**Key Lessons Learned**

On How To Become A Successful Indie Author!

**Introduction:**

First, let me define successful! I don’t mean rich. That happens to few writers, let alone Indie Authors. I define success as being an independent, self-published author who enjoys moderate to well-earned success in writing and promoting his or her own work without help from literary agents or traditional publishing houses.

Becoming a successful Indie Author requires experience, persistence, accepting help from others and belief in oneself; even in the face of multiple obstacles such as lack of online publishing experience, poor editing and unfavorable reviews of one’s works. You really have to want to write something and see it published to succeed as an Indie Author.

I’ve wanted to write stories since I was a young boy. I read everything I could get my hands on. Usually, this meant hand-me down magazines and books from my relatives. This included Readers Digest, National Geographic, Popular Science, Life Magazine and many others. I really enjoyed paperback books meant for adults older than I. You would be amazed at what you can learn reading Cowboy Western Books, Murder Mysteries, Detective Stories, Sci-Fi and other best sellers of the day.

Of course, there were tons of books to read in school and town libraries. I am an avid reader. I read every famous person’s biography in my school library. I loved history, science, classic tales, popular fiction, nonfiction, science fiction and other books written by popular authors who published during those days. If I didn’t have a book to read, I was bored.

Sometime in the fourth or fifth grade, our class was asked to write a story. I chose a tale about some young kids getting kidnapped who left a trail of crumbs for people to find them. After that, a childhood friend and I decided to write separate science fiction stories. Mine was about parachuting down to Venus. I don’t remember what my friend wrote. What I do remember is my Mother threw out our stories by mistake and both of us were heartbroken. Filling out thirty or so pages of handwritten sentences seemed like a huge accomplishment to me at the time.

If you wanted to be a writer back in those days, you filled out a questionnaire from some magazine and sent it in with a sample of your work. I received an answer back saying I had potential and would I like to take the course—for a fee of course! I had to pass since I didn’t have the money. Nor did I have much encouragement from working class friends or family.

Today, you have many more options to find out if you have writer potential. You write your story and submit it to a magazine, publisher or literary agent. If they like your work, they get back to you. This happens roughly ten out of a one hundred attempts. Roughly ninety percent of all writers fail to get published through traditional channels. For those who do succeed at getting published; fifty percent of these books fail in the marketplace according to public sources.

Here are some other published book statistics. Somewhere between 600,000 and 1,000,000 books are published in the U.S. each year. Approximately 70% are now self-published. A bestseller varies from 3000 to 9000 book sales the first week. The average book only achieves 250 to 300 sales per year. The U.S. Book Sale Market is forecasted to be around $44 billion by 2020. The average traditional published author makes $55,000 per year. The average self-published author makes $5,000 to $10,000 per year. As you can see, not many of us authors are writing novels for the money.

So I have to ask you—why do you want to become an author? I’ll tell you my answer—because I need to write—to express myself—if not on paper, then in digital ebooks.

I like to tell stories and I like to inform and entertain my readers. For reasons not entirely clear even to myself, I like to write Science Fiction stories. Am I successful at it? Only moderately so. My books have never hit any bestseller list, but I keep trying. I consider myself to be a successful, Self-Published Indie Author. I am on my ninth full-length Sci-Fi novel—all ebooks. You can find my ebooks on [**Amazon**](https://www.amazon.com/-/e/B004K5DDQY), [**Smashwords**](https://www.smashwords.com/interview/donviecelli) and [**Barnes & Noble**](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/s/don+viecelli?_requestid=475248). I am still writing and self-promoting my books. I try to self-publish at least one new full-length ebook each year.

In this article I am going to show you what I have learned in becoming a successful Indie Author. Much of what I learned, I learned the hard way; on my own. It doesn’t have to be that way. I should have listened to others sooner, but I like to learn things on my own before asking for help. So, to save you a lot of hard work, I am going to make it easier for you. All you have to do is learn the following Eight Key Lessons:

* [**Key Lesson Number 1: Pick The Right Genre!**](#Keylesson1)
* [**Key Lesson Number 2: Chose The Best Self-Publishing Services!**](#Keylesson2)
* [**Key Lesson Number 3: Find the Best Pricing Options!**](#Keylesson3)
* [**Key Lesson Number 4: Set Up Your Own Website!**](#Keylesson4)
* [**Key Lesson Number 5: Use Social Media Wisely!**](#Keylesson5)
* [**Key Lesson Number 6: Find The Most Effective Promotions!**](#Keylesson6)
* [**Key Lesson Number 7: Join A Writers Group!**](#Keylesson7)
* [**Key Lesson Number 8: Keep Writing!**](#Keylesson8)

Let’s get started.

