

Best-seller FAQs

Life cycle of the publishing process has been illustrated below.



It all starts with an idea. If you have got an idea about a fiction or non-fiction book, probably you have started your journey. It needs to be shaped into the process called book life cycle.

1. IDEATION FAQs:

1. I have an idea. Can someone help in shaping my idea into a book?
 - a. Yes, there are a lot of literary agents, ghost writers are available who can shape idea to a book. At StoryMirror over 100s writers are available who can write a book for you. You need to share your ideas with them through audio or text format.
2. How much is the charge for converting an idea into a book?
 - a. It depends on the no of words you would like in the book. A typical short novel ranges to 50,000 words and charge varies from 50c-\$3 in USA and from Rs6-Rs15 India per word. So, you spend close to \$25,000-\$150K USD in the USA and Rs 300K-750K in India.
 - b. In India the cost is 1/5th cheaper when compared to such services of USA.
3. Ghost writing is a pretty costly services. Is it worth trying?
 - a. A typical book completion time is 6 months for 200-page book with average time spent is close to 700 hours if tried independently. Assuming 8 working hours a day for a professional, it is 4 full month of effort.
 - b. However, through writing services, you get a book written by your name without you writing it. Ghost writers do not get any credit or royalty, but just the initial payment. Hence this is a costly service. However, this is

worth trying as ghost writers can change destiny of the book and there are several best-selling writers who avail this kind of services.

- c. When you prepare for competitive exams like JEE, CAT, GMAT, GRE, CA, Civil services examination, you spend several years of effort and invest huge amount of money. You do not bother about the investment amount, as the promising future is more valuable. One successful book can change future of a person. A typical best-selling author charge Rs300K-Rs500K for 1 day session in corporate and one best-sold book can give revenue to your life until your death. But very few understand this fundamental concept and put half-hearted effort. That is the primary reason, why 99% authors do not make it to best-seller. Those who understand authorship as career shift and put befitting effort, they make it that premier league.

4. Who should look for writing services such as ghost-writing?

- a. Those people who are very busy and cannot find time to write for long hours and can afford costly professional services.
- b. Those who can imagine, but cannot write and those writers, who are lazy and cannot finish the book.

5. Are there any example of Ghost-written books being very successful?

- a. There are many examples. Even many successful best-sellers use ghost-writers to carry out their tasks.
- b. Since the contract is discrete and Non-discloser agreement is signed with ghost-writers, no major information is in public domain.

6. Can StoryMirror provide me access to Ghost writer, who can help in writing book for me?

- a. Yes.

7. What is the turn-around time for a ghost-writer completing the project?

- a. It varies between 3-6 months depending upon the complexity of the project. If you have written the major portion and expect a ghost writer to structure and correct the flow, then it will not take much time. But if you want everything to be written from start itself, it will take decent amount of time.

8. Can the ghost-writer write a non-fiction or children book for me?

- a. Yes, all sorts of writing services are possible by ghost writers including non-fiction, fiction, children books.

9. My book demands few graphs/charts or images. Can ghost-writer do that for me?

- a. No, as this is the work of publishing company who carry out necessary beautification of the book.

- b. Ghost-writer will be able to write text content which you have imagined.

10. What happens if ghost-writer pirate my book and sell somewhere?

- a. That is where contract comes into play. The contract papers are written in such a manner that person can be behind bar, if attempts to do so.

11. If I have more questions around this subject, whom to send a mail?

- a. You can drop all your questions through an email to marketing@storymirror.com or admin@storymirror.com.
- b. Typical turn around time is 3-5 days.

2. PUBLISHING FAQs:

1. What are the difference between traditional publishing and self-publishing?

- a. If you've ever thought about publishing your book, you've probably encountered a discussion about Traditional Publishing versus Self-Publishing.
- b. Please find the differences below.

	Traditional publishing	Self-publishing
Who bears the cost of publishing	Publisher	Author
Ease of publishing	Difficult	Easy
Typical time to publish	12-36 months	It can be as low as 7 days
Royalty	5-10% of MRP	20-30% of MRP
Who bears the marketing cost	Publisher	Author
Copyright	Publisher/Author	Author
Advance payment	Sometimes Yes	No
Transparency	No	Yes

2. I am a new author and I want only traditional publishing. What are the chances?

- a. Every author wants to be traditionally published as all finance burden is on publisher. In a calendar year over 500K new titles are published in USA and 150K titles in India. Typical rejection rate is 99% in traditional publications. [There are many examples of best-seller started as self-publishing.](#)

