

Agents & Publishers

The Basics

by EA Blevins

Agents

Finding an agent is like trying to convince a rock star to give a free performance. They require *very* good incentives to accept you as a client, and your only bargaining chip is the quality of your work.

Agents choose their own clients. They have the connections, the experience, and the know-how to sell books they're excited about. They'll get you the best deal they can because they only make money when *you* make money.

Agents make money by selling your work to publishers (your contract should give them ~15% commission, but only if they make a sale). Agents should only *ever* charge you for postage and photocopies.

Publishers

Publishers want to know that you can make them money. While an agent can champion you to publishers, in the end, if the publishing world doesn't consider your work marketable, they won't take it.

Publishers (except for Self Publishers, or Vanity Presses) should only ever pay *you*. There is no reputable reason a publisher should ask you for money. You write, they buy it, they publish it, they (hopefully) make money off of sales and publish more of your work. Your goal is to become a cash cow, and their goal is to milk you.

Most publishers do not spend money publicizing new writers, so it's important that new writers are able to publicize and market themselves. Get creative and do your best to boost sales! A rich publisher is a happy publisher.

Beware

Anyone willing to accept your work without reading it, or who seeks you out as a potential client, is a scam artist. Plenty of publishing companies make money off of writers' dreams by offering services that a real publisher would give for free, like book jacket design, editing, or by requiring fees through the entire publishing process. RUN!