Robin Quinn: The idea for this panel is actually Sharon’s idea, your wonderful program chair. She wanted to do a panel that would give you tips on book publishing and also answer questions that you have about book publishing, and I added the idea of being a good businessperson to the panel.

So we have two business experts—two publishing experts—and we have a small business expert on the panel. Dan Poynter, on the end there, was a pioneer in independent book publishing, and he is the father of self-publishing.

Beside him is Constance Anderson, who is the director of Pacific Coast Regional, which is a small business development center.

And Carolyn Howard-Johnson. She is the author of the award-winning series How to Do It Frugally.

I’ll tell you more about these speakers right before they speak, but a few words on our format tonight. I’m going to introduce each speaker in detail before they do their presentation, and they’ll be coming back to me between their talks. I may also have some questions for them during and after their presentations, and this will be your turn to ask your questions about book publishing and running a business. And I’ll be selecting people from the audience, so just raise your hand. That’s how we’ll do it.

Our first speaker tonight is Dan Poynter. He is the author of the best-selling book *The Self-Publishing Manual,* among many other titles. He’s been a book publisher since 1969. Dan is an evangelist for books, an ombudsman for authors, an advocate for publishers, and the godfather to thousands of successfully published books.

His seminars have been featured on CNN, his books have been covered by the *Wall Street Journal*, and his story has been told in the *New York Times*. The media come to Dan because he is one of the leading authorities on book publishing.

Dan travels a lot, more than six thousand miles a week, to share, inspire, and empower writers, publishers, and professional speakers through keynotes and seminars. He has turned thousands of people into successful authors. His mission is to see that people do not die with a book inside of them. Please welcome the amazing Dan Poynter.

DP: My name is Dan Poynter, and I approve this message.

I want to start off with some history, talk about the PMA and IBPA. I was there for the very first meeting. Of course I was there for the first meeting of PALA too. I served on the board of the PMA and was vice president. We called it PASCAL originally, that’s the Publishers Association of Southern California, and then we went international, PMA.

I recognized back then that publishers’ associations had a very short life, and that’s because they relied on volunteer help. After a while the volunteers ran out.

I was on the board of COSMEP for a couple of terms—that was the Committee of Small Magazine Editors and Publishers, based in San Francisco, and based on my past experience, I made two suggestions. Number one, we needed at least part-time paid administration, because, as I said, the volunteers don’t last long. Our first part-time help was Jan Nathan, who later went to full-time, and then she hired her whole family.

And secondly, I said, we have to offer our members something to justify the dues. We can’t just say, “Well, we’re going to represent you in Washington” or something. Nobody cares about that. They want to know, how do I move books—what do I do?

You heard Sharon say that this is a very important subject to all of us, and that’s why you’re going to be covering that next month. So, I set up the promotion system starting with the library mailings and some others, and that’s grown over the years to where PMA, now IBPA, is giving a lot back to the members, so it’s easy to justify their subscription model.

I asked, what do our members want? They want to sell more books. That’s marketing. I came up with the name: Publishers Marketing Association. It makes it easy to remember, easy to say. It’s about publishers. It’s about marketing. It’s an association. Pretty simple.

Amazon started about 1995, and back in the late 1990s, just a few years later, I suggested to Jan Nathan that she give Jeff Bezos the Ben Franklin Award. Amazon was just a few years old, but both we, and he, could use the publicity. And of course we’d have a friend for life that way.

Jan said, “Oh, but he’s hurting the independent stores.” I said, “Jan, you run an association. I’m a publisher. Let me tell you something. Independent stores move very few books, and it’s really hard to get them to pay us.

“Amazon moves a lot of books, and they pay us. Where do you think we should put our loyalty? Amazon is our friend; the independent stores are not. Why should we stick up for them? Remember when we said that the chains were evil? ‘Oh, they’re killing the independent stores.’ Remember when we said that the Big Five—or it used to be the Big Six—New York publishers are shutting us out of the industry? ‘We can’t compete with them.’ Amazon let us in. Amazon leveled the playing field.”

So we get down to PMA versus IBPA, marketing versus independent. *Independent* is a protest word. You know what I mean? “We’re not one of them. We’re not one of the Big Five or Six in New York.”

Look, the independent stores are going out of business. They’re always complaining that someone isn’t fair. *Independent* in book publishing means *loser*. Or, at least, it means *old*.

What have the big publishers done for you lately? Anything? No, absolutely not. Has Amazon done something for you lately? Yes, everything. Is it better to spend time complaining or to find new ways to sell books? Do book publishers want to join a protest group or a marketing group? I think that’s pretty simple.

Now, I have some suggestions on how the publishing industry should deal with Amazon. The independent stores: stop complaining and start thinking. Sales tax is not your problem. Your downtown rent is your challenge. When Borders went out of business a couple years ago we found out what they paid for rent over here in California: $32,000 a month. I’m not talking about electricity or hiring people. That was the rent. Now how many books do you have to sell? And how can they compete with another organization that has a warehouse out in the country where the rents are a lot lower?

Your challenge, small bookstores, is delivery time. Amazon delivers right away. I ordered a TV set; it’ll be delivered Friday. I’ve had Amazon deliveries on a Sunday. From the post office. Amazon put the post office to work. Amazon has a larger stock, and it has faster delivery.

So what can a small bookstore do? Compete on delivery time. They can send brochures out to every business and every house in the neighborhood, and then they could buy a bicycle. Is that simple? Yeah, it’s real simple. Everyone is concerned about delivery time, and you can deliver in an hour. Amazon takes overnight. So, you can compete with Amazon, but you gotta start thinking about it and stop protesting.

Smaller publishers: What should we do? We should take advantage of all that Amazon has to offer. There is so much valuable information and so much that they are doing for us. For example: research. A couple years ago I was speaking in Johannesburg, South Africa, and just before I went on, a gentleman walked up to me and said, “Dan, I was in your class in Durban last week, and it was so good, I needed to get more. I drove all night to get here, and thank you for the Amazon idea.” I said, “Which one?”

He said, “Well, I couldn’t decide exactly what to write about and what to cover in my book, and you told me to go to Amazon and look up five or six books as close to mine as possible.

