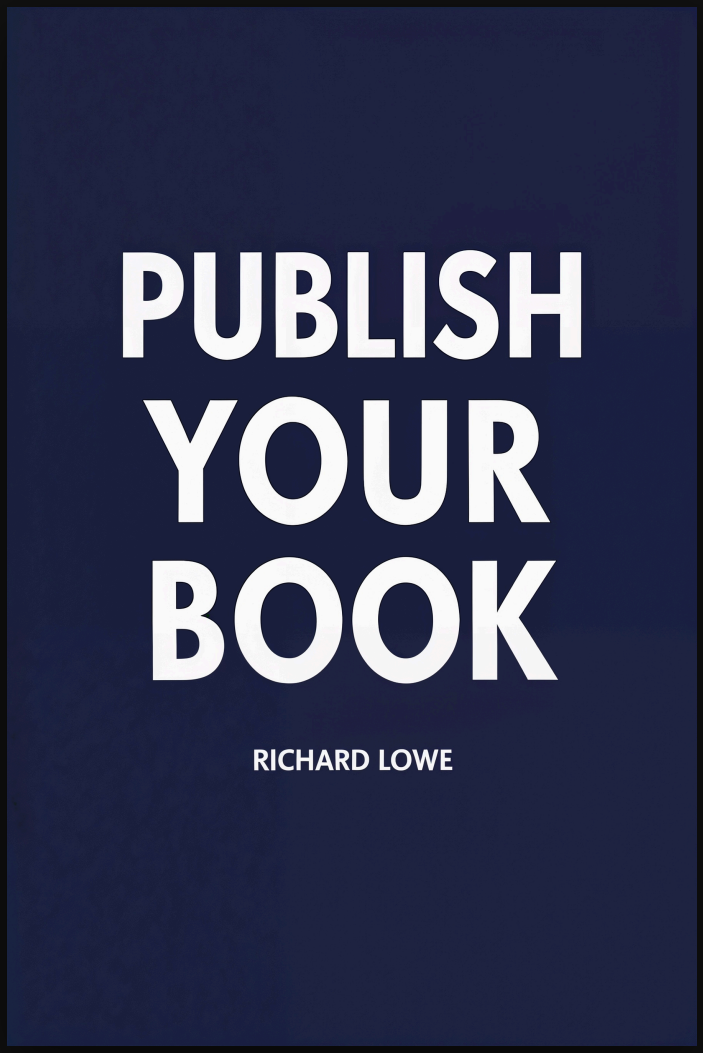
A FREE COMPANION TO PUBLISH YOUR BOOK

No More Guesswork

A fill-in publishing workbook that takes your finished manuscript from choosing a route to a live, correct listing, one checked box at a time.



RICHARD LOWE

How to Use This Workbook

Print it, keep a pencil handy, and work it once for every book you publish.

Publish Your Book walks through every route from a finished manuscript to a book for sale. This workbook puts those decisions in order so nothing gets skipped, and so the expensive mistakes get caught before the book is live instead of after.

It has seven parts:

1. **Choose your route**, so every later setting fits your goals.
2. **The Simple Path tracker**, six steps from accounts to publish.
3. **The file checklist**, for your Word master, print PDF, EPUB and cover.
4. **The metadata sheet**, filled in before you open any upload screen.
5. **Settings that bite**, the switches that are hard or slow to undo.
6. **The fifteen-minute scam screen**, for anyone who wants your money.
7. **After you publish**, plus a record sheet for your catalog.

> *The anxiety doesn't go away. The guesswork does.*

Part 1: Choose Your Route

The best publishing strategy is the one you'll execute. Start with one platform, get it right, then expand.

ROUTE	BEST WHEN	WATCH FOR
IngramSpark	You want one account that reaches Amazon, bookstores, libraries and the major ebook stores. The book's default for almost everyone.	Strict print files; two to six weeks to reach every channel
Amazon KDP	You want KDP Select (Kindle+), A+ Content, or Amazon's promotions, or a book live within about 72 hours	Select makes your ebook Amazon exclusive and renews every 90 days
Lulu	Print quality is the point: cookbooks, photography, art and technical books	Higher print costs; up to 12 weeks to reach retail
Traditional	You have a platform, a commercial book, and the patience to wait two to four years	Advance paid in pieces; little control over cover and design
Hybrid	You can afford to lose the money and have a specific reason self-publishing won't serve you	Most are vanity presses; run Part 6 first
Offset print run	You know a buyer will take a large quantity, such as a corporate order or a course	Unsold inventory, storage and fulfillment

My route for this book: _____ **Why:** _____

Part 2: The Simple Path Tracker

The six steps from the book's Simple Path chapter. Write the date as you finish each one.