**Key Lesson Number 1: Pick The Right Genre!**

You would think this is self-evident, but it’s not. Many writers start out not knowing for sure what they should write about. Some choose what is most popular in the marketplace hoping to hit it big right out of the gate. If they do, they are very lucky and talented. Others try different genres with different pen names at different times in their writing career. I may even try this at some point if I find a good story.

For now, my writing Genre is Science Fiction. What’s yours? This is very important. The two most popular writing genres in the U.S. are Mystery and Thriller stories. Science Fiction is certainly not the most popular, but it does have a growing audience. Think of some of the most popular movies made in recent years you went to see. Or, how about all the new Sci-Fi TV shows available on cable now? Sci-Fi popularity ebbs and flows throughout the decades. Everyone wants to know the future. We try to show it to our readers.

Each chosen genre has its own reader expectations. Sci-Fi readers expect World Building, Space Opera, Military Science Fiction, Fantasy and many other themes and settings. Mystery, Suspense, Thriller, Detective, Western, Romance, etc. have their own requirements. Be sure to research your genre, read your genre and understand your reader expectations before writing your novel.

The reason why your Genre is important is because you not only have to write a good, well constructed story—you need to be passionate about writing it. Your passion or “voice” will show up in your writing. It doesn’t matter how well you edit your work as much as how good or special your story is. Write what you love and readers will respect that.

**Key Lesson Number 2: Chose The Best Self-Publishing Services!**

I use **Amazon KDP, Smashwords** and **Barnes & Noble Press (Nook Press)** for ebook self-publishing and distribution. I chose these three self-publishing services for very specific reasons after years of experience starting in 2001 with Print On Demand (POD) house services. Not all self-publishing services will be right for you for subjective or objective reasons. Trial and error and experience helped me find the services I like for my ebooks. I will start with Amazon KDP.

**Amazon KDP:**

Amazon’s [**Kindle Direct Publishing**](https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US) is the biggest, most popular and best known of all the self-publishing online services for digital ebooks. There is no way around these facts. They sell thousands of ebooks every month. They rule the marketplace for digital ebooks. You need to have a presence on Amazon if you want to be successful.

They accept Microsoft Word documents and will convert it directly to the required Kindle ebook format called Mobi. You must add a well done book cover page, fill in the required book details and you are ready to publish. In addition, they also offer a **KDP Select Program** that offers special pricing and free ebook promotions during the 90 day exclusive period, but you cannot offer your ebook through any other publishers during this time.

I find using many of Amazon’s KDP program tools very helpful. Make sure you follow all the KDP detailed book entry requirements for Book Content, Book Cover, Descriptions, Keywords and Categories and ISBN assignment for the best results. You will need a completely edited and formatted Word document to upload to KDP’s Book Content section or the resulting Ereader format will be disappointing for your readers. KDP will identify incorrect or unknown words for you to correct before final publishing.

One of the most important files you will need for your ebook is the cover page. Book Covers and images must be professionally done to generate the best sales. I have tried making my own covers in the beginning, but the results were not professional enough. The best promotional tool you have is the cover page for your ebook. There are many digital ebook cover designers and the price is usually around a 100 dollars. The one I use is called **Kerman Covers Designer**. I recommend you find someone like Kerman to design your cover page.

Amazon will assign its own ASIN tracking number for your book if you choose not to buy or list your own. I always purchase my own ISBN numbers for distribution and pricing control purposes. ISBN numbers are recommended to identify and track your book sales. Most publishers and distribution houses need this number to distribute and sell your book. Costs are reasonable; as low as $29 dollars for ebooks and $55 for paper books that also need a Barcode. I recommend using [**Publisher Services**](http://www.isbn-us.com/) for ISBN numbers. You will need a separate ISBN for each ebook format such as Mobi format for Kindle readers or Epub format for Nook readers. Many ebook publishers do not require an ISBN number and most Print On Demand (POD) houses will provide one for you in their pricing.