3. Are there any example of best-seller that started career as self-publishing author?

- a. [Yes, here is the link.](#)

- 4. If in self-publishing margins , profit , control are higher, why anyone would choose traditional publishing?**
 - a. Publishing is a difficult process. Had it been so easy, all self-published authors would have been super-rich. The ratio of success is less than 5%. The author has to learn the art of publishing and marketing deeply to control the self-publishing aspect of the book.
 - b. For example, a new author have no clue on how to design a book, lay out the pages, marketing and distributing the book.
 - c. A typical traditional publishing houses take all into consideration, however authors lose control on the various aspect of the book.
- 5. Some self-publishing platform claim, they share 100% profit with author. Is it true?**
 - a. While choosing a publishing house, you should ask one simple question, who are their best-selling authors and how many copies have been sold by each of them and their references to talk to them. Most of the time these self-publishing platforms will not share this information stating it is confidential to do reference check. With that, you will get the answer.
 - b. Whenever any self-publishing platform share 100% profit with author then there is no motivation left for the self-publishing platform to make author a best-seller. As they would not be getting anything post publication. That means they will never try or help author to become best-seller.
 - c. So, any publishing platform sharing 100% of profit should be avoided at any cost, as the only motive for them is to extract publishing expenses from authors and leave them in mid before they becomes best-seller and move to the next author to get another book self-published.
 - d. Some authors get tempted to hear 100% profit and jump to the action only to realize later they lose money, time and never get into the best-seller league.
- 6. Does that mean self-publishing platform who share 100% profit with authors cannot be trusted?**
 - a. It will all depend after asking questions to publishing house and doing the reference check. Publishing market is very big and many players try to exploit authors in the name of self-publishing. Once the book is published, they do not take due care to the book for reaching masses.
 - b. A typical best-selling book takes almost 6-8 months to become best-sellers. There is no standard rule though and it might depend upon the type of book and marketing strategies.
 - c. If a publishing house publishing a too many books, is a red alert.
- 7. I talked to a publishing house, which says they have 30,000 store presence and 140+ countries they can distribute books**
 - a. Ingram and Repro helps reaching 140+ countries. Most publishing houses have the similar setup.
 - b. However, 30K store presence is a misleading information. You can ask those

publishing house a simple question, how many books really sold in those 30K book stores. If a book store keeps 10 copies of a book, we are talking about 300K copies sell – a delight #1 national best-seller might envy of. This information is rubbish and misleading and on this basis, you should reject that publishing house.

8. My publisher says they are fastest growing publishing house of the world and has 180K+ writers and 250K+ community members and they have published over 16K books. Should I believe them?

- a. When you asked this question, you knew the publishing house is not believable. So you got your answer.
- b. 16K book publishing is believable as some publishing houses have been doing this unfair practices for a quite long time and lack of choices forcing authors to land or get trapped by those publishing houses who are nothing less than a typical printer.
- c. At StoryMirror we have a community of 5M readers and close to 1M unique readers as of Mar 2020, who are active every month, whereas we have only 35K writer base. Someone who claims to be fastest growing publishing, should have better ratios than us. If the ratio of writers to community members are only 1:1.5, it is very bad number for any publishing house. For StoryMirror 35K writer/5M readers = 1:142, which is 94.66 times the ratio you are talking about.
- d. So be logical and evaluate before putting your money and time.
- e. Since the publishing house has 250K community members, of which 180K writers, leaves 70K+ readers. That means all 70K readers will not visiting platform every month. Assuming 10K reader visiting platform every month, and they have published 16K books implies 1 reader per 1 book every month. Hope this logical explanations does not make you laugh too louder.

9. Is Amazon KDP the best cost-effective platform for self-publication?

- a. Not necessarily. By default editing is not supported in KDP and provided by third party companies such as Amnet, Elite Editing and Kirkus as of Mar 2020. The charges are higher than market editing services you can get from professional service provider.
- b. Any unedited book is not appreciated in the market. Amazon recommends buzzbooks for cover page design and pricing starts from \$299. Same as the case of ebook formatting, uploading etc. If you combine all this cost, it is higher than any other similar self-publishing platforms. Since Amazon has bigger distribution network through amazon e-commerce and kindle, a general perception of reaching wider audience prevails. However, you will barely get to know many million copies sold authors through KDP only services.
- c. Will give an example of StoryMirror book “Simplify your life” by Vaibhav Dattar. It was originally sold through Kindle and could sell only less than 50 copies after several months. Published again through StoryMirror saw the book

