



How To Start Your Own Highly Profitable Desktop Publishing Business

By Floyd Fontz

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Introduction

Hi, my name is Floyd Fontz, and these days I find it hard to visualize any better way of working than in my own home and in my own business. Most of all; I believe I enjoy the flexibility, the incredible mixture of assignments, the interesting variety of people I meet, and quite naturally the income. As you might imagine it was not always that way.

My income now is much higher than if I had stayed in the corporate business world, as mostly I can control what I make by adjusting the hours that I work and the effort I donate to each client.

Or, I can choose to relax every once in a while with my wife and children. Thankfully, that choice is now mine! In your own business *you* make the decisions and *you* put up with the consequences!

That is, within reason; you decide what to charge; whether you want to take on a project; and of course what equipment to buy, while, you suffer no red tape, no approval process, no fixed guidelines except those you agree to.

Not all is rosy, of course, there are downsides as in any venture. Such as;

In the beginning, there's naturally the worry you won't be able to find enough work to yourself keep busy; and when things do take off, there's the stress of being busy all the time. Also, there's no one but you to *bite the bullet* and accept responsibility when things go askew, or to do the less enjoyable, yet demanding tasks.

For some, desktop publishing seemed to be a natural progression from the conventional graphic arts industry of typesetting and paste-up. And, boy do I remember those days, trying to line up graphics with a "*T square*," what a pain, and you know where!

For some, learning how to do desktop publishing became a necessity, while for others like me, desktop publishing seemed like an exciting career enhancement.

This book is written for publishers, designers, writers, marketing specialists, and those interested in learning the business of desktop publishing.

So, if you are planning to start a freelance business in a related field such as writing, designing, Web page design, photography, marketing, or multimedia, this book will cover these related vocations.

This writing will offer practical advice on how to start your business, from recording your business name to producing artwork creatively, as well as, invoicing and collecting your fees.

Working your own business demands self-motivation, perseverance, and an ability to manage time. Developing a successful desktop publishing business will also require you to have a good sense of design, computer software knowledge, a grasp of the printing industry, or, have a strong desire to develop these traits.

So, if you enjoy challenges and doing diverse projects daily, a desktop publishing business may be just the answer for you.

Be aware, desktop publishing compels you to become a great designer. While, today's computer technology makes it easier to produce superior artwork and easily make changes, you must know how to typeset properly, recognize typefaces, cultivate good design skills, proofread, operate a scanner, you get the idea.

If you are thinking of starting your own desktop publishing business, ask yourself:

- Do I really want to start a business?
- Am I prepared to make sacrifices?
- Do I have, or am I willing to learn, the knowledge and flair needed to produce good quality artwork?

Back in the early 1980s, when I began my business, desktop publishing was a term known only to few and *accomplished* by even fewer. Today's technology has entirely altered the way we produce printed pages.

Desktop publishing has spawned a livelihood for over 300,000 professional desktop designers in this country alone, and frankly affected probably three times that many in some aspect of their work.

Today, desktop publishing has become a fundamental part of document production for businesses of all kinds, and is in daily use by employed and self-employed print designers the world over.

Remember, what you will bring to your business are your; skills, knowledge and above all, *desire to succeed*.

Being a desktop publisher will put you in touch with many kinds of people. It requires you be a creative thinker, problem solver, and an all around indispensable person.

To say the least, this business has been good to me and my family. As an independent businessman, I've made a good living by helping people enhance their business, and you can as well.

Remember, as in any business venture, you must think and plan carefully. The values you need when running a successful desktop publishing business are the very same as those needed for operating any other business endeavor: *good judgment* and a *willingness to work hard*.

You can reach all your goals, if you; stay creative, keep learning, and above all believe in yourself, for if you display belief in yourself, others will, also.

The best of good fortune;

Floyd Fontz

Desktop Publishing

I was around way back in early 1980's , and it used to be that designing and printing even simple documents, such as newsletters, invitations, or flyers, was a major undertaking that most likely involved a typewriter, glue (for pasting in graphics), scissors, and a photocopier.

The creation of more complex documents such as; magazines or flamboyant marketing materials, was even more difficult and required the services of professional typesetters and printers. This was expensive and time-consuming because several people needed to be involved in taking the project from design to layout and finally to printing.

That all changed in the mid-1980s with the advent of desktop publishing. Desktop publishing, or DTP, is the process of using a computer to combine text and graphics into professional-quality printed documents. It altered the printing industry by giving anyone with an idea they wished to communicate in print the needed tools to do so efficiently and cheaply.

To more define it, desktop publishing, or "*DTP*," is a coined term for an arrangement of hardware and software that allows the user to manipulate, accumulate, and control all phases of a single document or a publication. This is; the type, photographs, illustrations, graphs, colors, etc., and do so *electronically*, instead of by hand.

