

## Episode 199

### Book Publishing Standards: What Every Business Owner Should Know

Welcome to the Write Publish Market podcast. If you're a business owner thinking a book would be a great marketing asset for your business, you're in the right place. Maybe you've already committed, even better. I'm your host, Jody Brandon, book publishing strategist and partner for business owners, CEOs, and entrepreneurs, and 20 plus year veteran of the book publishing industry. On the Write Publish Market podcast, in addition to learning from me and other industry experts, you'll hear from other business owners about their experiences as we explore all facets of writing, publishing, and marketing a book that will help your business grow in ways you might not even be dreaming of yet. I'm so glad you're here. Let's dive in. I truly believe that when one of us looks good, we all look good. And when one of us looks bad, it can really make us all look bad. So today we are talking about signs that your book was not professionally published. You know nothing says this book was completely DIY'd like xyz. So let's get into it because these are traps that are very very easy to avoid especially for professional business owners, thought leaders, CEOs, entrepreneurs, those of you listening to this podcast. We have industry standards so that when you pick up a self-published book or a hybrid published book, it doesn't look any different or feel any different than a traditionally published book, which has for decades and decades been the gold standard, right? But so many business owners especially are self-publishing by choice, using hybrid publishing by choice because of all of the things that we've talked about a million times on this podcast. The control factor, the timeline, getting to market quicker. Keeping more of the profit from direct book sales, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. So let's talk about a few of these things that are real red flags for somebody picking up your book. So number one is unprofessional design. And what I mean by that is typesetting is a lot of times an invisible skill. Typesetters are geniuses. For those of us who don't have that skill, typesetting is a genius art. However, the way you know something is wrong with a book is something just sort of feels off sometimes, right? You don't even realize, we as readers don't even realize how much goes into typesetting, but we do know if something feels off. So what are some of these red flags? You know, too many fonts, space between a paragraph and flush left text, instead of, you know, paragraph indents, which is what books traditionally have, versus, you know, a website, for example, has, you know, everything is flush left, and then there's a space between each paragraph. Books are not like that. You might not even realize that, as I'm saying it, you might, the light bulb might be going off in your head. Oh, yeah. And that's because, again, it's an invisible art. Maybe there's no header, no footer, no page number, something like that. That gets forgotten. A typesetter would not forget those things. Spacing in between sections, the heading hierarchy. Primary headings are styled in this font at this type size. Secondary headings are the same font but smaller. Tertiary headings are maybe a different font and italicized or whatever the case may be, but a typesetter pays attention to those and has a style sheet for them so that things don't get missed. But unprofessional design is one of those things where you know it when you see it, even if you can't quite put your finger on what it is. So I urge you, I talk to my clients about this all the time, I understand the appeal of working with your website designer, your brand designer, the person already on your team, they know you, you trust them, they know your brand inside out, etc. they are not skilled book typesetters. Most likely, there are some who are, but most likely that your designer is not a book designer. And so

you want to make sure that for your book, you're hiring a book typesetter to handle the interior as well as the cover, the cover we're going to get to. The next red flag is too many typos. You've heard me talk before about how no book is going to be perfect. There are going to be typos that slip through, mistakes that slip through, no matter how many times you've looked at it, your copy editor has looked at it, your proofreader has looked at it, your beta readers have looked at it, your best friend has looked at it, your mastermind group has looked at it, things unfortunately still slip through. The acceptable editing like error rate is about four percent. So for every 100 mistakes in a book, a great copy editor is going to catch 96 of them, which means though that four are slipping through. So just be wary of that. If you do not have your book professionally copy edited, I assure you that's going to be a lot more than four out of 100 that are slipping through. Just because, again, even if you're a great writer, you're not a grammar expert like a copy editor is. And let me say, I fully understand that a lot of times, you know, we let grammar quote unquote errors slip through because we're thinking of them as style choices. If there's too much of that, however, a reader is going to think the book was not edited and therefore the author didn't take the process seriously and therefore whatever information is being shared is not being received because of that. So too many typos is another red flag. Let's get back to that cover. I have here on my notes the things I wanted to talk about. I just have cover, yikes. So there's lots of things here. I bet you can think of in your mind right now some book covers that you were thinking, oh boy, I would not have made that choice. Sometimes it's as simple as this looks awful in a thumbnail size, which is something that a cover designer will keep in mind as they're designing. And you might not if you are self-designing or if you're purchasing a cover template somewhere. Sometimes it's just doing too much. There's too much going on. You know, it's too many colors, too many fonts. Maybe there's an author photo that's way too big or some other photo that's way too big. I mean, a lot of author photo or no author photo is something that people kind of go back and forth on. As a reader, I personally don't love it. I don't think it adds, I don't think the photo adds to the credibility of the author, but I know that a lot of people do feel that way, that it does. And so that's sort of, you know, personal preference. But I urge you, author photo huge on the cover, probably almost always not the way to go. Hey there, business owner and aspiring or published author. Sorry to interrupt this episode. Just wanted to check in and see if you're subscribed to Coffee and Commas, my email newsletter, where I share behind the scenes, industry info, and much more about writing, publishing, and marketing a book for your business. Sign up at [bit.ly slash coffee and comma](https://bit.ly/slashcoffeeandcomma) sign up. That's all lowercase. Now back to the show. Thinking about the front cover as only the front cover is also, you know, another red flag that says you're not taking this process seriously. When we talk about the cover, we're talking about the front cover, the back cover and the spine. Those three elements work together to make up your book cover and the spine, and the back cover have elements that they're supposed to include also. So make sure that you are paying attention to the entire cover, not just the front cover. I get it that that's, you know, gets the most attention, but don't forget those other pieces too. Now let's talk about the inside there a little bit. So another red flag is the order of matter in your book. The order in which you have things doesn't follow the industry standard. You know, maybe you have your introduction before your table of contents when it should go after, Your author bio should be really, you know, the last thing in the book, unless you have one of those pages, you know, it says, you know, would you leave a review or check out this download, get on my email list kind of thing. Other than that, the author bio is the