“You said, ‘Look for books and think about who’s buying them. And would that person be a good candidate to buy my book. And you said to read everything on the page, and I did. I read everything, including the reviews. Those reviews were revealing. They were fascinating. I found out what people liked about those books and what they didn’t like. I found out what they wanted from those books, and what they didn’t want. And I know now what to put in my book and what to leave out.”

Amazon is a great resource. It has replaced *Books in Print*, that $1200 collection of books that nobody can lift. And there’s a lot more information. Amazon is the only publisher that promotes books. The big, big publishers don’t do that. The reviews are free. And small publishers should go with the winner, with who pays them.

What about the big five publishers? They are behind the times. They have not changed the way they do business since 1947. They are just hoping that the book business will get better. Well, it’s not going to change back; it’s going to continue to change the way it’s going. And my suggestion to big publishers is, you don’t have a lot of choice—I suggest you buy Amazon stock.

We used to say that fiction was harder to sell than nonfiction, and that used to be true. And so for fiction authors, it was as self-fulfilling prophecy. They would say, “Oh, it’s so hard to promote fiction,” and they would do nothing. And what happened? Fiction didn’t sell.

Well, all the bestsellers on Amazon in e-books? They’re all fiction. So there’s a lot of hope out there for fiction writers, but you have to promote your books. Publishers don’t promote books. Authors have to promote books. So don’t think that some publisher is going to do that for you.

By the way Amazon is everything. They’re a printer, bookstore, publisher, distributor. And I’m everything in my field. I’m a publisher, author, and reader. I read everything. I read a lot of e-books because I travel so much, and I can’t carry a whole bunch of books, but I read on my iPhone. And I go through quite a few books, because I have time in airplanes and time in airports.

And the point is that I’m on both sides of the book. I am amazed at how many publishers and authors are not readers. How can you know what’s going on if you’re not a reader? I’m not going to ask for a show of hands because I don’t want to embarrass you, but many do not buy books or any other product from Amazon. How you can understand the system? How can you understand what Amazon can do for you?

Amazon is an interesting marketing study. I know that standing up for Amazon makes me kind of unpopular in groups like this and in other groups where people are uninformed, where people do not read and do not buy books. In the handout I have a picture of *The* *Everything Store*. I’m not going to ask how many people have read *The Everything Store*, because I’m guessing there’s not one. This is about your business. Amazon’s been around for 20 years, and this tells you what Amazon is doing.

I know many times over the last 20 years we’ve wondered, “Why did they do that?” This book tells you why they did that. I can’t recommend it to you strongly enough.

CHJ: That wouldn’t be by Dan Poynter, would it?

DP: No, Brad Stone.

So, to all you authors and your publishers, Amazon is your friend—so far. Amazon is a publishing fact of life. Nobody is larger. Quit wasting time complaining. Protesting is a waste of your valuable time. Take advantage of what Amazon can do for you, and there are so many things. Stop protesting and think of ways to use the industry to compete. Thank you.

RQ: Our next speaker is Carolyn Howard-Johnson. She’s someone I bump into from time to time in the publishing world, and she’s always a delightful, upbeat presence there. She’s a woman of many accomplishments, so I’ll just highlight some of them here.

I mentioned that she’s the author of the How to Do It Frugally series. These books include the *Frugal Book Promoter* and the *Frugal Editor*. She is also a poet and an author of fiction, including the award-winning novel, *This Is the Place*, and *Blooming Red*, which is a collection of Christmas poetry.

Carolyn has been an instructor for UCLA’s extension writing program since 2003. Please put your hands together for Carolyn Howard-Johnson.

CHJ: Thank you. It’s good to be here tonight. Good to see you all.

I had to laugh at Dan because I’ve always said, “We love to hate Amazon.” And it’s OK to hate Amazon, but you do exactly what Dan says. You don’t ignore it, and you utilize everything that they offer, and they offer a whole lot. In fact, it’s part of one of the five points that I did for you tonight, but I’ll kind of skim over that because he kind of covered it.

Beginning authors tend to think that *marketing* is a dirty word. And unfortunately it’s one of those notions that we don’t get over very easily because it’s been ingrained into us.

You might say that we live in a puritan society where they’ve told us from the time that we were little to be humble. And *humble* doesn’t really work in terms of selling books. So we have to learn to get around that.

We can still have some of those attitudes that we were raised with, but we have to manage those attitudes so that we can also get in front of people and make a point of convincing them—not to *buy* our books, that is not really where we’re coming from—but to *read* our books because they’re going to help them. Even if you’re a fiction writer (I’m not denigrating that at all), they are reading your book for entertainment. If they can’t be entertained they don’t want your book.

And you’re passionate about that. You’re passionate about whatever book you wrote. Marketing is not selling. Marketing is finding your audience. And marketing is, believe it or not, about being passionate about what you sell—really passionate—to the point that what you’re selling is felt by the person that you’re selling it to. That’s the kind of thing that you’re after, and it’s not embarrassing to sell your book if you come at it from that angle. You can feel good about what you’re doing. You can even talk to your pastor about it. They might approve.

So that’s one of the biggest mistakes we make up front and that we carry on through our careers as authors and later as publishers. If I’ve done one thing tonight I want to convince you that that’s not what you want to do.

The next big thing that a lot of people assume is that it’s going to cost them a lot to do marketing. So what do they do? They think, “I’ll let a publisher do that. I’ll go after an agent, and we’ll get a big publisher, and they’ll market my book for me. Not only will I not have to do something I don’t want to do, which is market, but I won’t have to spend any money.”

I came from a background of journalism and 30 years as a retailer and publicist. When I started out in about 2001 with my first novel, I knew that there was something that I didn’t know about marketing books, because book marketing is different from overall marketing. And my lovely aunt died and left me $35,000 dollars. I convinced myself that she would have wanted me to spend my money on the things I didn’t know about marketing to sell this precious book of mine that she’d been hearing about for the last 20 years.

So I took the $35,000 and hired a publicist. A really good publicist. One that was supposed to get me on the *Today Show*. One that was supposed to get me into the *Wall Street Journal*. On and on and on.

And she did not do one thing for me that I have not been able to do for myself since then. And that led me to write the *Frugal Book Promoter*—that along with the thought that when I realized I’d made this horrible error, I went to UCLA, and I said, “I don’t want any authors to experience what I experienced. I don’t want them pouring any amount of money—from $10 to $35,000 like I did—down the drain. So can we do a marketing class in the writing department?”