You will find the Amazon KDP Select program to be very profitable for successful selling authors. However, KDPS is a very restrictive program and requires **Exclusivity** on all ebook sales. In other words, you are not allowed to sell your ebook on any other site, including your own website. I was not happy with all the pricing and distribution restrictions and choose not to enroll my books in this program. Others, especially new authors with limited number of ebook titles and some very successfully authors with multiple titles, prefer dealing with Amazon exclusively. Be aware of the fact that the Kindle Mobi format only works on Mobi capable E-readers and thus will not work on other devices such as Barnes & Noble Nook, which requires an Epub format.

Amazon Royalties are 35% for prices between $0.99 - $9.99 and 70% for prices between $2.99 -$200.00. KDP Select offers Free pricing options during the selected 90 day period and promotion opportunities not available to KDP only Authors. Amazon distributes ebooks to many different countries with different pricing options available.

Finally, Amazon’s KDP publishing services includes some very useful Reporting tools to see how your ebooks are doing in the marketplace. It is also very important to add your Profile information to Amazon’s [**Author Central Page**](https://authorcentral.amazon.com/gp/profile), which allows readers to **Follow** you. You can also promote your [**Author Page**](https://www.amazon.com/-/e/B004K5DDQY), see your Books and Sales information and Customer Reviews.

Once your ebook is published, you can download a copy of the Mobi format to download to your PC for promotional use, such as offering Free Advanced Reader Copies (ARC), Free Promos, Review Copies and other purposes.

Amazon KDP is constantly updating its rules, procedures and offerings so bookmark the website and keep informed of any changes.

**Smashwords:**

After using several other online self-publishing services such as BookTango, Google, Kobo and others, I decided to simplify my life and use [Smashwords](https://www.smashwords.com/) for many of my ebooks. The primary reasons for this were to offer Epub and other formats for my ebooks and to reach more distribution channels including Libraries.

Smashwords currently has almost 475,000 ebooks published online. Their [**How To Publish On Smashwords**](https://www.smashwords.com/about/how_to_publish_on_smashwords) information is easy to understand and fill out. By uploading a MS Word document only, Smashwords offers the following seven ebook formats for most Ereaders:

* Epub
* Kindle (Mobi)
* PDF
* Sony Reader (LRF)
* Palm Doc (PDB)
* Plain Text
* Online Reader (HTML)

These formats are available to download to your PC for promotional use, such as offering Free Advanced Reader Copies (ARC), Free Promos, Review Copies and other purposes.

Smashwords is very particular about the Word document submitted for uploading. You must follow their [**Smashwords Style Guide**](https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/52) to the letter or your ebook will not be offered to Premium Catalog distributors. Smashwords could make it easier for MS Word users by allowing the use of standard MS Word Table of Contents tools instead of insisting on using Hyperlinks and Bookmarks to make Table of Contents (TOCs) for each ebook. This requirement alone makes it hard for some writers not familiar with Word formatting rules to publish ebooks on Smashwords and decide to choose another online publisher with more user friendly tools.

Even with this drawback, Smashwords offers many other useful features for Authors, which include the following tools:

* Sales Reporting Tools (Sales and Payment Reports)
* Metadata Management Tools (ISBN Manager, Pricing Manager, Series Manager)
* Marketing & Distribution Tools (Channel Manager, Coupon Manager, Interview Manager, Affiliate Settings)

I find Smashwords Marketing & Distributions tools to be far superior to what Amazon offers. For example, I can choose any of the 16 different Distribution Channels they offer and Opt Out if I wish. These Channels include, Amazon, Apple, Barnes & Noble, iBooks, Kobo, Libraries and others, all with separate Pricing Options.

Speaking of Libraries, Smashwords offers several different ebook checkout systems for libraries. These systems include Library Direct, Baker & Taylor's Axis360, Gardners, OverDrive, Bibliotheca and Odilo. Without these programs, libraries cannot purchase your ebooks and check them out to multiple lenders.

Besides all the Pricing options Smashwords offers its authors, I especially like their Coupon Manager. This allows an author to offer any ebook at a discount, including Free, at any time and make it Public for promotion purposes. Amazon does not offer anything like it. No Price Matching by Amazon is required (so far).

