

IPG / The Empowered Author Survey Results

SUMMARY

Ahead of being published, nearly a quarter of authors either found lots of information that they didn't trust (13.8%) or thought information was confusing and hard to find (10.3%).

Just under half (48.3%) of authors received a pack of information from their publisher after signing contracts.

Nearly half (48.3%) didn't feel confident that they understood how publishing would work, with particular uncertainty around marketing.

More than a third (37.9%) didn't understand exactly what was expected of them in the publishing process, especially in marketing.

Authors are generally satisfied with their publishers' performance on editorial and design, but less happy about their achievements on sales, marketing and publicity.

Around two thirds (69.0%) were consulted about publicity and marketing plans for their most recent books.

Nine in ten (89.2%) authors use Twitter to personally promote books, and many also use Facebook (62.4%) and Instagram (44.7%). They also use other social media and a very wide array of platforms and ways to proactively promote and sell their books.

Nearly three quarters (72.0%) think their royalty statements are clear and easy to understand.

On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (completely), authors rated the extent to which their expectations of being published have been met at 3.6.

Just over two thirds of authors feel very loyal (35.3%) or quite loyal (32.9%) towards their publishers.

1 NEW AUTHORS ONLY

Q1 Ahead of being published, which of these statements best applies to your experience of finding information about getting published or agents?

	Percentage
It was easy to find	20.7%
I found lots of information but wasn't sure which option was for me	55.2%
I found lots of information that I didn't trust	13.8%

Information was confusing and hard to find	10.3%
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Q2 Which sources of information did you find most useful?

Common sources included the Writers’ and Artists’ Yearbook, Twitter, web searches, university courses, writing websites, other authors and general word of mouth.

Q3 Did your publisher give you a pack of information after signing contracts?

	Percentage
Yes	48.3%
No	51.7%

Q4 After signing contracts, did you feel confident that you understood how being published would work?

	Percentage
Yes	51.7%
No	48.3%

Q5 With hindsight, what additional things would you have liked to know at this early stage?

By far the most common responses were around marketing—especially how the process would work and the responsibilities of the author. Some authors would also have appreciated more guidance on timeframes and editorial stages.

Q6 Did your publisher clearly explain who you would be working with at stages like editorial, marketing and publicity etc?

	Percentage
Yes	58.6%
No	41.4%

Some authors felt their contact with publishers on the different stages was limited.

Q7 Did you understand exactly what was expected of you during the publishing process?

	Percentage
Yes	62.1%
No	37.9%

Some authors were unclear about the extent of their required involvement in marketing their books.

Q8 Please tell us briefly what your experience was like around publication day.

Authors had very varied experiences on publication day, with some delighted with the activity and feeling well-supported, and others underwhelmed. There were frustrations around marketing and publicity. Covid disrupted many publication day plans.

1 ALL AUTHORS

Q9 How satisfied are you with your publisher’s performance in the following areas? Please score between 1 (totally unsatisfied) and 5 (totally satisfied).

Authors tend to be much more satisfied with editorial, design and speed of communications than with marketing, publicity and sales work.

	Average score
Editorial	4.1
Speed of response to correspondence	4.0
Design	4.0
Contracts	3.9
General communications	3.7
Rights	3.5
Marketing and publicity	2.9
Sales	2.9

Q10 In an average year, roughly how often does your publisher communicate with you unprompted?

	Percentage
Weekly	12.9%
Monthly	35.3%
Quarterly	22.4%
Annually	8.2%
Never, unless prompted	21.2%

Q11 Were you consulted about your publisher’s publicity and marketing plans for your most recent book?

	Percentage
Yes	69.0%

No	31.0%
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Q12 Were you told what was expected of you in terms of publicity and marketing?

	Percentage
Yes, completely	42.4%
Yes, but not very well	41.2%
No, not at all	16.5%

Some authors were frustrated at their lack of information or support for publicity and marketing, while acknowledging the restrictions of budgets and Covid.

Q13 Which of these social media platforms do you personally use to promote your books?

	Percentage
Twitter	89.4%
Facebook	62.4%
Instagram	44.7%
LinkedIn	22.4%
YouTube	18.8%
Other	12.9%
None	4.7%

Other platforms mentioned included blogs, websites, Pinterest, MeWe and Soundcloud.

Q14 Beyond social media, please tell us briefly about any ways you promote your books separately from your publisher.

Authors use a very wide range of ways to promote books on their own initiative, including talks, readings, signings, festival appearances and media interviews across print, TV and radio. They generate reviews, contact bookshops, libraries, schools and universities direct, organise blog tours, videos and giveaways, buy advertising, hire PR agencies, visit book groups and leverage their networks of friends, families and professional contacts.

Q15 Has your publisher ever provided you with support for promoting books?

	Percentage
Advice on request	56.6%
Resources (eg manual, templates)	31.3%
Financial (eg event fees, equipment costs)	19.3%

None	19.3%
Other (please specify)	15.7%
Training (eg public speaking, social media)	7.2%

Other forms of support mentioned included review copies, promotional items, video content, expenses and moral support.

Q16 Do you think your royalty statements are clear and easy to understand?

	Percentage
Yes	72.0%
No	28.0%

Q17 On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (completely), how well have your expectations of being published been met by your publisher?

Average score: 3.6.

Authors most frequently mentioned marketing and publicity as the main areas where their expectations had not been met. There were also frustrations with the frequency of speed of communications, and with stages of publishing including contracts, design, rights and production.

Q18 How loyal do you feel towards your publisher?

	Percentage
Very	35.3%
Quite	32.9%
Neutral	11.8%
Not very	14.1%
Not at all	5.9%

Q19 If you were able to achieve a single improvement in your publisher's work for you, what would it be?

There is extensive desire for publishers to improve their sales, marketing and publicity activity. Authors would also like to see closer collaboration and better communication, and some wish to see improvements in contracts, rights, royalties and design. However, there is also widespread appreciation of the efforts of independent publishers and the constraints they are under.