Now at that time, in about 2001, there were very few writing departments that included a marketing department at the universities. It was almost, again, like marketing was a dirty word. Like marketing wasn’t creative enough. And so I didn’t really expect a positive answer, but because I was brave, and I did it, and I was passionate about what I was selling, they said yes.

And then I had another problem, which was that, although there are a couple of books out there about book marketing, they didn’t cover the basics. They gave some neat ideas, but they didn’t go back to the beginning and teach people how to write a media release, how to do a media kit, how to do a sell sheet.

So I wrote the *Frugal Book Promoter*, and it’s now in its second edition. It’s been selling ever since then like hot cakes. It’s my number one best selling book.

That’s really the story of how I got started in nonfiction, because after all I was a novelist and a poet, and it’s kind of overshadowed my being a novelist and a poet, but it hasn’t taken over. I actually found that is has been useful to transfer one audience to the other.

My most inspirational item that I like to share with people is that you can now be in charge of your writing career. That is not brand new, because we’ve had self-publishing for a while, but that is pretty darn new.

Now, the drawback to that is that a lot of people think that if they’re in charge of their own career they can go willy-nilly any way they want. I agree to a certain extent that rules are there for you to learn, number one, and then break if you’ve got a really good reason for breaking them. But you do need to know them first.

And if you do put out shoddy work, you are affecting all of us. That infects the entire independent community. Everyone is judging us, and we are now really starting to get over the hump where we were fighting book bigotry, as I call it—the idea that just because something is published on a POD press that it’s automatically lesser than something published by Random House.

Of course that isn’t true. But the more shoddy work that is out there, the more it will appear to be true to those that want it to be true.

So that’s why we’re here in this room tonight. We’re all in the right place. But unfortunately there are a lot of people that aren’t here tonight. And that’s where organizations like IBPA come in. I came late to IBPA. I went through some of those earlier ones; they were a little less expensive, and I’m very frugal, but the extra money is worth it.

I want to tell you that the entrenched publishing rules are something that you can get around, but you need to know what they are. IBPA and other organizations like them work if you know how to work them. You read their magazine, and you learn what they’ve got set up to help you. They’ve got all kinds of programs, all kinds of things that you can do through IBPA, not least of which is to use them like your own little publicity bullhorn.

They just hired a new person to edit an online newsletter. You can submit successes that you’ve had with your novel, and send her a picture, and she’ll send that out in an e-mail with a color picture of you, or your book, or you doing something with your book, and that becomes publicity for you among people who read and are interested in books.

There are so many ways that you can use these organizations. Along those lines, Dan mentioned reading. I’m going to give you some of my favorite places to read. Read books. Buy books. Don’t expect other people to buy your book unless you’re willing to buy a couple books yourself. Think of books as gifts. That’s really important to do. Support our industry. It’s even okay if you support the big five publishers, but support the entire publishing industry.

There are all kinds of online reading too. But because the net is what the net is, there’s a lot of unreliable information out there. So it’s up to you to sift through what’s out there and find the experts. Here are some of my favorites, and they’re all free too:

Dan Poynter’s newsletter—he has a marketplace newsletter where you can actually get him to publish information about your book, asking for reviews, and he doesn’t charge you a cent for that. So you go to his site, and you send him the information on that book for the marketplace. You’ll get great quotes, industry news, tips, columns on editing, columns on publishing—really a nice newsletter, published every other week.

Hope C. Clarke’s newsletter—really a great newsletter, and she gives you all kinds of ways to enter contests and get grants, funds.

Joan Stewart—she’s known as the Publicity Hound, and she knows marketing from A to Z. She isn’t an author herself, I don’t believe, but she has taken authors under her wings, probably because she knows we need so much help. And she puts out a newsletter every week and does webinars.

My “Sharing with Writers” newsletter—if you sign up, I send you the e-copy of a little book on homonyms and style choices. By the way, style choices—there are rules that we don’t have to follow. Everyone thinks, oh grammar, let’s get our punctuation rules, our editing rules.

You have wonderful people like Robin who can do that for you, and, yes, you can make that happen, but you must also realize that not all the rules you heard in high school—and even college—are real rules. There are style choices.

So if there’s something that you want to do, research it a little bit. It’s possible that it’s just a style choice. If you watch the newspapers, for example, you will see them use different punctuation rules than books use. The more you know about this the easier it is for Robin to do a good job for you, because if you submit a clean copy to an editor she is going to see more than she would if it’s cluttered with errors.

The last one is Tom Antion’s newsletter—he’s considered the Dan Poynter of the speaking world.

I hope this quick list will make a difference for you, and I hope that you do just keep reading and reading and reading on the web, in books, and remember my motto: one book on marketing is never enough.

RQ: Thank you, Carolyn. I like that idea of looking at marketing from a difference perspective, instead of “how can I get this person to buy my book,” “how can my book help this person and what can I say to show them the value that they’re going to get out of the book. You’re giving them something of value, and therefore you can feel good about it.

We’re going to have a small business expert up next, and her name is Constance Anderson. She’s the one person on this panel that I haven’t known for years. I just met her at dinner tonight. My thinking in inviting her is that most of us can become better business people, smarter business people.

Constance is the director of Pacific Coast Regional. It’s a small business development center serving the greater Los Angeles area. I’ve taken some classes at different SBA-funded or partially funded organizations like a course on MailChimp, and it was excellent, and I think it was free. Many of them are very low cost. They have a class on doing business plans and they do business coaching and consulting. So please welcome Constance Anderson.

CA: Good evening. I’d like to start out my conversation by asking a little bit about who is in the room. My world is a little different from yours. How many of you are publishers? And how many are writers? And how many think you’re actually running a business? And how many of you filed income taxes last year showing you had a profit?

All right, now I have an idea of how to start my conversation with you. What I’d like to do is help all of you with cash flow. And we all know what that is, right? The idea is getting you to the point where you’re actually making money—from selling your books or providing services of publishing and so forth.

So what I’m going to do is tell you a little bit about what I do. Oh, another question, I forgot. So you know what the Small Business Administration (SBA) is right, all of you? But how many of you know what a small business development center is?

The small business development center program is one that the US Small Business Administration partially funds to provide services to help small businesses grow. The idea is to provide economic impact. My role in it is as the director of this particular center is to make sure I help anyone with a business—any business that is legal and not one of those that we can’t work with—to run a sustainable business, one in which you’re generating revenue, one in which you’re also going to eventually get to the point where you have to hire people, and that’s what we refer to as economic impact.