For the majority of people in our business, the term *desktop publishing* refers to *all* of the aspects that are needed to produce a camera, or Web-ready document. Including, graphics, word processing, etc..

The expression "desktop publishing" was created by Paul Brainerd, the founder of Aldus Corporation, a software company that developed *PageMaker*, the first page-layout software for the personal computer.

PageMaker was introduced in 1985, a year after the Apple Macintosh computer had appeared on the scene with its point-and-click graphical user interface, its "*WYSIWYG*" (what you see is what you get) use of type and graphics, and its somewhat friendly approach to personal computing.

Correspondingly, vital to desktop publishing was the evolution of the *PostScript* printing language by Adobe Corporation and the desktop laser printer, also by Apple Computer.

The ease of access to these products signified the beginning of a revolution in the publishing world and the creation of an entirely new industry.

The capabilities of the early computers and software seems almost laughable, today. In fact, the early "**Macs**" had just 128 kilobytes of RAM, about an eighth of a megabyte! At the moment, and we've only begun, desktop publishing systems classically have anywhere from 128 *megabytes* to 4 *gigabytes*!

At that time, typesetters and graphic designers made fun of the potential of these new systems and had doubts about their ability to produce professional-quality type and graphics. Today, of course, traditional typesetters have vanished into history.

Who Employs DTP

Today, desktop publishing is a technology used by companies of all sizes large and small, as well as, by self-employed individuals, and by some businesses as their main line of work. In fact, it can be useful to *any and every* individual and type of business!

Due to the reality that, desktop publishing is becoming ever more user-friendly, and greater numbers of people are becoming familiar with DTP expressions and it's potential, this has created more and more '*professionals*' in our field.

These professionals are the most knowledgeable and expert in at least some area of desktop publishing and utilize that technology as a primary element in their work.

These professionals work in a variety of settings, including:

- Magazine, newspaper, or other publishing enterprises.
- In a graphics design firm.
- Word processing and secretarial services.
- A design department in a small graphics firm like a real estate office, marketing company, advertising agency, etc..
- A publishing center of a large corporation.
- A print shop that provides its own typesetting and does desktop publishing for customers.
- A home or office-based desktop publisher and designer business.

Numerous, desktop publishers come from the fields of either graphic design or word processing, and already have the needed skills in desktop publishing, while others start with no more than a aptitude for computers, a good eye for design, and a burning desire to own their own business.

After all is said and done, a desktop *publisher* is simply a person who uses a computer to produce artwork that can be printed, and desktop *publishing* is a method of publishing that artwork from the top of your desk.

Personal computers can be manipulated to produce publications, such as;

- Newspapers, bulletins and journals.
- Magazines and newsletters.
- Sales literature and promotional materials, brochures, booklets, etc..
- As well as, flyers, coupons and direct mail materials.

- Business materials, like;
Purchase orders, invoices, contracts.
- Letterheads, envelopes, business cards, various manuals.
- And so on.

Additionally, desktop publishers can be called on to produce other materials which are not really desktop publishing but may be created on a computer. These include:

- Packaging.
- Interior and exterior signage.
- Electronic presentations.
- Web page design.
- Video editing
- Animation
- Multimedia presentations.

Anyone can do desktop publishing, yet in truth how many people can meet promised deadlines, fully satisfy their clients, and make money?

On Your Own

It was not really long ago that organizations hired outside help mainly to employ ideas that they dreamed up. However, today inexpensive computers and easy-to-use software allow companies to do much of the production work themselves.

For example, newsletter editors used to write the stories, and then hire outside companies to *typeset and paste-up* their newsletter. Now, editors can write and construct the entire newsletter themselves and on a their computer.

On the other hand, the talent and skills may not exist within the organization for creating projects that require special expertise, such as those related to; corporate identity, color publications, illustrations, Web design, presentations, multimedia, etc..

The good news is, that today while the amount of *high-level work* that is contracted out *has actually increased*, in the intervening time *low-end creativity* has *virtually vanished*. That is, the middle sector, *overflow work*, is declining, while high-end special assignments are booming.

To discover the key to your own *successful* desktop publishing business, you need to place your focus on an area that cannot be performed easily by a company's internal staff. *In other words, develop a niche market for yourself.*

Working For Yourself

A "*freelancer*," is one who is self-employed. The term is meant to refer to anyone who works for himself or herself, and *successful self-employment* is brought about determining your distinctiveness and letting the right people know about it.

A desktop publisher, can perform their services in a variety of ways. As a freelancer, you may work in other people's offices and be paid hourly, daily, or per job. Then again, you might also choose to be a *temp*, working out of temporary personnel agency.

Also, you could work a special deal for office space in exchange for services. With a sharing agreement, you could share an office with another desktop publisher in a time-sharing arrangement.

Home-Based

Working out of your home can be very attractive for a mixture of personal reasons. Real life issues like; coping with busy family routines, raising children, and being there for the family on a regular basis can all be a lot simpler if you are working at home.

