

Welcome to the Write Publish Market podcast. If you're an entrepreneur considering writing a book to serve your business, you're in the right place. Or maybe you've already decided; that's even better. I'm your host, Jodi Brandon, book publishing partner for entrepreneurs and 20 year veteran of the book publishing industry. On the Write Publish Market podcast, in addition to learning from me, you'll hear from entrepreneurs just like you and hear about their experiences as we explore all facets of writing, publishing, and marketing a book that will help your business grow in ways you might not even have dreamed of yet.

Kelsey Baldwin is an author, designer, and entrepreneur. She runs Paper + Oats, an online resource for creative entrepreneurs looking to expand their reach with digital products, quality design, and authentic marketing. Kelsey teaches entrepreneurs how to use Adobe InDesign for all their business' graphic design needs through free tutorials and a best-selling online course. She also works 1-on-1 with authors to design high quality book interiors and covers. As a single mother, she is an advocate for women learning to sustain themselves and gain independence through online business. Her first book – *Strong Girl, Brave Girl* – chronicles her journey through divorce while being pregnant, and is available on Amazon. She lives in Missouri with her daughter Poppy and their border collie Cooper. Learn more about Kelsey at www.paperandoats.com, and check out her free InDesign workshop at www.theindesignfieldguide.com.

JODI: Kelsey, welcome back to the show. I'm so glad to have you back this time as a guest expert, rather than as an author yourself. You're putting on that other hat today, so thanks.

KELSEY: Thanks for having me.

JODI: I've been getting lots of questions lately about design and design templates. After it happened, for the fourth time, I thought, *Okay, I think it's time maybe to have another chat about book design on the podcast*. I thought I would just dig in sort of generally to start. At what point should an author be looking for, or what should they have ready when it's time to hire, a designer?

KELSEY: The main thing is to have your manuscript of your book completely finished, including all of the editing. I've certainly worked on books where the editing was not done, and to do that after the design phase was just a nightmare. So it will just make the whole design phase goes so much more smoothly if your manuscript is totally completely finished. Also, know what the page size will be. So likely your listeners are self-publishing, done through Amazon. They have a lot of different sizes you can choose from. If you're going through a different printer, they can probably do whatever size. So just make sure you have that nailed down, because that's a tricky thing to change once you get deep into the design of it. If you're going to have a cover design, make sure you've got your final title figured out for your book, a subtitle, you've got your author name — that's a pretty easy one — the bio and the photo on the back of the book for the author, if you've got a summary for the back of your book, or any endorsements or quotes, or something you want to include. Having all of that copy finalized will just help that cover design go much smoothly. The spine of the cover — the calculation of how thick

your spine will be — isn't really done until the interior is laid out and you know how many pages that will be. Usually a designer will just kind of make an estimate for the spine and then, once the inside is done, they'll come back to the cover and finalize that to make sure it's just right.

JODI: I'm glad you brought up the cover. What should an author be thinking about when it comes to cover? Should they have some ideas of things that they like and that they don't like? Should they be paying attention to trends in their kind of book? Obviously, the cover is going to play a piece in their marketing plan, just because that's the visual element of the book that people are see, right? How much attention should the author be paying to what they want the cover to look like — versus what the designer then will come in and say, “Okay, this is what I think we should do. “And then the author can give it a yay or nay.

KELSEY: It's helpful if the author comes into that conversation with maybe some covers that they like or notes about design or aesthetics or styles that they're thinking about. It especially helps, too, if the designer knows a little bit about what the book is about — some kind of summary, if they haven't read through it already. The genre of the book is really important too. A fantasy type book is obviously going to look really different than a self-help book or business-related book, right? A good designer will know the difference. It's important for the author to come with a few of those ideas, but still recognize that the designer is the designer. They're the expert, and letting them do their thing is important. I sometimes compare it to if I were to hire a plumber to come work on my house. I don't know anything about plumbing, so I'm not going to say, “Hey, you should use that right that other kind of pipe or use this tool.” I don't know what I'm talking about. I just let them do their thing. For designers — especially for book design, because it's such a specific type of design takes a different skill set than some other types of design — just let them do their thing, but still bring a few ideas to the table to kind of steer them in the direction you're wanting.

JODI: I know some book designers do interiors and covers but some don't they only do one or the other. Do you think that it's more helpful for an author if the same person works on both, or does it really not matter?