The goal is to take you from where you are today to the next level. We do that with the funding that I get from the SBA and that I raise on my own. I do write grants. So the SBA program and the small business development center that I run requires that I match the funds that I get from the SBA.

That means that I now have a relatively large budget to provide services to individuals such as you to help you understand how to run your business better, how to make more revenue.

One of the ways you can look at it is, how many of you actually think you need cash or funding to support your business? Nobody? Everybody. Or a lot of you. That’s one of the things that we do. Not only do we help in the strategic setting up of your business, we can also help with funding.

So if you’ve been running a business for two or three years and you’re cash flowing, that’s easy for me to do. If you’re running a business and you’re not cash flowing then my job is to work with you to the point that you are cash flowing so that I can take you to the next level.

Funding is sometimes difficult to get but I would like to say, and I often say this, there is a lot of money out there. Tons of money out there. So those stories you hear of people saying “there’s no money out there for small businesses”—there’s lot of money out there for small businesses.

Most people walk into the bank, knock on the door, and say, “I need money to support my business,” without a business plan, without projections, without cash flow, without being able to explain to that lender how you’re going to repay them—because that’s the most important thing to them. With me, I’m hoping that if you’re working with me and you’re looking for funding, I’m going to make sure you can answer all those questions when you do walk in that door—and I’m going to ask you *not* to walk in that door until I feel that you’re sufficiently ready.

So I have people every day who come in our office looking for funding. Pacific Coast Regional is a lender—we’re what is referred to as an alternative lender. But I also work with a bunch of different traditional financial institutions. But those institutions expect me to submit a package to them that is ready for them to file.

I work with you by assigning a consultant or business advisor to you that will help you understand what your business plan needs to look like. I don’t send any loans to a bank or any other financial institution that doesn’t get funded. That’s my reputation.

If you allow me to work with you long enough, we will get to the point where you are getting funding, you’re running a sustainable business, you’re also in a position to hire people.

Some of you might say, “I like being a sole proprietor.” That’s fine. My goal is to take you to the next level.

It could mean that you’re just going to run your business by yourself, and if you continue to do that it means that you’re also limiting yourself. The goal is not to limit yourself unless that’s what you want to do.

The goal is to help you to get to the point where you have to hire people because your business is growing to the point that you need to do that. Or you need to borrow money to take your business to the next level. Maybe it’s buying a piece of equipment. Maybe it’s hiring someone, such as Robin, to edit your books—whatever the case is. That’s a reasonable request for funding.

What’s important to you is that the SBA funds that we use are your tax dollars at work, at least half of it. There are 1,300 of me throughout the country. So for those of you who’ve never heard of an SBDC, I’m very disappointed. But now *all* of you know what an SBDC is.

There are 1,300, and we just finished our annual conference in Dallas where we all come together and make sure that we know what we need to help you run a sustainable business. So your tax dollars are at work, and our whole purpose in business is helping you grow your business.

I live and breathe every day working with businesses. I work with publishers. I work with shirt designers. I work with restaurants, hair designers, weave designers—anything you can possibly think of other than medical marijuana dispensaries. We cannot work with medical dispensaries or liquor stores, and we can’t do anything with adult entertainment. Other than that, we can help you.

Audience member: What about nightclubs?

CA: We do nightclubs, but not adult entertainers.

Is that enough of that? Do you feel prepared that you can ask me questions later? I can continue to talk about what we do.

Audience member: I’m going to find you.

CA: Oh, you’re going to find me? I’m going to make sure you can find me. Pacific Coast Regional is located in Korea Town. But sometimes we actually come to you. My office is 3255 Wilshire Boulevard.

Audience member: Can you talk about the difference between you and SCORE?

CA: Oh, now, I’m very transparent. I don’t like SCORE. Now I could get written up tomorrow by the SBA for making a statement like that.

The difference between SCORE and the small business development center—SCORE is Service Corporation of Retired Executives. That basically means that you get retired people that give their time to helping you. They’re not measured. They’re not monitored. They don’t get any money. These are just strictly volunteers.

My consultants are paid. I pay them per hour for spending time with you helping you grow your business. I get a budget every year from the SBA that says, “Constance, you must provide 3,000 hours of one-one-one, face-to-face consulting to a number of people.” It also says that I must open a number of businesses. It also says that I must create a certain number of jobs. I can’t meet my goals if I don’t take you guys to the next level.

Good enough? Okay, thank you.

RQ: I have a question before we get to the audience questions, for two of our speakers. Carolyn and Dan, I want to know, what are your favorite programs that you think are most beneficial to authors on Amazon?

CHJ: One of the misconceptions people have about Amazon is that to have an e-book published on Amazon they have to give Kindle an exclusive. That is inaccurate. To have Amazon help you with promotion in their Kindle Select program, you have to give them an exclusive, but that Kindle Select program is all free.

RQ: What kind of things do they do for the author?

CHJ: If you’re part of the select program you can arrange to have your book given away for free for five days every 90 days, and then you can promote that using a whole slew of different online e-letters, e-zines, websites, and that jumpstarts your book because there are people out there reviewing it and reading it. It gets word of mouth started.

That was one of their first ones and one of the easiest ones.

RQ: It also raises your ranking on Amazon then and they promote you more.

CHJ: Right. They have something very simple that most people don’t know about called a *wish list*. If you go to one of your fellow member’s websites—maybe they’ve asked you to do a review, and you’re checking to see if you think you’d like to read their book.

You decide that maybe you don’t want to review their book, but maybe you want to do them a favor. You can add their book to your wish list, and that puts your picture, your little icon from your author profile—and the author profile is a wonderful perk that means you’ve got a page of your own on Amazon—up at the top of their book buy page. And it helps algorithms that Amazon has instituted for both their book and your book.

Just something little, all it takes is a click. That book then appears on your profile page.

They have lists—I mention five or six of them in the *Frugal Book Promoter*—and they’re always adding to it.

What’s the brand new one they just added? Kindle Unlimited, where with Kindle Unlimited, if you subscribe to their new program—it’s patterned after one by Scribd—you pay $9.99 a month and you get as many e-books as you want. So it’s a subscription, and you have access to all of Amazon’s Kindle.