Smashwords Royalties are among the highest of any online publisher for all price levels. Royalties are 60% for Distributor sales, 45% for Library sales and up to 85% for direct sales from the [**Smashwords Store**](https://www.smashwords.com/).

**Barnes & Noble Press (Formerly Nook Press)**

I also recommend [**Barnes & Noble Press**](https://press.barnesandnoble.com/) (formerly Nook Press), which use the Epub format. They also are very easy to use and easy to set up your ebook for publishing. I publish on B&N Press to offer Epub formats for Nook device users. Again, all you need is a MS Word document to upload and use their self-publishing tools.

[**Barnes & Noble Bookstore**](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/) is one of the largest online ebook retailers who also still have brick and mortar book stores in neighborhoods near most customers.

B&N Press Royalties are 40% for ebook prices between $0.99 - $2.98, 65% for prices between $2.99 - $9.99 and 65% for prices between $10.00 - $199.99.

The Epub format is available to download to your PC for promotional use, such as offering Free Advanced Reader Copies (ARC), Free Promos, Review Copies and other purposes. However, the download format does not include the Cover Page, which you need to add on your own.

It is uncertain how long B&N Bookstores will remain in operation or, for that matter, B&N Press online self-publishing. Just for noting purposes, Barnes & Noble is currently Smashwords’ second largest ebook distributor.

**Print On Demand (POD)**

There are many Print On Demand publishing houses for the Indie writer. They provide most of the services beginning writers need to publish paper books and/or ebooks. However, their services can be expensive. When I started in 2001, I used a POD for my first two books. It only cost me around $350 to have the book published for distribution. Now the cost is around $1000 or more to self-publish a book in paper and/or digital formats using a POD house.

The major drawbacks using a POD for publishing your books is the cost for services, the high selling price for paper books, low royalties and contract restrictions. You have very little say in pricing options or distribution rights.

The major advantage to using a POD is they provide good copy editing services in their pricing packages, which is a distinct advantage over self-published writers who edit their own books and miss a lot of typo errors hard to eliminate. I still have problems finding my own typos and other errors. The other major advantage is POD houses provide the different digital ebook formats needed for E-readers and online sellers such as Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Apple iBooks and others. If you are a beginner and afraid to learn the technology involved, POD houses may be a good place to start.

**Other Ebook Topics:**

On my website I provide additional topics for Indi Writers. Go to [**Ebooks**](https://www.donviecelli.com/ebooks.html) to find the following links for:

* Ebook Online Stores
* Ebook Promotion Sites
* Ebook Publishing
* Ebook Resources
* Print On Demand Houses
* ​Promotion and Marketing

The above topics do not list every service or resource available to Indie Writers, but they will help you find what you need to become a successful Indie Author.

**Key Lesson Number 3: Find the Best Pricing Options!**

Pricing your ebooks can be a tricky business. There are all kinds of pricing recommendations from various sources that suggest the best pricing options or strategies for your ebooks. I have tried most of them. You must search for the best pricing option that works for you.

At first, around 2010, ebook prices for a normal length ebook (80,000 to 100,000 words or 266 pages to 333 pages using 300 words per page) would be priced around $5.99 to $7.99 per ebook. Today, the same ebook could be priced from $0.99 to $4.99 at most, or even—Free!

There are numerous reasons for this. One of them is the huge number of new Indie Authors self-publishing ebooks today. Another is the rapid proliferation of traditional publishing houses and bestselling authors introducing past titles in ebook format and flooding the marketplace.

A good source for pricing strategy can be found in Smashwords [**2017 Smashwords Survey**](http://blog.smashwords.com/2017/06/smashwords-survey-2017.html). It found the following most common price points:

* $2.99 was the most common price point for indie authors.
* The top four price points (other than free) that maximized unit sales were (in order) $3.99, $4.99, $.99, and $2.99.
* The top four price points for maximizing earnings were (in order) $4.99, $9.99 and $3.99.
* Possible takeaway: Indies with large readership at $2.99 should try migrating to $3.99 or $4.99

Another good source to download and read is Smashwords [**The Secrets to Ebook Publishing Success**](https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/145431). I follow many of Smashwords recommendations for my pricing strategies.