KELSEY: It could go either way. If it is two separate people, just make sure that it's still cohesive across both of their designs. It might be helpful to do the cover first — not necessarily the entire back and spine as well — but at least having an idea of what the front is going to look like. Then you can subtly weave some of those same design elements into the interior so it all feels really cohesive, incorporating the same types of fonts, or general style or aesthetics, or like really simple design elements, like a line divider, or dots, or some little illustration or illustrative pattern or something can be repeated on the inside of the book from the cover. That could also just be another way to tie it all together.

JODI: Unless it's something totally obvious — like the same font, for example — a lot of non-designers might not even notice that. But they will notice a sort of seamless experience. That's exactly what you're going for there. That's a great point, too, about getting at least that front cover mock-up done ahead of time. That's great for author, because that visual point of reference is so helpful when writing a book. That's a good differentiator, though, that you're not necessarily talking about the whole thing,

because like you said, the spine, for example, can't be done until the page count is finalized. You don't know the page count, or the trim size, until you finish the dang thing. So it's sort of like setting up the domino effect that I imagine a lot of people listening maybe haven't really thought about.

Let's talk a little bit about the revisions process. The point you made about knowing the trim size ahead of time is important. I worked with somebody not that long ago; it couldn't have been more than a couple of years. She decided at the last minute that she wanted to change the trim size of her book, and she couldn't understand why her designer was basically charging her for a whole new product. I said, "They're starting from zero." And she said, "Well, can't they just change the margins like you do in Word and kind of rerun it?" And I said, "I mean, I'm not a book designer, but no." So other than having that figured out at the beginning, what does the revisions process look like? What should authors be expecting? The caveat here, of course, is that I know that every designer is different and has a different process. But just generally speaking, if you could speak to that a little bit.

KELSEY: For me, personally, whenever I'm designing a book, and most designers would agree with this, it's easiest if once they get that first draft of the manuscript all laid out, they could comb through just page one to the end of it — page by page — and make a list of their revisions all in one go. Make a giant bulleted list that might be really long. That's fine. Doing it all in one go, rather than combing through just briefly and making a few changes and sending that off to your designer, and then they send you a new proof and come up with a few more. It's easier if we can just get it all in one go. It's also important that the list that you're making — you're not sending a physical copy of the book, that has red pen all over it — that it's just a digital copy, to make sure you make a list of what the page number for what you're talking about. The paragraph number, or even the line number, is really helpful so the designer can really easily find where you're at and what you're talking about in the text. If you make it hard for them to find, it's just going to take the designer that much longer to make your changes and work through your list, which ultimately is going to cost you more money. As easy as you can make that for them, the faster it'll go.

JODI: I call that the "sausage making part." Because there's no easy way yet. We still have to go through it. It's just the nature of the beast. The author needs to take ownership. Take the time, like you're saying, to kind of comb through. It's a tedious job. You get to the end, and you have that delicious sausage, so there's that too.

A lot of people are coming to me and saying, "It seems like there are really great book template designs out there. So I think I'm going to do that versus hiring someone to do a custom interior design." I'm sure that, given your job, you don't advocate for that. But if someone is going to — for budget reasons, for example — what should they be looking for? I have to imagine that not all templates are created equal.

KELSEY: That's so true: Not all templates are created equal. You get what you pay for also. I would ideally want to look for an InDesign file. Using the program Adobe InDesign is the best choice for designing a book. There are a lot of automation features within that program that really were built for book design and can make the process go really smoothly, and make sure you don't have lots of errors and things but make sure it's consistent throughout. That would be the program that I would look for.

Also make sure your template has a good variety of layouts for different types of pages and types of content that you have in your book — having maybe a template for a title page, dedication, table of contents, what your chapter opener will look like, what your section opener will look like. If you have any callouts you want to make in the text or quotes that you want to highlight and have the text wrap around, having that already laid out in your template can be really helpful. If you have any interactive pages like journaling pages, or a workbook or question-and-answer type things at the end of the chapter, maybe finding a template that has a layout for that type of page. Also think through character and paragraph styles is a feature that InDesign offers, which is basically kind of setting up what font and size and spacing for different types of texts. You can kind of set up lots of almost mini templates within a template of settings for your formatting, and then you can just quickly go through and kind of highlight all of your chapter openers — where it says the chapter number — and just with one click apply a style to it, rather than trying to remember what was this size, and that font, and this much spacing added to it. It saves all those settings for you, and you can just fly through your formatting then. It also ensures that everything's consistent. So if you need to change the size of something, you can change it within that style, and it will change everywhere in your text where that appears.

JODI: That sounds helpful.