Your book can be automatically enrolled in that, and you get paid for this, when they pick out your e-book. They have to read at least 10 percent, but once they’ve read 10 percent it’s just like they’ve bought it. They pay you, and as Dan said, they pay you on time. They pay you what they say they’ll pay you. As long as they read that 10 percent, you’re good to get a check deposited directly to your bank account.

DP: Amazon has a match program—people who bought this book also bought that book over there. So Amazon called me up and said we can take your self-publishing book and match it with all these other self-publishing books, and I said, “Yeah, but mine sells so many books that those other people already match their self-publishing books to mine already, so I don’t have to do that.”

There are things that you can do that are not part of the Amazon programming. You write a review and give it to a friend of yours and say, “Will you post this review?” And that’s one way to get some reviews up there and get some stars up there.

Another thing you can do is you can go and look for other books that are very similar to yours, same readership, and review the book—give it five stars, of course—and say, “If you enjoyed this book, you will enjoy Carolyn’s book as well,” and you name Carolyn’s book. And that puts Carolyn’s book on that other page.

I read a lot of books and read faster than most of these authors can write, so I go and read the reviews. Every so often one will recommend another author, and I’ll go read the reviews. If it sounds pretty good, I’ll buy that author’s first book and read it. And if it’s good, I’ll buy all the rest in a row and read them in order.

Make sure, however, that you match your books with other authors that are similar and have a similar readership. If you have a book on how to raise cows, don’t try to match it with John Grisham, that’s not going to work at all. Make sure you make a good match.

CHJ: I think one of the secrets is to go to your buy page and your profile page and just go through all the links. Look at everything on that page. I bet a lot of you have never looked through your whole buy page on Amazon. Scroll down and look at all the possibilities there.

RQ: Okay, now we’re ready for questions. Who has a burning question?

Audience member: Instead of a question, I have a statement for my wife, Carolyn. That is, “That’s where that $35,000 went. Now I know. Thank you!”

CHJ: And aren’t you glad it wasn’t on boyfriends?

Audience member: I also have a statement, for Dan Poynter. There will be complimentary birthday fudge during the question and answer time.

DP: I’m very proud to be 76 years old today. No, I haven’t retired. I’ve never met an author who retired. Most people who retire don’t like their job. And according to *Forbes* magazine, 86 percent of the population doesn’t like their job, which I would extrapolate to mean that 14 percent of the population are published authors. And all I can say is why would you want to retire? Do you hate writing books?

Audience member: I know that Amazon bought Goodreads, which is one of my favorite sites, but on my profile page, they keep encouraging me to go over and populate Shelfari. I’m wondering if you have any scoop or inside information on, is it going to be Amazon’s Goodreads, formerly Shelfari? Or is it Amazon’s Shelfari, formerly Goodreads? Or what’s going to happen with that?

DP: It won’t be formerly Amazon.

CHJ: I don’t know. I think it’s really anybody’s guess as to what will happen.

Audience member: They have a similar function, but they’re not quite the same.

CHJ: Yes, and they may be testing before they make a decision. You know, doing Shelfari in some places and Goodreads in other, kind of a beta test.

RQ: That makes a lot of sense that they might be testing. I worked for a landscape architecture company at one time, in the marketing department, and it was bought by an architectural company who just bought it for the clients. They completely closed the company that I had worked for and just took everything over that was valuable, and that was the client list.

Audience member: The thing that’s very useful about Goodreads that I’ve found is that I’m actually able to see a kind of demographic of who my fans are. I was able to discover, though I write male-centric comic fiction, I have more female fans than male ones.

RQ: Interesting. They say women are the ones reading all the books.

Audience member: I think they love to see men being foolish.

DP: Women buy 68 percent of all the books.

RQ: That still leaves a decent percentage for the men.

Audience member: If you don’t have a ton of money for self-publishing does it make sense to first get on CreateSpace, and then maybe later on if you have some more money—since I believe CreateSpace has at least one kind of contract that’s nonexclusive—then go get your own ISBN and take your book to a printer and get it published yourself so you can have separate distribution.

RQ: The question is, does it make sense to go through CreateSpace and publish it there and then later publish it on your own and get a printer?

Audience member: My thought is that I’m not going to put up a lot of money up front. Later on, if you do have some more money, you would be able to print it on your own to get more distribution.

CHJ: CreateSpace has a couple of different paths for publishing. I’ve used every different way—combinations, traditionally, every possible different way. The only thing I haven’t done is trying both of CreateSpace’s paths. One path is to completely to do it for yourself, for free. That’s the one I’ve used. I’m frugal.

The downside to that is you either have to hire some help, or you have to take that uphill learning curve we were talking about before so that you don’t publish shoddily.

That means if you don’t hire anything done, you have to edit yourself—no, no, you don’t really want to do that, but you *can*—and I’m an editor too, so I do. Honestly, you’ll find a couple of little booboos in my books. Nobody can edit their own book and not come out with a couple of booboos. I’m not sure any editor can do that for you—am I right?

RQ: I catch everything.

CHJ: Well, Robin catches *everything*. Okay. So you can do that, but you’re going to have to edit it yourself, format it yourself, do the cover. And they do have a website with a wonderful template service to help you do that. They’re not as good as this one, that was done by a fantastic cover designer, where you can see that even the font was done special, or this one. But they do a credible job with their covers. If you experiment with it you can come up with a darn good cover.

There are still going to be a lot of things that you’ll have to learn to do yourself. That takes time, and a lot of first-time authors are in a big hurry. We know that, don’t we?

Or, you can let CreateSpace take care of some of these services. I personally think that they’re way too high priced. So if I had to make the choice, I would take the free path and hire out the specific parts of the publishing to real experts that I picked. By the way, this man’s name is Chaz DeSimone. If you have a book and you want a great cover, he’s fantastic.

And remember, just a graphic artist isn’t going to cut it. We’re not talking just graphic artist. We’re not talking about somebody who can paint pretty pictures. We’re talking about the two together, along with some marketing skills to find yourself a really good book cover artist.

So what I’m saying is, my choice is go the free route, and then use the money that normally you’d use going the other route (with CreateSpace doing the publishing services) and hire individual parts the publishing process yourself.

Does that make sense?