last thing. So sometimes you'll see the author bio and then an index or then an acknowledgement section or something like that. that flags to the reader that you don't know what the heck you're doing. So you want to make sure that you're following along with the industry standard. You know, I go through this in my book, *Right Published Market*, but also I'm going to talk at the end about the IBPA standards, the Independent Book Publishers Association, which, spoiler alert, if you're self-publishing, you are a publisher. You're not just the author, you're the publisher. but they have a really great and detailed industry standards checklist on their website, which I will link in the show notes. Fantastic. Highly recommend you check that out. Whether you're hiring great people, you're still in the driver's seat of this project as the author. So I encourage you to check those out. So we'll talk a little bit more about them at the end. That's just a tease. Another red flag, you're missing required info or sections. So there's lots of things in a book that are optional, right? You don't have to have an introduction. You don't have to have a forward written by someone else. You don't have to have a dedication or acknowledgments, but there are things that are required, you know, a copyright page required. And even furthermore, there are elements on that copyright page that you have to have. Do you have to have a disclaimer? No. Do you have to declare all rights reserved? Yes. You know, like copyright, year, copyright symbol, your name, like that reservation of rights, yes, required. Do you have to list first edition 2025 or first edition 2019 if this is a second edition? No, you don't. Do you have to have a disclaimer? No, you don't. Do you have to list, you know, credit your production team, your copy editor, your typesetter, your cover designer, et cetera? No, you don't. But so there are things that people expect to see in a book. And I would argue, I don't have statistics on this, but as someone thinking about writing a book like this to serve as a marketing tool in your business, you probably read a lot of books. You probably read a lot of nonfiction books. and so you know when something's up. Guess what? The readers of your book are also going to know if something's up. So the last thing you want is to put a book out there to put spend all the time, money, resources, effort, etc. into getting a book out there to use as an asset in your business and have the reason it not convert for you as that asset because people look at it and think, hmm, this person not take this process seriously. Look, this does not even look like a serious book. So I urge you, again, let's talk about those IBPA standards again. Take a look at them. They're free. They're on their website. Again, I'm linking it in the show notes. They're broken into, you know, like a content section and then a production section that kind of lets you walk through answer all sorts of questions about your own project, make sure you're on the right track, helps you with questions that you can ask those people on your book team just to make sure, hey, I just want to make sure that we're, you know, following the IBPA standards here. Do we have what we need for the back cover? Are we missing anything that people will be looking for on the back cover? Do we have what we need on the copyright page? Do I need a disclaimer? Where should it go? What does it look like? What does it entail? All of those sorts of things, those standards can really, really help you. And as a book publishing professional in the industry, I can tell you that we rely on them daily. I used them when I was revising my own book. I used them when I wrote the book originally. They're a fantastic resource for everyone in the industry. And again, as we all use these standards and make sure that our books are up to par, and nobody's thinking, oh, that book is so unprofessional. Or who wrote this book? Who published this book? Who designed this book? Who designed that cover? All of those questions sort of go away. And that just helps lift the industry up as a whole. And I think

that's good for all of us. That's good for the entire industry, authors, publishers, booksellers, readers, it's good for everyone. I urge you to take the process as seriously as you can. Learn what you need to learn. You do not need to become an expert in book publishing, especially if you're only planning to write, you know, one book, maybe, maybe two. You certainly do not need to become an industry professional, but you do need to remember that you are a publisher if you're self-publishing. And so these standards are your responsibility to yourself and your book and your business. but it's the rest of the industry as well. So I hope this was helpful. I hope that you will check out those resources and I look forward to the next episode. I'll talk to you then. Thanks for listening to this episode of the Right Published Market podcast. I know just how busy business owners and CEO schedules are, and I'm grateful you've taken some time out of yours to spend with me today. If you enjoyed this episode, take a quick screenshot and share it on social to let others know you're listening. Use the hashtag Right Published Market to spread the love.