- sold over 10K copies in few month and the life of author changed through the book.
- d. Book publishing is continuous effort – both time and money and KDP is too costly compared to many self-publishing platform for similar quality and output.
 - e. KDP does not help you reach book stores as well. Royalty is also very less if you calculate in real-terms.
 - f. There are a lot of hit and trial and discussions goes before a good book is published e.g.
 - i. What is to be written on preface, acknowledgement
 - ii. What font to be used
 - iii. How images will be placed
 - iv. Can I put color image in the inside pages?
 - v. Can publishing house change my graphs/ images
 - vi. Can I have a poetic layout for my poetry book
 - g. All the above require a proper education or training, which most cases missed by first time writers, which is not provided by KDP.

10. I am good at grammar and I have written quite well. Do I need editors before publishing?

- a. Writers write on the flow. Mistakes are very common occurrence even for grammar Nazi writers. A book can be a life changer for a person. If a book sells million copies, a writer becomes a celebrity. His life changes post a successful book. Avoiding the editors are the last thing a writer should think while self-publishing

11. What are important attributes of best-selling books?

- a.
 - i. A good content
 - ii. Appealing cover
 - iii. Matching target audience
 - iv. Demand for book
 - v. Right time of launch
 - vi. Extensive marketing

12. Which sells most? Fiction or non-fiction?

- a. Both sells equally. Fiction reach million copy sells faster than non-fiction.
[Click on this link to get information on list of best-selling books.](#)

13. I have written only 25K words. Can I publish a book?

- a. If it is a poetry book, it is ok. For novels, it should be at least 40K words for readers to get engaged.

14. Does poetry books sell these days?

- a. Yes, there are poetry writers who even sell million copies e.g. Lang Leav. At StoryMirror we have one national best-seller who has sold more than 10K copies out of poetry book.

15. When a book is called as national best-seller?

- a. When it sells between 5K-10K copies. But there is no standard rule. It is undocumented agreement between publishing houses.

16. I have an idea. How much time and effort would be required to get a 150-page book?

- a. It will all depend upon type of content. If you are expecting a life change after book is released, then you should be ready for equivalent investments – both in money and effort.

17. How much effort are required to become a national best-seller, assuming the book is very well written?

- a. It depends. Will give an analogy here. When you prepare for an engineering exam, MBA exam, CAT, GMAT, GRE, TOEFL, civil services, you invest years of preparation and huge sum of money. A typical top degree from India(IIT/IIM) takes out 2-3 years of time and over Rs2-3M as investment amount. In USA, an MBA degree from top universities cost up to \$150K. The reason behind this investment, we are confident of better future after the degree and ready to go to that extra miles. If one book is very successful entire future life changes for an author. Consistent royalty without doing any further work, huge money through seminars, talk shows and workshops help author lead a very promising life. The amount spent is quite less compared to the other equivalent professional career. Time to become a best-seller can be less than 6 months given proper planning and executions.
- b. Those who believed in quantum leap in their career and put equivalent effort and money, have all become successful and established writers. Those who tried publishing with half-hearted effort, only saw their authorship as a distant dream.

18. What are typical styles of fiction and non-fiction books?

- a. Non-fiction books should have a chapter hook, main premise of the book, key takeaways. You can have one key takeaway or multiple takeaways throughout the book. Powerful real-life examples, case studies, anecdotes make the book worth reading. A non-fiction book written in a fictional way makes it worth reading. The fiction book should have a powerful protagonist, plot, characters should be well developed, nice suspense, interesting dialogues etc make the book worth reading.

19. Do I need Literary agents to publish a book?

- a. Not necessarily. Literary agents are professionals, who connect to publishers, guide you in story building. But if you have chosen a publisher, who can take up the literary agents work, you can be assured that, they will take care of all aspects of publishing. At StoryMirror we have end-to-end support starting

from editing, design, layout, marketing and distribution. So you do not need any agency to help you out.

20. I am a regional language writer, where selling 300 copies is a luxury. Can I still aim for selling 10K copies.

- a. At StoryMirror, we have multiple Hindi books, which has sold more than 10K copies. So selling 300 copies in regional language is a myth.
- b. With proper planning and execution, any good book can sell.

21. Which is more profitable? Digital and physical?

- a. Both are equally profitable, provided that effort is oriented in right direction.
- b. Any book that sells through paperback format, also sells quite huge in digital platforms.