RQ: It’s been my experience with my authors that have gone through CreateSpace that, in the environment we’re in today, there’s not much need to go and get a printer yourself, unless maybe you might be able to go to a local printer and get some copies, perhaps, for a lower price, but you’ve got books at a pretty good price from CreateSpace.

You might want to do what Carolyn said and hire out some of the other services and just go with CreateSpace’s free service, but in most cases you won’t need to get a different printer these days. You used to have to do that in the old days.

CHJ: You can do comparison pricing—she might be right that there might be somebody who can do a book—but this book is a 130 pages, and it cost $2.15 plus shipping. I don’t think you’re going to beat that. And I can order one or I can order 300—or 3,000. It does go up in price if it’s a really big book.

Audience member: I was having a conversation with another author the other day, and he had two different versions of his book, one was CreateSpace for Amazon and one was something else that could be distributed through other channels. He was using another self-publishing service to do that, so he wasn’t printing books, per se, but it is possible to do that.

RQ: That’s true. If you want to get into bookstores, you may want to use—

CHJ: You can still do that with CreateSpace. It doesn’t cost any extra. They have a whole battery of places they will submit your book, like Ingram, Baker and Taylor—no extra charge. When I first started with them it was $29.95; now it’s free. So, I don’t—

RQ: I think the thought might be that if you go through CreateSpace then Ingram doesn’t treat you as well. You have to go directly through them to get the best treatment. Sharon?

SG: My client wanted 500 copies of a book that we did through CreateSpace, and I got him a much better price printing with a short-run printer than with CreateSpace.

Audience member: I always try to compare. I have a couple printers that I use, and I compare the price that they will give me with a certain quantity, and that determines whether I’ll use CreateSpace or the other printers.

Whoever can give me the best price and best quality, that’s who I go with. Nine times out of ten, CreateSpace has been by far the better price for smaller quantities.

DP: As she says, get prices. CreateSpace is a POD, and they tend to be more expensive. I speak all around the world, and about the only time I recommend CreateSpace is to foreign publishers because it gives them access to the US market, and they’re in the side door to Amazon.

It’s a quantity game. The lower you print, the lower the cost. The big printers, the ones that do offset, can do 500 copies, and that’s what I recommend to most people. Think of all the places you’re going to send review copies, promotional copies, and so on. And you’re going to sell some. You’ll go through that 500 pretty quickly. And you’re going to get a much better price on the 500 than you will on the POD per each.

Magazines—there are very few left. Most have downsized or gone out of business. There are very few magazines that you can send review copies to. The newest reviewers are the book bloggers on your subject.

For my *Air Travel Handbook*, I went and did a Google search for book bloggers on commercial air travel, passenger travel (not pilots, flight attendants). I found 124 blogs. These bloggers are focused on air travel. They live, eat, and breathe air travel, and all of their subscribers all over the world do the very same thing. It’s extremely targeted. It’s not like trying to put an ad in the *Times*. This is only going to people who love commercial air travel.

These are the people you want to send your review copies to. So, you want to do a Google search for your subject matter plus *book blogger* and come up with a list and that will help you justify that 500.

Audience member: Where is a good place to go to find a list of printers?

DP: Google. Oh, no, for printers you only want to deal with book printers. There are 24 offset printers and 22 digital printers in the United States. The lists are available on my website.

You only want to deal with book printers. These people run their printing operations 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The glue doesn’t cool down. They know what a book looks like, and if they do a bad job they’re not going to say, “Well, we don’t do books anymore,” because that’s all they do. You’re going to get much better service and quality.

Audience member: One exception that I found on short-run printer versus POD is if you’re going to publish POD, it can be much better to do your advanced review copies, if you’re going to do those, on the short-run press.

Both CreateSpace and Lightning Source, for their control purposes, require an ISBN. It really does bog things down if you’re trying to control your release date. If it has an ISBN, it’s a product. Despite the fact that I yell at the POD people and say, “Do not release this book,” I’ve had advanced reader copies show up on Amazon for sale.

With the short-run press, I order a few hundred. It doesn’t have an ISBN on it, so it doesn’t exist. Then I published on Lightning Source, and it was very clean because the day I pulled the trigger on Lightning Source, the page was up on Amazon within the week, and it was just extremely clean.

DP: I’ve sold books on Amazon, and the next day they showed up as used copies. There weren’t any out there, but there are companies out there that crawl around and suck up the new copies and hope that if they sell them, that they’ll be able to find one somewhere. But just because you see it offered as a used book or a new book doesn’t mean they have them. And they didn’t rip you off.

Audience member: I’m actually talking about the advanced review copy, without the graphic cover, that wasn’t supposed to be available for release.

RQ: I like that idea, also, of the advanced review copies with a local printer before you do your Amazon selling, because then you don’t get that problem with the availability.

Audience member: I have a question about book printers, Dan. Lightning Source recently started a company, IngramSpark. So, is that supposed to be like CreateSpace, only in the Lightning Source family?

CHJ: Exactly. Almost exactly. Another one you might want to look at is bookbaby.com. I haven’t used them, but they have a free path.

RQ: Well, IngramSpark, in the Ingram family, is fighting other services like CreateSpace. For a long time they didn’t want to deal with the smaller people, with a one-book person, but they’d kind of put up with them. So this is a way for them to push into that other area but also provide the services that people are looking for.

Audience member: This one’s on marketing. Once you have the book, when’s the best time to start marketing?

CHJ: Right now. Don’t wait. You can premarket. You can start marketing yourself. You can set up a platform. You can start building your contact list, so that even if you decide to go the traditional route or get an agent you can say to them in your book proposal, “I have a list of 600 local people and 1,000 nationally that I can send out invitations to.” That’s part of a platform.

This shows that you know how to partner with them as a full marketing partner. There are all sorts of things you can start doing now. You can learn how to write a great media release.

Audience member: Can I just add to that? I marketed my bestselling book guide seven months before the book came out.

RQ: And how did you market it?

Audience member: Through social media, through my website, through networking events. I had the cover all ready, showed everyone the cover, and had the outline done. Did a twelve-week blog leading up to the release of the book with little bits and pieces of it. So when the book came out, people were waiting for it.

CHJ: Everybody knows the Twilight series—Stephanie Myers, right? I can’t remember who her publisher is, but it’s a big one. They provided a website for her, and she didn’t like the tack. This was on the cover of the *LA Times*, so I’m not telling any secrets here.