For relatively unknown Indie Authors such as myself, I have been forced to compete in the marketplace by offering my earliest ebooks at $0.99 each or Free. Offering some of my ebooks for Free has served me well for two reasons. One, I receive more name recognition and two, I receive more Reviews than I would otherwise. Reviews on Amazon are especially important and very hard to get. More on this later.

In today’s market, it is very important for new writers to develop an ebook series, usually 3 or more ebooks in length. Series are necessary to attract and keep new readers. Once an ebook series is available, the author can offer the first book at a lower price and/or free to sell the bundle. I am using this pricing tactic every day now.

The important lesson here is new Indie Authors will have a hard time justifying a higher selling price than $3.99 for an ebook unless it’s a proven seller or new introduction to a popular series.

Using the various pricing options above will complement the most effective promotions recommended in Key Lesson Number 6 below.

**Key Lesson Number 4: Set Up Your Own Website!**

You probably won’t be a successful Indie Author unless you have your own website. My website is called [**Don Viecelli Sci-Fi**](https://www.donviecelli.com/). I started my website when I signed up for the earliest Comcast Internet service around late 1988. They offered individual websites until they decided a few years ago to move the business to independent providers such as [**Weebly.com**](https://www.weebly.com/).

In total, I have had over 7,300 Visitors to my website since the beginning. I now average around 500 Page Views per week and over 200 Unique Visitors per week. A more interesting website would attack more visitors, I’m sure, but I don’t do any direct selling of my ebooks on my website. When I do, I will seek more professional advice.

I use Weebly for all my ebook activities such as listing my ebook online retail channels, posting my latest book reviews, providing ebook resources, listing my favorite writing sites, indentifying interesting Sci-Fi sites, posting Blog updates and much more. It may not be the most professional website, but websites serve a very important function. It allows your future readers to find you, see your books and serve as a platform for advertising your work and/or selling activities.

If you don’t feel you can set up your own website, then by all means find someone who can set one up for you and do it quickly. It doesn’t cost a lot of money and it will pay for itself.

**Key Lesson Number 5: Use Social Media Wisely!**

Every Indie Author must learn how to use social media wisely. Since you don’t have the luxury of a literary agent or a traditional publishing house to prepare your book for publication, handle the legal aspects or provide all the marketing and promotion requirements needed to sell your books, you will have to become very knowledgeable on how to use social media effectively.

I use [**Twitter**](https://twitter.com/DonViecelli)**,** [**Facebook**](https://www.facebook.com/donvSciFi/)**,** [**Goodreads**](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/4410472.Don_Viecelli)**,** [**Linkedin**](https://www.linkedin.com/in/don-viecelli-7330814/) and my [**Website**](https://www.donviecelli.com/)primarily to promote my work. Each has its own strengths, which you must learn by personal trial and error.

**Twitter:**

Twitter had 974 million accounts with 330 million active users in 2017. Some writers use Twitter just to keep in touch with others. I focus on my ebooks and the books of other Team Members I ‘Follow’ with my Tweets. I joined Twitter in December 2016 and built my list of Followers to 1900+ as fast as I could. Twitter is very useful in promoting Free book Giveaways and Special Price offerings without spending any money. I have not found Twitter paid advertisements to be effective for my ebook sales, but then I am on a tight advertising budget and may not have learned how to use them more effectively yet.

**Facebook:**

Facebook had 2 billion active users in 2017, but trying to build a list of Followers is much more difficult for me than on Twitter. I use my Profile Page for family and friends only. I created a Business Page for my ebooks, which I use for promotion and sales purposes. Another great feature is the ability to create separate Facebook Group Pages and follow other FB Groups to spread the word about your ebooks. Again, I have tried paid advertisements on Facebook with little success.

**Goodreads:**

Goodreads had 65 million registered users in 2017. It was purchased by Amazon in 2013. Goodreads is a very useful site to find out what other readers think about your work and other similar titles. Their book reviewers are very tough and spare no punches. Since there are millions of Goodreads members, it can serve as a test market for your ebook.

I joined Goodreads in June 2011. I needed an Internet site to publish my [**Sci-Fi Book Reviews**](https://www.goodreads.com/review/list/5635363). I decided to take a literary agent’s advice after I submitted my first book, ***The Guardians***, in 2002. The agent deemed my book was not commercial enough for a traditional publisher. He said I should read what other authors are writing in my genre. I took his advice literally.