KELSEY: Yeah, it's really helpful in just ensuring if you make those changes, or if you change your mind about something, that it's going to be consistent throughout. It's also ensures you're not forgetting a page or skipping over something. It helps you avoid those errors automatically. It's also helpful in an InDesign file to have some master pages set up. Those are similar to the styles; they're kind of like a template ID page within your file that has some set formatting to it, especially for having a running head or a footer and your page number on a master page. It could be as simple as that. That way you don't have to go and stick a page number on every individual page. It'll automatically have it in the exact same spot on every page. You can also set up automatic page numbering, which is a simple thing to do in InDesign, and it will automatically number all your pages for you. If you change the order of text or have to add in an extra page somewhere, it'll automatically renumber everything for you. Lots of tools like that, that really help make sure that your book — especially a self-published book — is up to the design publishing standards. Books at Barnes and Noble, or from all your favorite authors, you want to be on par with them, and you want the design to look professional. Those are some things to look for. Also think about the order of your pages. This is something, I'm sure, Jodi, that you probably help with whenever you help outline or edit and help people put their books together is making sure that front and back matter are in the right order. Things are showing up in the right sides of pages, and things like that. That can be a dead giveaway of an amateur book.

JODI: That's a telltale sign I preach all the time: There is nothing wrong with self-publishing. It's a perfectly legitimate path to publication. But you have to take the time to make sure that you're producing a quality product.

KELSEY: Yeah, those things I feel like can be a big distraction to the reader noticing that it's different than another book they've read — not in a good way. Like a page or a design element that's not consistent throughout — that's distracting. I feel like the ultimate sign of a good book designer is that you don't really even notice. The book design just easily lets you read through it. There's no hiccups.

You're not distracted by anything weird happening on the page. It just lets your text — that you've worked so hard to write — have that shine.

JODI: As you were talking about all of the ins and outs of InDesign, I just kept thinking to myself, *Oh my gosh, I would never in a million years do this myself*. It's a lot.

KELSEY: Yeah, I weirdly really enjoy the tedious work of designing a book and making sure all the words are looking good.

JODI: People say the same about copy editing. I have people say all the time they'd rather poke their eyes out with a red editing pencil. But editing — that's like my best day ever.

That was super helpful. And I can't imagine anyone listening to that then thinks, *Oh, no, I could totally just do this myself*. I also think something else that nobody really talks about is purchasing InDesign. By the time you do that and teach yourself — even with all of those shortcuts — everything that you were talking about, which is of course great and super helpful, you might end up not really saving that much money in the long run by doing it that way.

KELSEY: That's true.

JODI: This was a super-helpful episode. Lots of people are going to come away with lots of questions answered. You know, because you've been on the show before, Kelsey, that I don't let anyone leave without telling me something that they're reading right now and loving or that you recently finished.

KELSEY: I love this question. I have really been trying to read more. Especially through 2020, I haven't read fiction. I don't know why I just have always had a hard time getting into it. But I had committed this year to try to read some fiction books. I just randomly picked one up at the library. I had a list of some that I was looking for, and they didn't have any of the ones that were on my list. I was with my daughter, Poppy, and she actually just pointed at one. "What about that one?" I had kind of heard of it: *The Starless Sea* by Erin Morgenstern. You might recognize the cover. I didn't know anything about the book at all. I said, "Yeah, sure. Let's get that one," and I started it that night. It's a big book; it's 500 pages. And I could not put it down. I read the whole thing in a week, and it was really, really good. It's a fantasy-type fiction, which is not really — I would normally pick that up. But I really, really enjoyed it. And I feel like it's kind of given me some new, new hope that maybe I can get back into fiction.

JODI: Ooh, I haven't even heard of that book. I'll check that out. Not what I typically read, but I'm trying to try some new things — different books than what I typically read. So I'll have to check that out.

KELSEY: Check it out. After I read it, I googled some reviews and it didn't get great reviews. But I thought, *Huh, well, I enjoyed it*. But I was checking.

JODI: Thank you again, so much, for your time today, Kelsey. I really, really appreciate it.

KELSEY: This was really fun. Thanks for having me.

Thanks for listening to this episode of the Write Publish Market podcast. I know just how busy entrepreneurs' schedules are, so I'm grateful you've taken some time out of yours to journey into the world of book publishing with me today. If you enjoyed this episode, take a quick screenshot and share on social to let others know you're listening. Use the hashtag #writepublishmarket to spread the love. Until next time, friends. Happy writing.