

Could a Small Independent Publisher be Right for You?

Getting the attention of a publisher can be very frustrating for a writer. But thankfully not all publishers are created equal. There are only five or six major publishing houses and with these it is often difficult for an author to get in the door. Editors at these houses tell of enormous slush piles and many times require that an author have an agent to represent the work. A small independent publisher is another avenue that an author can pursue to have their work published. There are numerous small presses, each offering their own special brand of publishing. Many manuscripts have found a home in one of them.

Nick's New Heart, my nonfiction book about my son's heart transplant experience was picked up by a small press. It's not only a book about my son but also about my family. I did shop it to the big guys and numerous others also. I'd received a large number of rejections but also enough encouraging ones to keep me submitting. I send it to a small independent publisher who saw its value and contracted me. It was the best publishing decision I could have made for Nick's New Heart.

The personal aspect of working with a small press is what most appealed. I not only wanted, but needed personal attention. Being asked what I thought should be done with Nick's New Heart was important because this book wasn't only about my baby (my manuscript), but the book was about my real baby and family. I needed to have some control over how it was presented, the title and the direction.

This was my first book and I wanted to understand step by step what was happening. By having a small press, I had someone who listened and answered my questions. I didn't just hand my manuscript over to a group of committees to make all the decisions. I was asked about what I wanted to see on the cover and had a chance to okay it. I got to discuss length, font, paper quality and whether or not it should be hard back or soft cover. Most of these items were decided for me but I did get to feel like I had some input.

A small press can offer the uneducated writer publishing knowledge that a large house doesn't have time to give. The editing process and setting of pages are things easier shared when working with a small publisher. Staying in contact can sometimes be easier because the number of authors isn't so great. My email and phone calls were always answered in a timely manner. If a writer feels the need to be involved in their book all the way through the publishing press, I would recommend a small press.

Often independent presses are more open to story ideas and submissions that large press who will pass on them for any number of reasons. The large

publishers may think the book idea is good, but that it doesn't make good business sense. Small press can have less of a slush pile to wade through, meaning a response time is shorter. The author isn't waiting around for months to hear whether or not the press is interested in their work. Waiting six months to a year to hear back from a large publisher isn't unusual. In my experience, six weeks to a month is a long time for a small press to hold on to a manuscript.

There are many reputable independent presses that use the same business model as larger publishers but do it on a smaller scale. They offer editors, some give the author a minimum advance, while others don't but pay higher royalties. Many small presses don't offer high amounts of promotional money but then at a large publishing house a new author might not get a lot of attention in that area if they aren't already well known.

Small independent publishers can be found at <http://www.writersmarket.com/> and <http://www.newpages.com/book-publishers> Also Google–Small Independent Publishers for even more outlets.

One word of caution, small presses, like large ones need to be researched and their guidelines for submission follow. Just because a press is small doesn't mean that they publish every genre or type of book. Treat submitting to a small press with the same professionalism as a larger one would be given.

If it is important to you that your opinion at least be considered, valued and your voice heard think about submitting to a small publisher. The best

thing I ever did for Nick's New Heart and for me as an author of the book was to sign with a small press. My baby was treated well and so was I.