Now, I must confess, even though I loved reading science fiction as a young person, I basically gave it up after my college years and read mostly bestseller fiction from authors such as Nelson DeMille, Ken Follett, John Grisham, Robert Ludlum, James Michener, James Patterson and many others. I still read popular Sci-Fi authors, but only if it was interesting to me.

However, when the bug finally took hold of me in early 2001 and I decided to write my first story, I chose Sci-Fi. Obviously, the genre went through some changes and I had lost touch. To make up for lost time, I started reading Sci-Fi books heavily, wrote book reviews for each one and posted on Goodreads. Since then I have reviewed over 180 Sci-Fi books on Goodreads and have learned what readers are looking for. Now, I constantly read what new Indie Authors are writing and try to incorporate ideas that will benefit my stories.

**Linkedin:**

Linkedin had 467 million members in 2017. I use it more for business relationships than for selling my ebooks. However, the site allows me to promote my ebooks and latest offerings whenever I need too. I post articles I write and new Press Releases on Linkedin, but I do not use the site for any advertisements yet.

**Website:**

I covered my Website above under Key Lesson Number 4. You won’t make much progress becoming a successful Indie Author without one.

**Key Lesson Number 6: Find The Most Effective Promotions!**

Now, for what I really learned about effective ebook promotions!

Most new Indie Writers struggle to be found in this very competitive marketplace. I am no exception. Remember, I told you earlier I started writing Sci-Fi books in 2001 part-time while I was working. I self-published two paperback books in 2002 and 2006, respectively, using a POD house and sold less than 65 books. The Internet was just a dream then and digital books never really took off until around 2010.

So, in 2011 I decided to cancel my POD contracts and self-publish my ebooks on Amazon and Barnes & Noble. I added Smashwords in 2016. Between 2011 and 2017, I have self-published eight new ebooks, one Novella, one Novelette and one Guardian 3 Book Series Bundle. Sales have increased only marginally until 2015. I sold 79 ebooks from 2011 to 2015 and earned around $285. Not much to look at, I know.

From 2016 to the end of 2017, I got my act together. By this time I had enough ebook titles to make a difference and I learned how to use promotions more effectively. I increased my sales to 699 ebooks sold (8.85 times more) and earned around $775 (2.72 times more). Still not a lot, but it’s getting better, faster. My Amazon Author Ranking has improved dramatically the last two years. My best author ranking so far appeared on December 26, 2017 when I reached #981 out of 30,000 Authors for the All Books/Kindle eBooks/Science Fiction and Fantasy category with a top ranking of 3%. Even better, I reached #8,605 out of 400,000 titles for the All Books/Kindle eBooks category on the same date, which ranks at the top 2% of all Authors. Not bad for an Indie Author, I say.

**Free Giveaways:**

How did I accomplish this? By using Free Giveaways to build my email contact list and collect more book reviews on Amazon and Goodreads. I gave away 4755 free ebooks in 2017 using online free bundled services from [**BookFunnel**](https://bookfunnel.com/) and [**Instafreebie**](https://instafreebie.com/).

In spite of what some writers say, giving away some of your ebooks for free help build market awareness more quickly for you and your writing. Don’t underestimate the power of free promotions. Refer to Key Lesson Number 3 on Pricing for additional reasons why this works. The biggest benefit of offering free ebooks is building your email list. On the other hand, very few readers who download free ebooks post reviews, which I find unsupportive of Indie Authors.

**Newsletters:**

The most effective way to increase Indie book sales I have found out is to use Free Giveaways to build Newsletter (NL) email lists. I built my Newsletter contact list from 100 to over 2800 names within 14 months. Nothing I tried previously worked as well as using [**BookFunnel**](https://bookfunnel.com/) service.

I use BookFunnel Free Bundle Giveaway Promos to gather email addresses and contact names for mailing my Newsletters. I send out a Newsletter around two times per month. BookFunnel costs $10 per month to collect email address plus $5 per month to automatically integrate names with [**Mailerlite**](https://www.mailerlite.com/)**,** [**MailChimp**](https://mailchimp.com/) or other email marketing services. I sell 10 ebooks or more depending on the Promo every time I send out a NL. You can also use Newsletter Swaps with other Indie Authors to promote each other’s ebooks since it cost nothing but your time.

