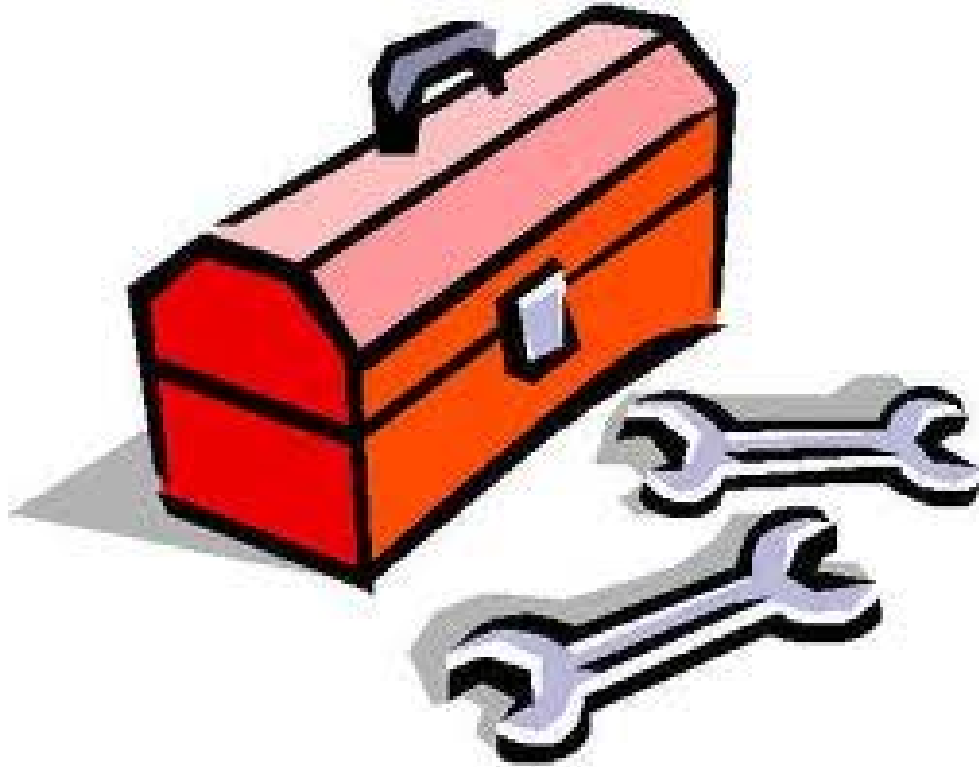


# A Resource Guide for



# Indie Authors

By Ingrid Ricks

[www.ingridricks.com](http://www.ingridricks.com)

Since deciding to forgo my agent and publish my memoir [Hippie Boy: A Girl's Story](#) on my own, I've had so many people ask me how I did it and how to go about it that I've decided to compile everything I've learned into this **Indie Author Resource Guide**.

*Disclaimer: I don't pretend to have all the answers and I'm not suggesting that the resources and information I share here are the only way to go. This is just how I did it and what worked for me.*

## Platform Building

This is where you need to start before you ever think about publishing your book. Because if you don't have an existing staple of readers who like your writing and are ready to purchase your book as soon as it's ready, it's virtually impossible to have a successful book launch.

### What I did:

- **I went to [www.godaddy.com](http://www.godaddy.com) to reserve two URLs** (one for my book and one in my author name). I also purchased a hosting account from [www.godaddy.com](http://www.godaddy.com). I used Go Daddy because they are cost-effective, easy to work with and offer everything in one place (domain names, hosting, WordPress plugins, etc.) I also think they have great, responsive technical support.
- **Launch a book Web site: [www.hippieboybook.com](http://www.hippieboybook.com)** I used WordPress for my web site because it's inexpensive, has a variety of cool, customizable templates to choose from, is very social media friendly, facilitates blogs as well as web pages, and has an easy-to-use content management system that makes it simple for non-technical people (e.g. ME) to update and change content.
- **Launch an author web site: [www.ingridricks.com](http://www.ingridricks.com)** Note: My author web site and my book web site are the SAME web site (parent name: [www.ingridricks.com](http://www.ingridricks.com)). I just pointed the hippieboybook URL to a different page on my author web site so that if I want to send people directly to my book section, I can.
- **Started a blog: <http://ingridricks.com/blog/>** Originally I started a blog that was separate from my web site. I realized this was a mistake because it didn't offer as much cross promotion opportunities. So now it's hosted on my main web site. I have an old blog URL [www.dreamitseekit.com](http://www.dreamitseekit.com) that I plan to re-point to my web site blog so that I can give out that URL to people (vanity URLs are good for this reason).
- **Who I used for my Website design:** Thea Chard: [www.theachard.com](http://www.theachard.com) She's professional, affordable and amazing to work with. She also has a very good

understanding of social media, which is important. You can also do a Google search for WordPress designers, I'm sure there are lots of them around.