1. **Get your accounts in order.** Create your IngramSpark publisher account with your legal name and real address. Finish tax information and add your bank account before you upload anything. On KDP, finish the tax interview first, because Amazon holds royalties until it's done. *Done:* _____

2. **Get an ISBN for each format.** Buy your own from Bowker: $125 for one, $295 for ten. If you plan more than one book, the ten pack drops the cost to $29.50 each. *Done:* _____

3. **Prepare your files.** An interior and a cover for each format. Part 3 has the checklist. *Done:* _____

4. **Fill in your metadata.** Title, subtitle, author name, description, categories and keywords. Part 4 has the sheet. *Done:* _____

5. **Set your price.** Ebook first, then print after the wholesale discount. The price check is below. *Done:* _____

6. **Publish.** Upload, check every page of the eProof, then order and review a printed proof before you approve distribution. *Done:* _____

Before step 2: your imprint

- ☐ I have decided whether to publish under my own name or an imprint name
- ☐ If an imprint, I have registered a DBA in my state before buying ISBNs (the publisher name on an ISBN block can't be changed later)
- ☐ I have a separate bank account for publishing income and expenses

Imprint name: _____ **ISBN block purchased:** _____

Step 5 price check

FORMAT	GUIDE FROM THE BOOK	MY PRICE
Ebook, genre fiction	$2.99 to $5.99	
Ebook, nonfiction	$4.99 to $9.99 (KDP pays 70% only from $2.99 to $12.99)	
Trade paperback	$12.99 to $19.99, and at least $1.00 earned per sale after printing and discount	

Part 3: The File Checklist

Most upload failures trace back to problems that were already in the Word file. Fix them in the source and everything downstream gets easier.

Your Word master

- [ ] All tracked changes accepted, all comments deleted, no hidden text
- [ ] Chapter headings use Heading 1, section headings Heading 2, body text Normal
- [ ] Page breaks start each chapter (no stacks of Return presses)
- [ ] Single spaces after periods (Find and Replace until zero replacements)
- [ ] Smart quotes and proper typographic characters throughout
- [ ] Images embedded and inline with text, not linked or floating
- [ ] Saved as a master copy, such as BookTitle_MASTER.docx. Every export comes from this file

Print interior PDF

- [ ] Word page size matches the trim size exactly, set before the margins
- [ ] Gutter wide enough for the binding; margins at or above the printer's minimums
- [ ] Section breaks set so front matter and body number correctly
- [ ] Fonts embedded; images at 300 DPI; hyphenation on
- [ ] Exported as Standard PDF with PDF/A unchecked
- [ ] Read page by page after export

EPUB

- [ ] Text boxes removed and hyphenation turned off before conversion
- [ ] Validated (Calibre, or EPUBCheck before Apple Books)
- [ ] Table of contents links work, chapter breaks land correctly, images display
- [ ] Opened in at least two reading apps

Cover

- [ ] Designed for the genre by someone who knows book covers
- [ ] Title readable when the cover is 100 pixels tall
- [ ] Dimensions from the platform's template, including spine and 0.125 inch bleed
- [ ] 300 DPI, CMYK, all text inside the safe zone

Part 4: The Metadata Sheet

Fill this in before you open an upload screen. Then copy it into every platform so the details match everywhere.

FIELD	WHAT I'LL ENTER
Title (exactly as on the cover)	
Subtitle	
Author name (same spelling everywhere)	
Series name and number	
BISAC codes or categories	
ISBN: paperback / hardcover / ebook	

Description: open with the reader's problem or the story's hook

PART	MY DRAFT
First line: the problem or hook	
What the book does about it	
Who it's for	
Plain-text version checked	

Never open with "This book is about." Write a plain-text version too, for retailers that show HTML as raw code.

Seven keyword slots: phrases readers actually type

1		5	
2		6	
3		7	
4			

Part 5: Settings That Bite

Each of these is easy to set and slow, costly or impossible to undo. Check each one off as you confirm it.

- [ ] **IngramSpark returns set to NO.** Check it twice. If returns are turned on and then switched off, the window stays open for six more months
- [ ] **Wholesale discount chosen on purpose.** 55% matches publisher terms and opens bookstore consideration. Anything under 53% counts as a short discount, and many stores won't order those
- [ ] **KDP Expanded Distribution left off** for any paperback that is also on IngramSpark
- [ ] **KDP Select only if you mean it.** It renews every 90 days. Set a calendar reminder seven days before each term ends
- [ ] **AI disclosure on KDP answered truthfully.** Grammar help is AI-assisted; paragraphs written by AI are AI-generated and must be disclosed
- [ ] **Pre-order only with a date you'll keep.** Miss a KDP pre-order deadline and you lose pre-orders for 12 months
- [ ] **PCN requested** through PrePub Book Link at least a month before publication, if you want libraries. It's free and needs your own ISBN
- [ ] **Series name spelled the same** on every book, or retailers treat them as separate series
- [ ] **No links to rival stores** in an ebook sent to Apple Books through Draft2Digital, or Apple will refuse it
- [ ] **Google Play set up directly** if you want to be there. Neither Draft2Digital nor IngramSpark reaches it
- [ ] **Local copies kept** of every book file, cover file and metadata sheet, in case a platform closes your account