They told a story about how she decided that, because the publisher didn’t do the job that she wanted them to do, they weren’t marketing it to the audience that she felt was best suited to her books, she made her own website and started hitting blogs. She made friends with lots of YA bloggers who reviewed books.

So she talked to them in the comments sections, befriended them, talked a little bit about her books, talked about other books that she thought they would like, and she did this steadily and literally pushed her own book onto the bestseller list. That’s a partnership, and that’s what we’re all after. Even if you think you want to go the traditional route, your publisher very well might need you. And that prepublishing blog for twelve weeks, absolutely. That’s what the big guys tell you to do.

Audience member: I’m also marketing now a sequel that’s not coming out until November 2015.

CHJ: And you’ve already got that audience to market to.

RQ: One way that smaller publishers, self-publishers, got started is the idea of the niche market. We have a smaller market that the big publishers aren’t interested in. They don’t really know how to market to it. These bloggers are one way to get to your market, to your reader, because your readers are already reading their blogs.

CHJ: One of the things I do free for my readers is thenewbookreview.blogspot.com. The submission standards are in the left-hand column.

Once your book is out, you submit it to me, following the submission guidelines exactly, because I’m like Dan. I like things submitted to me in a copy-and-paste form. Isn’t that right, Dan? Because I can’t do it for you free if I’m going to be doing a lot of editing, obviously.

You submit it to me, and I put it up on my blog. It can be a review from somebody else that you have permission to repost, and I can reprint it, but you have to get that permission yourself. Or it can be a synopsis, and we won’t pretend that anyone else did it; we’ll just talk about the book. It can include a bio for you; it can include a bio for the person who did the reviewing.

It can include pretty much anything about the book, and it includes your metadata. Metadata is the kind of stuff that goes on sell sheets.

Those kinds of free things are available through most people, like Dan and me, who write books for authors to help them with their marketing. It’s kind of in our blood; we can’t help it.

By the way, Blogspot is one of Google’s free blog services, and it is *easy*. It’s the one I talk about it in this book.

RQ: So, Carolyn, you’re doing reviews on these books if people send their information to you?

CHJ: They send the review itself. It’s like recycled reviews. That’s why I call it the New Book Review.

RQ: So they send you a review that’s already out—

CHJ: With permission—

RQ: And you post it on your site?

CHJ: Yes.

RQ: I have a question for Constance. What are some of the mistakes you’ve seen people make with their small businesses?

CA: Forming a partnership without knowing the other person. I like to tell people that, if you wouldn’t be married to them, you probably wouldn’t want them as a partner. Another one would probably be running the business without an actual plan.

There are lots of businesses that are successful without a business plan, but at some point, you’re going to need a business plan, especially—

Audience member: Why do we need a business plan?

CA: Especially if you’re looking for money. My lenders that I work with expect me to have a business plan as part of the financial package. They know that, by me submitting a package, that it’s complete to that level, that they’ve got a good package. As I said before, I don’t get any turndowns once we get there. It’s usually a done deal. So we’re submitting really good packages.

Audience member: You do start-up financing too?

CA: Absolutely.

Audience member: Do you have to be in a certain area?

CA: You should be; think about is the convenience of getting there. As I mentioned there are 42 small business development centers in California.

There’s one in Santa Monica, and it hasn’t been announced yet, but it is closing. So, more than likely, a lot of those people are about to come to my center or they’re going to go to Long Beach.

Make it convenient for you. I would love to have all of you, but I know that’s not going to happen. Just feel comfortable and know that you’re working with a team that is really looking out for you and will work for you.

CHJ: Can I just quickly translate her idea of a business plan to what is actually a business plan for authors, and it’s called a book proposal. And you’ve already probably written one if you’ve decided you wanted to go the traditional route first or to get an agent first. You probably already have one of those.

That, in effect, is a kind of business plan, and the people I consult with often come to me with that business plan or book proposal already done. I also have a little booklet that’s available for $6.99 called *The Great First Impression Book Proposal*.

It’s a good thing for everybody to write because it becomes a plan, an actionable marketing plan. It also serves to keep you on track, the same way you would if you were under the thumb of a traditional publisher—you know, chop, chop, chop.

RQ: One of my areas of specialty is spirituality, and there’s a lot of talk about having vision, and as she was talking about a business plan I was thinking, wow, that’s a great idea, to think about where you want to be going, rather than just as the work comes in. Having some goals for that year—I remember working with one publisher that did that. They had specific goals they wanted to reach this year, by what month, that kind of thing.

Audience member: If Carolyn has done audio versions of her books, have you found that to be successful and would you recommend it to other publishers?

CHJ: No, that’s in my book proposal to do.

DP: People often come to me and say, “I’ve sold so many books in print, should I do an audio, and how many can I expect to sell?” It depends upon your audience. For example, if you write a book on sales, and you’re selling this to salespeople, they are stuck in their cars. They tend to be audio people—they don’t read. Okay? You’re going to sell a lot of books to those people.

But most of my readers are authors and publishers—they are readers. They don’t listen to audio. I’ve tried audio. Dead in the water. They just don’t buy audio. So it all depends on who your market is. and be very realistic about who’s out there and who might buy your book.

Audience member: I have a question for Constance, but I also have another question that I’m going to ask first, which is about Amazon.

I’ve been watching what Amazon is doing with Hachette, and I’ve been watching what Amazon is trying to do with maybe the drones and trying to take over. I think they’re trying to squeeze people, and I wonder—I want to look at this realistically, but I also want to look at it ethically and professionally. So, what I’m concerned about and have been paying attention to is how Amazon treats their employees in the warehouses.

So, how does someone like me, and perhaps other people that are full-time authors, reconcile with what Amazon is doing and how they’re taking over and putting out your book and using them?

DP: Amazon does want to take over. Read *The Everything Store*. He started off with books, but right from the beginning he intended to sell everything. You look at what he’s doing and read that book, and you’ll understand—yeah, he’s definitely trying to take over and sell everything. You call it ethics. I call it protest.

CHJ: I call it capitalism.

DP: Capitalism. Yeah. Do whatever you want. I want to sell books, and I’m going to take advantage of everything that Amazon can do for me.

Audience member: Well, I’m not looking at it negatively. I’m just talking about, you know what happens when we have monopolies. You know eventually what happens to them. My only inquiry is, is Amazon the only way to go? Or is it Amazon plus? Or is it just Amazon?