- **Started an author/book Facebook page:** [www.facebook.com/hippieboybook](http://www.facebook.com/hippieboybook)  
[www.facebook.com/ingridricksriterdreamer](http://www.facebook.com/ingridricksriterdreamer) Note: I realized after starting my author book page that it's better to actually have it in my name, because I plan to write more than one book and want to build my name recognition. Another option is to create an author or book group. This is because group pages allow you to do group chats and send out group messages. They are much more functional than the regular PAGES. To set up an author page, go here: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php>. To set up an author or book group, go here: <http://www.facebook.com/groups>
- **Started a Twitter account:** [www.twitter.com/ingridricks](http://www.twitter.com/ingridricks)
- **Started posting excerpts, essays and blog posts on Scribd:** [www.scribd.com/iricks](http://www.scribd.com/iricks). Scribd.com is the word's social writing and reading site – with as many as 60 million unique users monthly. The founders of Scribd are very supportive of creative writers and the community is supportive and amazing. If you want to reach readers for your work, you should be involved on Scribd.
- **Joined** [www.bookblogs.ning.com](http://www.bookblogs.ning.com) This is an amazing resource site filled with book bloggers and indie authors. There are all sorts of opportunities to promote your book, connect with other authors and gather the information you need to help make your book successful. For example, at the beginning of my indie publishing journey, I wanted to know how to secure the broadest distribution as an indie author so I started a discussion on this. I learned through that bookblog discussion that for print, I needed to go with [www.lightningsource.com](http://www.lightningsource.com) because they are part of Ingram's book distribution channel, which all book stores/libraries use to order books.
- **Started posting excerpts, essays and blog posts on Open Salon** ([www.open.salon.com](http://www.open.salon.com)) Open Salon is an open writer's submission platform that enables bloggers and creative writers to build exposure for their work. A big benefit of Open Salon is that is a subsidiary of [www.Salon.com](http://www.Salon.com), the online arts and culture magazine. Editors sometimes cross-publish essays submitted on Open Salon to Salon. This happened to me and the exposure was VERY beneficial. [http://www.salon.com/writer/ingrid\\_ricks/](http://www.salon.com/writer/ingrid_ricks/)
- Posted book excerpts, short memoir pieces on SMITH ([www.smithmag.net](http://www.smithmag.net)) This open submission platform is dedicated to personal stories/memoirs – so it's a great avenue for memoir writers.
- **Google +.** I'm not yet actively involved in this social networking forum but I've heard amazing things about it and I'm going to start exploring it.

## Turning Manuscript into a Book

The most important step (BY FAR) was to write the best book I could write. You've got one shot so don't rush this. Take writing classes, participate in critique groups and rewrite, rewrite, rewrite until you feel you have produced your best work. It's hard to take your book back and distribute a "new, improved" version once you've already put it out into the universe.

### What I Did:

- Once I felt that my manuscript was the best I could make it, I hired an amazing editor to evaluate my manuscript and point out the weaknesses so I could take it to next level. (Then I spent six weeks rewriting nonstop to address the editor's comments). To find a good editor, I recommend making posts on author chat boards and social media groups and asking for recommendations. My editor was Erin Brown: [www.erinedits.com](http://www.erinedits.com) I was/am THRILLED with her evaluation. It made ALL the difference for my book.
- **Hire a professional book cover designer.** I knew based on my year posting excerpts and essays on various social media platforms that I needed a cover design that would pop even as a thumbnail. Make SURE you have an eye-popping cover that jumps out large and small because people really do JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER. There are lots of great book cover designers out there. Who I used? Juli Saeger Russell: [lushdesign@comcast.net](mailto:lushdesign@comcast.net) She's an amazing designer and also a great friend of mine.
- **Hire a very detailed copyeditor/proofreader.** Once your rewrites are done and your manuscript is in final form content wise, hire a very DETAILED copyeditor/proofreader. I don't have a great recommendation for this. I suggest going to author chat groups and asking for referrals.