Holiday and seasonal timing

IF YOUR BOOK IS	HAVE INGRAMSPARK DISTRIBUTION LIVE BY	MY DATE
A Christmas book	September	
A back-to-school title	June	
Any book going wide through Draft2Digital	Two weeks before launch	

Part 6: The Fifteen-Minute Scam Screen

Do this before any sales call with a publisher, agent, or marketing service you haven't checked yourself.

Company or person: _____ **Date:** _____

- ☐ Searched the name with "complaints," "scam" and "lawsuit" before looking at their website
- ☐ Searched the name with "Author Solutions" (its brands include AuthorHouse, Xlibris, iUniverse, Trafford, Archway, WestBow and Balboa)
- ☐ For an agent: checked the Association of American Literary Agents, QueryTracker and Publishers Marketplace for real sales
- ☐ Called the phone number on their website during business hours
- ☐ Asked for three recent clients I can contact myself
- ☐ Looked up their books on Amazon: dates, reviews, sales rank

Questions a scammer cannot answer

QUESTION	THEIR ANSWER
Name three books you published in the last twelve months that sold more than 500 copies, with ASINs.	
What percentage of submitted manuscripts do you decline?	
Can I see a recent royalty statement, author name redacted?	
Which editor works on my book, and can I speak with them before I sign?	
Do I receive all production files when our agreement ends?	

The hybrid break-even

Package price $_____ ÷ profit per copy $_____ = _____ copies just to break even. The book's example: $10,000 at $5 a copy means 2,000 copies. Most books sell far fewer.

Walk away
Guaranteed bestseller claims, "We can only accept a limited number of authors this month," upfront reading fees from an agent, or a contract that takes your rights in exchange for your money.

Protect yourself
Pay by credit card, in milestones tied to delivered work, with every deliverable and deadline written into the contract.

Part 7: After You Publish

Publishing a book takes weeks. Building a publishing business takes years. This page is where the second one starts.

- [ ] Claimed my Amazon author page through Author Central, with a real biography and photo
- [ ] Connected every book to one author identity there
- [ ] Checked every retail listing a few weeks after release: categories, cover, description, price
- [ ] Corrected any wrong metadata at the source platform and resubmitted
- [ ] Set a reminder to review the whole catalog twice a year: prices, series links, descriptions, Select enrollments

My catalog record

TITLE	ISBN OR ASIN	PUB DATE	PLATFORMS	PRICE	SELECT, RETURNS, DISCOUNT

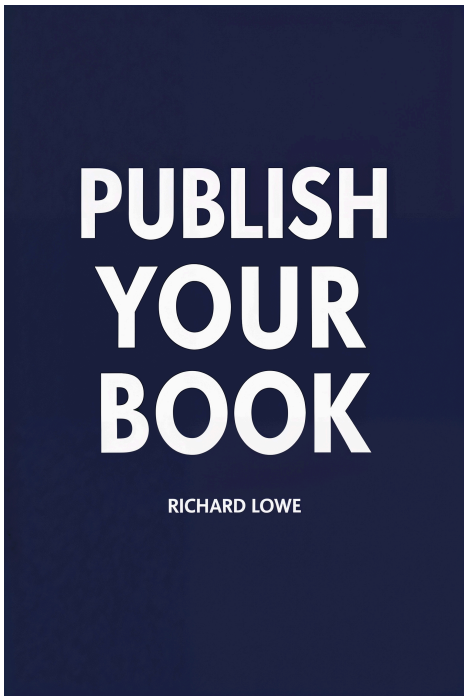
Four things Richard Lowe would tell himself in 2016

1. **Obsess over the cover and the title.** They decide whether anyone clicks. Everything else matters only after that.
2. **Hire a copy editor before you publish.** A one-star review about typos stays forever.
3. **Publish the second book sooner.** The first book sells better once the second one exists.
4. **Know which project you're on.** Publishing a book and building a publishing business have different timelines and different measures of success.

> *Your readers are waiting for your book. Get it to them efficiently and professionally.*

The Whole Story

This workbook gives you the order of operations. Publish Your Book gives you the reasons behind every box: each platform tab by tab, the settings that cost authors money, traditional and hybrid publishing, offset print runs, the scams aimed at authors, and a 137-question FAQ.



Publish Your Book
The Publishing Series

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