazon is a great asset for us authors.

**But here's where things are a bit hazy.** According to their entry on Wikipedia, they are it is often called the **world's largest online retailer**. Most of us associate Amazon with books, but they have really expanded and now sell just about everything.

So Amazon is a retailer (Step 5 in the model above) BUT for some strange reason, when it comes to purchasing power, they are not paying the same price for the books they sell as other

retailers. In fact, they are paying the price that **wholesalers/distributors** pay for your book (Step 4). That means they are buying books at an average of 15% LESS than other retailers. This means they have a tremendous advantage in that they can seriously undercut your High Street book shop.

But wait... there's more...

As many of you know, Amazon also now has a subsidiary press called **CreateSpace**. This means they are also now operating at Step 2 of the model above (I'm not sure who their printer is). This means they are now getting that extra 50% of your end profits when you publish through them. Now, fair enough, I can fully understand that Amazon saw the opportunity to profit from the self-publishing boon. It's called free enterprise. I have no argument with that, as it totally makes sense.

However, here's the problem...

Recently, word on the street is that Amazon has started a new policy of listing books that come from Lightning Source and other POD suppliers as being "Out of Stock" with sometimes an estimated 1-3 week delivery status! Lightning Source is aware of this, and say that they are "continuing to look into the issue and are evaluation our options to address it."

Of course, this makes no sense whatsoever because when you use a POD service there's no such THING as being "out of stock." Your digital file is always ready to be printed and is in fact printed as soon as the POD service gets the order.

Some authors have been writing to me in a panic over this, and asking my opinion if I think they should switch from being 100% self-published to going with Create Space, because then they would be assured to be listed as "in stock" (as Amazon will ONLY guarantee this status for their own subsidiary press).

Here's my answer: Absolutely NOT!

Why? Partially from a practical level, and partially from an ethical one.

**The practical argument:** First of all, in my experience, authors who publish through Create Space appear ONLY on the US Amazon site (Amazon dot com) until they reach a certain sales status. I learned this the HARD way when a client of mine launched last year with me, and a couple of weeks before launch we realized she did not appear on the Canadian or UK sites. Now let me assure you, the Canadian and UK mind-body-spirit markets are nothing to ignore! Many of my clients sell as many books in Canada as they do in America, taking them rapidly up to #1 in Canada as Canada has 10% of the population of the US. These are very important markets for spiritual and self-help authors.

**The ethical argument:** Secondly, I have major issues about the ethics of this situation. Amazon is trying to wear three different hats here: the publisher (Step 2), the distributor (Step 4) and the retailer (Step 5) in the sales chain. Each of these steps has ethical obligation to be equitable to

their customers, whoever they may be. And the break in this system is the conflict of interest they have between Step 2 and Step 4, which gives them an unfair advantage at Step 5. First of all, I have no idea how Amazon managed to gain the status of a distributor in the first place when they are not distributing to anyone; they are retailing directly to the public. But that aside, if Amazon is playing the role of a distributor to other publishers, it seems incredible that they would treat these publishers—who are their customers—any differently from their OWN publishing company. The two hats have to remain separate; otherwise, what we are verging on is a violation of anti-monopoly trade laws. In fact, I wouldn't be at all surprised if we hear about a litigation in the near future.

So what do we do?

One blogger's suggestion was to go with BOTH Create Space and Lightning Source, so as to ensure your book is shown as 'in stock' on Amazon all the time. Well, I'm sorry, but I refuse to succumb to the bullying.

My personal solution is two-fold:

- 1) Use your power of the pen to write about this in as many places as you can so Amazon starts to feel the heat and
- 2) Educate your audience about the situation. In other words, when you do a launch or publicize your book TELL your readers that it might say "out of stock" on Amazon, and that it is simply not true.

Authors should be able to set up their own publishing companies and be treated like any other company. I am a believer in FREE enterprise, which means that big businesses must not be allowed to bully the small business owner out of their own enterprise. Small business owners are the life-blood of the world, and nearly all of our current economy AND environmental problems are due to our current dependency upon big businesses in general.

I love Amazon and I have no desire to 'take them down'. But as consumers, and self-publishers, let's at least hold them accountable for their behavior by not reacting to such unethical bullying strategies.

All power to the self-published author!

**Lynn Serafinn, MAED, CPCC** is a certified, award-winning coach and teacher, marketer, social media expert, radio host, speaker and bestselling author. Her eclectic approach to marketing incorporates her vast professional experience in the music industry and the educational sector along with more than two decades of study and practice of the spirituality of India. In her work as a promotional manager she has produced a long list of bestselling mind-body-spirit authors. She is also the creator of [Spirit Authors](#), which offers training, coaching, business-building and inspiration for mind-body-spirit authors, whether established or aspiring. Passionate about re-establishing our connection with the Earth, she supports the work of the Transition Town network in her hometown of Bedford, England.