## Publishing eBook

**ebook Stores (direct publishing):** Amazon and BN.com both make it easy to set up a direct account and directly publish your eBook. They both offer Digital Rights Management, which protects against piracy. To set up an account with Amazon, go to [www.kdp.amazon.com](http://www.kdp.amazon.com) to get started. To set up an account on Barnes and Noble, go to [www.barnesandnoble.com/pubit](http://www.barnesandnoble.com/pubit)  
Note: Apple also allows authors to submit eBooks directly, but they prefer to work through third party aggregators. As a result, they make you jump through a bunch of hoops to work with them directly. However, if you are interested in applying for a direct relationship, here's where to start: <http://www.apple.com/itunes/content-providers/book-faq.html>

**eBook formatting:** There are two key ebook formats: ePub and mobi. Amazon requires Mobi. BN.com requires ePub (as does the Apple iBookstore). There are lots of eBook formatters that can be found by doing a Google search. I used my friend Thea Chard: [www.theachard.com](http://www.theachard.com)

**Smashwords (eDistribution aggregator):** In addition to Amazon and BN.com, many indie authors submit their eBooks on [www.Smashwords.com](http://www.Smashwords.com). Smashwords is an eBook aggregator and has distribution agreements with the Apple iBookstore as well as smaller distribution channels: e.g. Sony, Kobe reader etc. The benefits are that they handle all the distribution and file conversion for you (once you have your word doc perfectly formatted and ready to go). They also make it easy to get into the iBookstore. For their services, Smashwords takes a 15 percent commission of your sales. The main benefit of Smashwords, as I see it, is that they let you give away free eBooks AND they get you distribution in the smaller distribution channels (Sony, Kobe that I've not figured out how to access directly). I have a small book of essays that I'm using as a cross promotional tool for HIPPIE BOY so I want to get it out to as many people as possible and Smashwords helps me do this. The downside of Smashwords—and the reason I only use them for my free ebook ([A Little Book of Mormon and Not So Mormon Stories](#)) — is that Smashwords is not DRM-protected, which makes it very easy to have your book pirated from the site. Readers can actually download your book in a word doc format (which scares me). I may rethink this because exposure is KEY to indie authors. But I'm not yet ready to post *Hippie Boy* there. I've not experienced this myself, but I've heard reports from some indie authors that Smashwords sometimes does a poor job of formatting your manuscript into the different eREADER conversions. And because indie authors have no control over the formatting conversion that Smashwords does, you lose control over that process. NOTE: Other indie authors SWEAR by Smashwords and LOVE it, so I advise you to check it out for yourself.

**eBook Pricing:** Every indie author I've come across that has been wildly successful at selling their eBooks has priced them LOW – between \$.99 and \$2.99 – with the vast majority leaning toward 99 cents. I currently have *Hippie Boy* priced at \$2.99 because at that price point, Amazon (by far the biggest eBook retailer – at least for now) pays a 70 percent commission. Go below that and they only pay a 35 percent commission. But remember, EXPOSURE/AWARENESS IS KEY so the 99 cent price point might be the best answer. Do not make the mistake of thinking you can price your eBook at the high prices that traditional publishers do because as an unknown author, your eBook WILL NOT SELL. (I would love to be proved wrong on this so if anyone has a different experience, please let me know.)

## Publishing Paperback

**Print on Demand:** There are two main services authors use for Print on Demand: CreateSpace and Lightning Source. CreateSpace ([www.createspace.com](http://www.createspace.com)) is an Amazon affiliate and I know plenty of authors who have used CreateSpace and are happy with the service. If you want the broadest distribution possible, Lightning Source ([www.lightningsource.com](http://www.lightningsource.com)) is the best solution