22. What all pointers should be looked at in signing a contract

- a. Royalty
- b. Transparency
- c. Termination clauses
- d. Copyright information

23. If I have more questions around this subject, whom to send a mail?

- a. You can drop all your questions through an email to marketing@storymirror.com and/or admin@storymirror.com.
- b. Typical turn around time is 3-5 days.

3. Book Marketing FAQs:

24. What are the types of marketing services available to a publishing house?

- a. This is a very vast question and there is no limit to answer it. Marketing is all about reaching more and more people.
- b. Please find the differences below between various marketing funnels

Traditional Channels	New Age Digital channels
Book store display	Social media planning
News Paper Ad	Digital ads (Amazon, google etc)

TV ads	Key-word based marketing
Banner displays	Micro-influencer marketing
Free books distribution	Give Away through digital channels
Talk shows	Digital connect (AMA sessions)
Radio	Content Marketing
	Yes
	Email marketing
	Message & notification marketing
	Video trailer marketing
	Growth-hacking techniques
	Affiliate marketing
	Referral marketing
	Customized website for authors
	Viral marketing techniques

25. I want to become best-seller. Which marketing technique best suitable for me.

- a. A combination of new age digital channels and traditional channels.
- b. Always remember a best-seller is career shift and a bright future for rest of your life. Hence the effort and money is equivalently required to make the dream come true.

26. What are the book-store display marketing?

- a. You might have seen some books are placed at the front or special displays in many book store. It is a marketing activity for the book.
- b. Special display cost varies between Rs5K-Rs30K per month for various good book stores. In airports, it normally varies between Rs25K-30K depending upon the type of display.

27. What are the cost of News Paper ads?

- a. It varies based on circulation.
- b. A national daily charges Rs150,000 for 4inch x 4inch ad
- c. If it is a front-page ad, it costs between Rs1,00,00,000 to Rs1,50,00,000 for leading national daily.

28. Are all newspaper charge money for book Ad?

- a. Mostly Yes, unless you have special relationship with chief-editor of a channel.

- b. Advertisements are the major source of revenue for newspapers, hence it does not come free of cost.

29. At what stage of Book Marketing, I should try News Paper Ad?

- a. News Paper ad, TV Ad should be 3rd stage of book marketing. By that campaign time, the books must have sold 500K-1M copies before opting for this costly campaign plans.
- b. At StoryMirror, we do not recommend this kind of campaign at all, as the return on investment is very low. Rs150K spent on digital campaigns can do magic.

30. Can you explain Banner display, free book distribution, Talk shows and Radio and their approximate cost and return on investment?

- a. This is a big question and require a detailed explanation.
- b. Banner display is road side display of banners for the book. The cost varies based on city, locality, size of the banner etc. In prime location, 12 feet by 12 feet banner for 7 days costs few hundred thousand INR.
- c. Free book distribution is same as Giveaways, where few copies of the books are provided to readers so that word of mouth can spread. The costing depends upon no of free books to be distributed and relevant courier costs.
- d. Radio shows are sometimes free if they invite author, which happens in case author becomes a national best-sellers. Prior to that it is paid medium and charge varies from Rs100K-Rs300K for various radio channels.

31. What are social media marketing? What are the advantage and approximate cost of such marketing funnel?

- a. It is the most commonly used marketing funnel. It includes various platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, whatsapp, Telegram, Linkedin, Pintrest etc.
- b. Typically the reach is 10x the amount of money spent. Conversion is not guaranteed, but from our experiences, we can say if the book is very good and there is some decent traction already built, then 1.25x to 1.5x you can expect from social media campaigns. It will also depend upon how you are creating customer buckets, segmentation of users and many other parameters which are critical for social media campaigns.
- c. All social media campaigns are heavily dependent upon the quality of the image, creativity and out of box thinking which attracts audience to the book
- d. For LinkedIn Ad, your language of social media marketing must be more professional and polished language, whereas in case on Instagram, more casual approach helps in reaching wider audience. In telegram and WhatsApp marketing, the funnel needs to be established well before marketing activities are initiated.

32. Can you explain digital ads (e.g. Amazon and google etc)

- a. It is bit different from social media marketing, but these are essential elements of book marketing.
- b. Books are normally searched in google and the one of the largest platforms for distribution is Amazon. Both the platforms run with keyword based algorithms and you need to choose right keywords and bid amounts to be searchable by readers
- c. There is no standard rules, but with Rs5K ad spent you can get 500-700 clicks to your book. Sales conversion will depend upon the book reviews and quality and content description on the cover pages.

33. What is micro-influencer marketing?

- a. Many social media influencers have built millions of followers and make some money by providing their marketing services known as micro-influencer marketing.

