

Self-published author aims to make writing pay

By Frank Witsil, Detroit Free Press 12:07 a.m. EST January 18, 2015

More and more people are paying to have their words, illustrations and photographs printed, and then they trying to earn their money back — and turn a profit — by selling the books.



(Photo: Clay Boura)

Clay Boura, a Web developer who spent his youth doodling characters, had long dreamed of becoming a published author.

Now, he is one.

His book, "Leave It To Beamer Presents: Don't Let the the Cat Out of the Bag!" is about a character named Beamer, who learns about idioms. He wrote it, illustrated it and paid to print 1,000 copies.

"When I got the first copy and opened it up, it was just so emotional," the 36-year-old father of three said. "It's something I'm trying to pass on to my kids, too. Not everyone realizes their dreams, and I want to use it as a way of showing them, you put in a lot of hard work and follow those dreams you can make them a reality someday."

But the suburban-Detroit resident also has the challenge of recouping his investment by selling the books, priced at \$14.95 each.

Like Boura, more and more people are paying to have their words, illustrations and photographs printed, and then trying to at least make their money back. It's a trend industry watchers expect to continue as self-publishing increases.

In 2013, the number of self-published titles increased 16.5% to 458,564, according to Publishers Weekly.

We talked to Boura about fulfilling his dream and his desire to make a living as an author.

QUESTION: Why did you write the book?

ANSWER: As I started having kids and read bedtime stories, I'd see how excited they got. I realized that's what I wanted to do. I've also always had a fascination with the English language and all the silly rules and phrases. And, a few years ago, my son, Cameron, made me think about how kids are so literal. My wife and I would say things like, "It's raining cats and dogs outside," and he'd look at us like, "What in the world do you mean by that?"

Q: How did you get this deal and how does it work?

A: What I found was there was no one set way of doing it. I thought, you follow these five steps and you become a published author. Well, as I talked to people, every one did it their own way. And then, one night I was watching the news and there was a 12-year-old girl who published a book. I turned to my wife and said, "This 12-year-old girl can get published and I can't get published. What the heck?" I started doing more research and I found that you could go to some place and pay to have your book published. I found a place, called and it turned out to be a good fit for me.

Q: So in addition to being a published author and illustrator, you're also now an entrepreneur. You have to hustle to get the copies sold just to earn what you've put into it, right?

A: Correct. If I went through a big publishing house, they'd do most of the marketing. But, I'm doing pretty much all of it myself.

Q: How much can you earn from this?

A: My initial investment was \$3,500. If I sell them all, I can maybe get double that amount.

Q: So at best, you will earn \$3,500 for all your work? This isn't a path to getting rich quick. Is it?

A: Well, this book is going to be the first in a series. I have the second book written, and ideas for probably a dozen others. So if it does become successful, maybe one of the big places like a Random House or Scholastic notices and gives me a better deal. But, I'd like to make this my full-time job and career. I know I have a long road ahead, but I'm willing to do it.

Contact Frank Witsil: 313-222-5022 or fwitsil@freepress.com

Clay Boura

Title: Author, illustrator

Age: 36

Hobby: Writing, drawing, video games

Family: Wife, Sheri; children, Cameron, 9; Chloe, 5; Autumn, 2

Education: Attended College for Creative Studies, International Academy of Design & Technology

Car he drives: 2003 Mustang GT

5 self-publishing tips

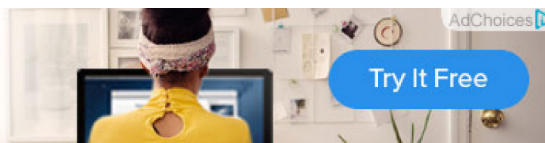
- **Have a clear purpose.** Know why you are publishing a book, your goals and expectations for it.
- **Be patient.** Take time to avoid, and correct mistakes; and, if necessary, hire experts to help you.
- **Start small.** You don't want to invest in too many books, then discover mistakes and problems later.
- **Focus on the reader.** Remember that you want people to use your book, and that's who you are doing it for.
- **Write every day.** It will sharpen your skills and keep you on track so you don't procrastinate.

Source: Publishers Weekly

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