

# A NOVEL IDEA

Follow these easy guidelines by author Ashwin Sanghi and the next bestseller can be yours

Amrutha Penumudi

amrutha.penumudi@hindustantimes.com

**What's the story behind you self-publishing your first novel, *The Rozabal Line*?**

I wrote *The Rozabal Line* between 2005 and 2006. After I completed writing it, I sent out letters and manuscripts to a few hundred publishers and literary agents. Unfortunately, no one seemed interested. A new print-on-demand service, Lulu, had just kicked off in America. All you needed was a PDF file of your manuscript and a basic cover design and Lulu would make your book available on all major book-retailing websites such as Amazon, Barnes & Noble, WH Smith etc, without charging any upfront fee. They would simply take a percentage of the revenue from subsequent sales. I ended up selling just around 500 books through the self-published route, but I enjoyed it because it was an opportunity to learn everything about the book trade.

**Are there any rules that need to be kept in mind?**

Self-publishing is an easy route to getting your work out into the public domain, but it places a greater responsibility on the author with respect to the content, quality, editing, cover design, pricing and promotion. Treat self-publishing as a serious endeavour to get all the elements right. If you keep your expectations low and your commitment high, you might just be one of the few lucky ones to strike gold.

**What kind of reception can one expect?**

You should keep in mind that Bowkers — the agency that assigns International Standard Book Numbers — indicated that over 2,11,269 self-published books



Ashwin Sanghi, author of *Rozabal Line* (L), *Chanakya's Chant* and *The Krishna Key*

were released in 2011 alone. While most new authors tend to look at success stories such as Amanda Hocking or EL James, the reality is that the average self-published title sells around 100-150 copies, bought mostly by the author's friends and family. No mainstream newspaper or magazine wants to read or review a self-published title, so getting visibility is almost impossible. Distribution tends to be limited to online stores. It is important to understand that self-publishing takes the pain out of getting yourself out there, but once you are, it's rather difficult to make a living from it.

**So what can you do to get yourself noticed?**

Well, I got active on Twitter, Facebook and my blog because there was no other way to get

myself heard. I knew that newspapers and magazines would not read my book, so I reached out to bloggers who reviewed books. I even created my own video trailer using iMovie and uploaded it on the YouTube. There's no limit to the creativity that you can bring to the marketing endeavour.

**How much does it cost, and what kind of profits can you expect?**

Publishing directly on Amazon Kindle costs nothing upfront because Amazon is more interested in getting a share of your revenue. Most self-published

**Publish your book in 10 easy steps**

1: Write your book.

2: Find a professional editor and get it edited. This is critical.

3: Decide on a service provider that you will use for self-publishing.

4: Create the document that needs to be uploaded to the service provider's computer. This will vary according to the platform.

5: Design a cover. If needed, take professional help. Remember that your cover is a critical advertisement for your book.

6: Acquire an ISBN for your book. Usually the service provider will assist you for a fee.

8: Upload your document, cover etc. Wait for your book to appear on book retailing websites.

7: Decide the price at which you wish to sell. Remember that self-published eBooks are available at very low prices.

9: Start marketing your book through social media and word-of-mouth.

10: Continue with your day job... At least until such time as you write *Fifty Shades of Grey*.

models work on similar principles but they offer you various add-on services, which are chargeable. For example, editing, proofreading, typesetting, cover designing services, additional distribution in bookstores etc. It is entirely your choice as to how many of these you really need.