- b. Micro-influencers are provide with images, videos or free books and they post in their social media platforms. For that they charge between Rs500-Rs500K depending upon the type of influencer. It is one of the very powerful way of marketing in short period of time.
 - c. At StoryMirror, we have connect to over 3000 micro-influencers with cumulative reach of over 200M worldwide.
- 34. If money is not constraint, is micro-influencers are the best method of marketing?
 - a. It is not just money, but creative image and videos are important in doing micro-influencer marketing. Yes, this is one of the powerful ways of marketing,
- 35. Please explain email marketing, content marketing and notification/messaging marketing.
 - a. Email marketing : Oldest form of digital media marketing and still one of the most powerful marketing techniques. For an effective email marketing, the marketing platform must have already a decent subscriber base, well-defined user bucketing and good open rate of emails.
 - b. Content marketing : A new age digital media marketing where various blogging mediums are used to talk about book. Earlier days of book reviews have been replaced by content marketing by bloggers. It requires extensive research around book, making a draft plan and modifying the scope of the content as the campaigns run.
 - c. Notification/messaging marketing: It happens through web/push notifications and SMS services to readers
- 36. What are video trailer, affiliate and referral marketing?
 - a. Video trailer: An effective video is more powerful than thousands of words. An effective video with befitting music and content can do wonders for a book
 - b. Affiliate and referral marketing: It is a type of marketing channel where referral incentives are provided to readers or marketers for their campaign. A strong referral program can make thousands of sells in a single day. This style of marketing is called revenue sharing campaign management. Only tech companies can execute this kind of campaigns unlike any traditional publishing companies.
- 37. What is growth-hacking marketing techniques?
 - a. This is most advanced form of marketing and there is no standard rules.
 - b. Rules and campaign planning is done based on types of books.
 - c. Technology based methods are implemented using the power of guerilla and viral marketing to reach millions of users in shortest possible time.
- 38. What are the marketing techniques StoryMirror supports?
 - a. All marketing techniques mentioned in this document
- 39. What are the budgets for marketing a book to a national best-seller?
 - a. There is no fixed budget. But to make a new author and a new book to a national best-seller require budget between Rs500K-Rs2000K INR.
 - b. Once book reaches the best-sellers mark, book keep on selling for a long time through word of mouth and basic level of marketing
- 40. What is the difference between Amazon best-seller and national best-seller?
 - a. There is a huge difference.
 - b. An amazon best-seller is category based ranking. Someone can become Amazon best-seller(or Amazon #1, just by selling few copies in a segment).
 - c. A national best-seller tag requires a book to be sold at least 10,000 copies in a period of 6 months-1 year.
- 41. How the book is marketed internationally?
 - a. Same techniques as above

42. I have written a great book and I do not have budget. Still can I be best seller?

- a. Yes, you can be. That will be little bit slow process, but eventually it will happen if the quality of the book is very good.

43. Is there any checklist of publishing and marketing activities?

- a. Yes, please refer to the table below

S1 No	Item
1	A good book
2	Cover design
3	Book Layout
4	Email marketing
5	Online and offline marketing
6	Micro-influencer marketing
7	Give Away through digital channels
8	Digital connect (AMA sessions)
9	Content Marketing
10	Yes
11	Radio and talk shows
12	Message & notification marketing
13	Video trailer marketing
14	Growth-hacking techniques
15	Affiliate marketing
16	Referral marketing
17	Customized website for authors
18	Viral marketing techniques
19	Author web site
20	Author Digital identity management
21	PR team for author

44. What is the last piece of advice you will give to a first-time author who wants to become only national best-seller and nothing less than that?

- a. Will give an analogy here. When you prepare for an engineering exam, MBA exam, CAT, GMAT, GRE, TOEFL, civil services, you invest years of preparation and huge sum of money. A typical top degree from India(IIT/IIM) takes out 2-3 years of time and over Rs2-3M as investment amount. In USA, an MBA degree from top universities cost up to \$150K. The reason behind this investment, we are confident of better future after the degree and ready to go

to that extra miles. If one book is very successful entire future life changes for an author. Consistent royalty without doing any further work, huge money through seminars, talk shows and workshops help author lead a very promising life. The amount spent is quite less compared to the other equivalent professional career. Time to become a best-seller can be less than 6 months given proper planning and executions.

- b. Those who believed in quantum leap in their career and put equivalent effort and money, have all become successful and established writers. Those who tried publishing with half-hearted effort, only saw their authorship as a distant dream.

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