### What I Did:

- **Hire a book typesetter/formatter and print book cover designer:** If you are printing a book, you need it professionally formatted and need to work with someone who is great with typesetting. You also need someone who can take your electronic book cover and format it for print (a back cover, book spine, etc). There are a lot of great book formatters out there. I went with the friend/woman who designed my electronic book cover: Juli Saeger Russell: [lushdesign@comcast.net](mailto:lushdesign@comcast.net)
- **Set up an Account with Lightning Source:** As mentioned above, Lightning Source is affiliated with Ingram's, which means that any book store or library can order your book. They also handle upload into the Amazon and Barnes & Noble online stores on your behalf and enable you to order short print runs so you can sell books on your own. I recommend checking out both CreateSpace and Lightning Source and deciding for yourself. I am very happy with my decision to go with Lightning Source. The quality of my books are amazing, the account manager I've been assigned to work with has been very responsive to my needs, and my paperback books are already populating on Amazon and BN.com. What's more, many small to medium-sized publishers work with Lightning Source, which helped me in making my decision.
- **Purchased an ISBN:** Note: to work with Lightning Source, you are going to need an ISBN for your book. That is your book identifier and it's what enables sales to be tracked. You can purchase your ISBN at [www.bowker.com](http://www.bowker.com). Note: eBooks require a separate ISBN from print versions, though neither Amazon or BN.com require an ISBN for eBooks published on their sites. I don't know this for certain, but I've heard that the iBookstore requires an ISBN. If you publish your eBook through Smashwords, they will assign a free ISBN for you. Just remember the downside of working with Smashwords.

## After Book Launch: Book Marketing

You might think that you are finally finished when you have gone through all the steps above and have successfully launched your book. Definitely take an evening off to celebrate. But then the real work begins. Because as an indie author, the entire book marketing job is on YOU.

### What I'm Doing (and will continue to do over the next YEAR):

- **Guest posts on relevant blogs:** The key word here is RELEVANT. Almost everyone now has a blog and everyone is looking for content to share with their readers. Time is limited so make sure that if you are guest blogging, you choose blogs that speak to your audience. And then make sure that you offer a message that resonates with that audience.
- **Reaching out to my target audience through online forums.** Because my memoir is, in part, about escaping extreme Mormonism, I reach out to the ex-Mormon community. Identify your target market and then find the online/print forums that reach them.
- **Contacting book reviewers** and getting my books out to them for review
- **Lining up speaking engagements/events** wherever possible
- **Sending out a press release** (I sent one out over PRWEB and am using the same release when I contact media/book reviewers):  
<http://www.prweb.com/releases/2011/11/prweb8929388.htm>
- **Contacting newspapers and radio shows for possible interviews:** I waited until I had my paperback version in hand and now am starting this process.
- **Continuing my social media involvement:** I try to devote an hour each day to social networking of some kind (with so many social networks out there, it's impossible to do it all so I just do what feels right on that day.)
- **Teaming up with indie authors to cross-promote books:** There are now lots of indie author groups forming where indie authors pull together to promote each other. Find authors whose work you truly admire and who admire you (your writing). Then work together to help spread the word about all of your books. As an example, I'm a member of Orangeberry Books – a collective of indie books and we are working together to promote this web site: [www.orangeberrybooks.com](http://www.orangeberrybooks.com)
- **BREATHIE, REST, ENJOY LIFE and take it AN INCH AT A TIME:** When I first launched my eBook of Hippy Boy on October 1, I spent a week working nonstop to get the word out about my book through social media and guest blogging efforts. And by the end of that week, I was exhausted, overwhelmed and discouraged. I had neglected my husband and two daughters, had not spent adequate time on my client work, and hadn't even made it to the gym for my daily "stay sane" workout. A wise friend reminded me that

my book will be out in the universe forever and I don't need to make it happen overnight. I can do one thing every day to move my book forward, while still living my life. So that's my ending advice to you: remember to keep it in perspective and to take it one inch at a time. If you've followed the steps above and put out the best, most professional book you can, you've got time to do the rest. Just keep at it all little at a time...and remember to celebrate the milestones along the way.

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## About the Author



Ingrid Ricks is a Seattle-based writer and speaker who focuses on overcoming adversity and embracing life. She is the author of *Hippiie Boy: A Girl's Story*, her memoir about a feisty teenage girl who escapes her abusive Mormon stepfather and suffocating religious home-life by joining her dad on the road as a tool-selling vagabond – until his arrest forces her to take charge of her life. *Hippiie Boy: A Girl's Story* is available as eBook or paperback on [Amazon](#) or [BN.com](#). For more information, visit [www.hippiieboybook.com](http://www.hippiieboybook.com)