DP: There *is* no other choice now. They are the only dog in the fight. The big publishers are trying things like setting up their own websites. They’re going to sell their own e-books. Who’s going to go there?

Do you have any idea who publishes John Grisham or somebody else? No, you wouldn’t know what site to go to. But, you go to Amazon, he’s there. It’s too late. The big publishers haven’t changed the way of doing business since 1947. They’re still waiting for things to change back. They’re not going to change back.

The big publishers have simply missed the boat. But, hey, they’ve never done anything for me. Well, no, I’ve sold out to a couple of big publishers, but they’ve never done anything for most people. So why do I care if they’re in trouble? Why do I care if they have any problems?

RQ: You know, there are *some* other ways to go. You can look for a smaller publisher who might give you more attention if you go with them because they have fewer authors.

CHJ: But they’ll sell on Amazon too. If they want to make any money they will.

RQ: Right, they’ll sell on Amazon, among other things. Right. But Amazon is the major way to go. The other way is back-of-the-room sales, if you’re planning on doing a lot of presentations. People sell books that way.

CHJ: If you can speak, or if you like to share what it is you told in your book with other people, like we’re doing up here with you today, then that’s definitely something you should try.

RQ: For instance, if you were here for the Judy Carter meeting, that lady knows how to sell books. She was at the book publicists’ meeting a couple months later, and she just had them lining up. People wanted her book, and that’s back-of-the-room sales—or front-of-the-room sales.

Audience member: Google calls me every day and asks me if I want a free advertisement for my business on my website, and I wonder if that’s a good idea.

RQ: They call you every day?

Audience member: Every day, and I just hang up. But I wonder if that’s a good idea, to put my business—I guess you’re supposed to be making at least $5,000 a year to have a business. Is that true?

CHJ: I’m not quite sure what you’re talking about, because Google has two different kinds of ads.

RQ: They want you to buy a Google ad?

Audience member: No, they say for free.

CHJ: I might be wrong, but I think we’re confusing apples with oranges here. I think what they’re talking about is ads that they put on your website, and then you earn—every time somebody clicks an ad on your website for whatever it is they put on there—you earn something called passive income.

So once it’s up there, the only thing you do is make sure it isn’t something that, ethically, you wouldn’t want on your website. They just appear automatically, and then people click on it and go directly to Google and buy something through that little widget that’s on your website.

I don’t how much they pay you, a fraction of a cent, a couple cents, something like that. But it adds up. If you have a really active website that will add up. And then at some point, you will get a deposit or a check or however you choose to sign up for it. You’ll get some money, but you’re not going to get rich that way.

I think that’s what it is. I could be wrong.

Then there’s another kind of an ad where you put an ad on their search engine that *you* pay for. I’ve tried that, just so I know what I’m talking about to folks like you. They’re supposed to be really targeted, but it’s a little bit confusing. It takes a lot of time, you’ve gotta watch it and make sure you’re using the right keywords. It’s kind of a pain in the—but they have worked for some people well.

It’s a little bit like how I said that an organization works if you work it. Google ads that you pay for work if you work it.

Does that make sense? And you have to pay for it.

Audience member: How do you work it?

CHJ: You give them so much money every time they get a click, and you can put a top amount that you’ll pay them—that kind of thing. They do have excellent people who will counsel you through the process and are pretty, not pushy necessarily, but knowledgeable. But those are two different kinds of things, I think, that you’re talking about.

Audience member: They call up and they say that they will put my website on Google for free! And so, I just hung up, because it sounded too good to be true.

CHJ: Next time they call, don’t hang up. Find out what they’re talking about. Maybe they’re giving you a hundred dollar gift certificate toward something, but I doubt they’re putting it on their search engine for free.

Audience member: Don’t you have to make at least $5,000 a year in order to make a business?

RQ: Constance, what do you think of that?

CA: If you make a dollar, then you have a business. One dollar. Okay?

Audience member: The old rule was that you should make a profit every four or five years, for tax purposes.

RQ: For the IRS.

Audience member: I know that for three years I was able to deduct my studio, but the accountant says you have to at least make $5,000 a year in order to have a business.

CA: No.

[Inaudible group discussion.]

Audience member: I just want to say something for people who may not be thinking of it. Any time someone calls you with any wonderful free business opportunity, make sure you look up who they say they are, get the number yourself off the directory, and call in the other direction. You originate the call. Spear fishing is an art right now. They want your information. If they get your information, you lose credit and you lose money. Be cautious.

RQ: Good warning. You never know—I try not to give any information about myself to somebody who calls me that I don’t know. You never know who they are.

CHJ: Even if you do think you know them. It’s the same with e-mail. They can look very official, but don’t give them information.

Audience member: If I may, in fact, there’s an alert right now where someone got in eBay’s actual mainstream and diverted people going to eBay onto a spoof site and collected about a quarter million credit cards, passwords, authorization codes. That was this week.

RQ: That’s scary.

Audience member: And Target? Wasn’t that Christmas time that they—

Audience member: And Home Depot.

DP: Before you do business with anybody in publishing, or you’re having your house painted or your car repaired, always make a Google search for the company name and the plus sign and the word *scam*. Company name plus *fraud*. Company name plus *Better Business Bureau*. Company name plus *rip-off*.

Because if people have had trouble with that company, it’ll appear in print, and then you can read between the lines and make up your own mind, but you can save yourself a whole lot of trouble by making a Google search.

RQ: Okay, we’re out of time. I want to mention that in Dan’s newsletter I learned that there is a book published on Amazon every five minutes, and there are an estimated 3.4 million books on Amazon. According to Penny Sansevieri, I read this in Carolyn’s newsletter, there are 3,500 books published each day. All this computes into keep getting educated about book publishing, and know as much as you can so you can succeed out there.

Audience member: And promote!

RQ: And promote.

Audience member: And another statistic is that the average self-published book sells 125 copies.

RQ: So you want to do better than that, and I feel that you can. Thanks for sharing. Let’s give a hand to our speakers.

SG: Thank you so much for coming. Our speakers have graciously agreed to stay and talk to anyone who would like to for a few minutes. Network with each other. Really appreciate you supporting PALA. Hope you’ll come back and join us next month, October 15. Thank you.

Audience member: And Dan’s birthday celebration is at the back of the room, so please enjoy.