**99 Cent Promos:**

Free is great for getting your name out there, but it is not as satisfying as making real sales. I have found that offering 99 Cent Promos to be very effective in selling ebooks. Readers are willing to buy ebooks if the price is right and the ebook is appealing. I sold 171 ebooks over 22 days participating in three different 99 Cent Promos. I plan to run or participate in more of these types of Promos in the future. A free online service to use to solicit participants is available from [**Google Forms**](https://docs.google.com/forms/u/0/). I encourage every Indie Author to participate in these promos. You can find 99 cent promo groups by searching on Facebook.

**Key Lesson Number 7: Join A Writers Group!**

I strongly encourage new Indie Writers to join a Writers Group. It’s not just for the company or because writing can be a lonely activity for many. You will actually learn something from other team members in the group who may have the experience you need to be successful.

I joined a [**BooksGoSocial Authors Team**](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScQL3gC4y74wx66NXYA7Pf5ooP7vOdKQ01rmHe2oblxZVmMrA/viewform?c=0&w=1) I found on a Facebook Group Page in January 2017. It is a free service supported by [**BooksGoSocial**](https://yourbookpromoter.com/), a book promotion company established to help Indie writers succeed and find new readers through book promotion services and training.

My Science Fiction Team calls ourselves, **Writers of SciFi**. We have our own [**Website Page**](https://www.donviecelli.com/writers-of-scifi.html), [**Twitter Page**](https://twitter.com/WritersofScifi) and [**Facebook Group**](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1736187769959110/). Writing groups support each others’ work and can provide valuable experience for becoming a successful Indie Author. Most of us have all gone through what you are going through now and are willing to share our experience and knowledge with you.

Why is joining a Writer’s Group so effective? Because Team Members will help Indie writers get more book reviews on Amazon, Goodreads and other sites that will have a positive impact on your future sales. They will also support your promotion efforts on social media that is so important in today’s competitive marketplace. I had my doubts at first since I prefer doing and learning most things on my own. I know better now and you need to learn this lesson as well.

**Key Lesson Number 8: Keep Writing!**

My last key lesson may be the most important thing you can do as an Indie Author—Keep Writing! Never give up; not even after you receive your first 1 Star Rating. It will hurt, but you will learn a valuable lesson (pun intended). Your book may not be up to reader’s expectations. Maybe it results from copyedit errors, poor story/plot construction, bad dialog, too much tell; not enough show, boring storyline, unprofessional cover page or image; you name it. You goal is not to make these type of errors on your next ebook.

Since you believe in yourself, are passionate about your writing and persistent, you will make the necessary corrections (if not though experience, then from help from your fellow team members) and you will succeed in becoming a successful Indie Author.

Besides, your ebook is digital and not traditionally published. You can make numerous revisions and immediately self-publish a new copy as soon as you want. Once you find that “great story” and it becomes a bestseller, you can afford to let other people help you look good and become a bestselling Indie Author.

**Inspirational Last Words:**

I wrote an early review on [***The Martian***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Martian_(Weir_novel)) by [**Andy Weir**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andy_Weir) in March 2013 after reading it over four days. The writer was a self-published Indie Author like many of us. The author self-published his novel on Amazon at 99 cents and gave away thousands of free copies. His Kindle version sold 35,000 copies in 3 months; more than he gave away for Free. It rose to the top of Amazon’s best-selling Sci-Fi list.

His story was discovered by traditional publishers and quickly withdrawn from the Indie marketplace in 2013.

***The Martian*** was published in print by Crown on February 11, 2014.

The book debuted on the [***New York Times* Best Seller list**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_New_York_Times_Best_Seller_list) on March 2, 2014, in the hardcover fiction category at twelfth position.

It was made into a movie by Ridley Scott was released in October 2015.

Andy Weir received the [**John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_W._Campbell_Award_for_Best_New_Writer) in 2016.

See what happens if you have a very good, well constructed story! Keep Writing. The same thing could happen to you.

That’s all the key lessons I have for now. I will update this article when more key lessons on becoming a successful Indie Author are learned. In the meantime, drop me a line and I will try to answer any questions regarding the Key Lessons Learned in this article.

For reasons why I became a Sci-Fi writer, read my Smashwords [**Author Interview**](https://www.smashwords.com/interview/donviecelli).

**Don Viecelli, Indie Sci-Fi Author.**

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