Some real benefits are:

- Your clients can be handled by phone, fax, E-mail, or courier, along with necessary visits to your client's office.
- Working by yourself away from a stressful office atmosphere, can be very helpful to your creative work.
- Opportunities for networking are easily available through professional associations, the Internet, and other organizations.
- Today's growing acceptance of home businesses and telecommuting options has created a favorable and professional attitude toward a home-based DTP service.
- Savings on rent and other financial considerations, along with time spent going to and from an outside office.

Some Home-Based Pitfalls

It's only natural, in addition to advantages there are *real* and *perceived* disadvantages in working a desktop publishing business from home:

- You may find it difficult, if not impossible at times, to get away from your work and subsequently family life could suffer.
- You may be inundated by babies crying, dogs barking, televisions earsplitting, along with a myriad of normal family occurrences.
- The family may become resentful of ringing telephones, incoming faxes, and the business distractions. Gaining the support of your family members will be crucial if not critical to your success.

On the other hand, the advantages your home business has to offer and making the most of your flexibility and independence can go a long way toward making light of any possible disadvantages.

Know Thyself - Assess Your Abilities

Your desktop publishing proficiency may well be the basis of your desire to start your own business, and where that is the case, you are already aware of the various skills needed to be an *expert* in this field: Such as:

- Complete mastery of page layout and graphics software programs. The most common used are; Adobe PageMaker, QuarkXPress, or Adobe InDesign, possibly Microsoft Publisher, plus Adobe Illustrator, Macromedia FreeHand, Adobe Photoshop, or other drawing/image editing programs.

Also, maybe a Web design program such as Microsoft FrontPage or the newer Microsoft Office SharePoint Designer or Macromedia's Dreamweaver.

In either event, you'll need to know your chosen programs backward, forward, as well as inside out. As well you will also need to know how other document program and how to achieve a variety of outputs from your file. The entire electronic publishing industry is something you should be familiar with.

- Also, you'll need computer expertise in related areas, like scanning graphics; ability to define details such as bleeds, trapping, and color separations; and assembling needed elements from a variety of computer-generated sources. In other words, the skill to complete complex projects and get the most from your investment in hardware and software.
- The there's your graphic design abilities. Since desktop publishing most often involves a combination of type and graphics, the desktop publisher needs to be a desktop designer as well.

You'll find creating original art, whether on the computer or manually, is a unique service you can offer to your clients.

- Your knowledge of Web publishing. It's one thing to design a great-looking print publication, but a different challenge altogether to put such a publication on the Web.

However, where you know how to convert conventional graphics to Web designs, have a firm awareness of Web color variations, you'll be able to help clients make a positive impression on-line.

- A familiarity with printing operations. That is, basically knowing how your original is going to be reproduced is of vital importance from the very beginning.

You need to have an understanding of the printing process to be used and the ability to adapt your work so that it conforms to the printer's requirements. Your design will need to be in line with your client's budget and the print shop's *limitations*.

- Typography and typesetting skills. You will need a detailed understanding of fonts, leading, kerning, and tracking.

You'll need to be a *pro* at tab setting and a master of organizing text so that it is clear, logical, and eye-catching. Mastering the text handling features of your page-layout program will be an indispensable task.

- Editorial skills. Key assets to the desktop publishing business include, a keen eye for spelling errors-along with knowledge of grammar, incorrect language and improper word usage.
- Typing and word processing. Know that materials for your use in desktop published documents may show up at your office or home in a variety of ways: typed or word processed, on disk, emailed in any number of file formats, on cassette tape. It maybe legibly handwritten, or even scribbled on scraps of paper. Your job consists of getting that text into the desktop published piece.

Management Skills

Along with the above attributes you'll need to review your talents essential to actually operating a business, which we will discuss later on in full, such as:

- Scheduling.
- Record-keeping necessities which may include setting up tax and payroll forms, billing and invoicing, writing checks, keeping track of accounts receivable, and recording expenses, as well as discovering your business's hopeful profitability.
- Marketing and selling. These abilities are quite naturally of prime importance!
- Sustaining client relationships. by responding quickly to their complaints and problems.
- Allocating resources and purchasing.
- Managing computer operations.
- Keeping current with DTP advances.
- And, juggling skills. Such as; managing multiple projects at the same time, remembering supplies, etc..

Even though the skills cited above are necessary for the undertaking of your desktop publishing business, it is important to note that it is not essential that you enjoy *each and everyone* of these yourself.

It's not realistic to expect anyone to be *equally* experienced in all the above areas, for what will make your business stand out from others will be *your* unique personality and blend of abilities. At the same time, it's a good idea to learn just where you are likely to need support.

As soon as you have reviewed your individual strengths and weaknesses, you can work out a plan to acquire the other necessary skills.

Remember, your business will be very much a *reflection of you*, as most likely you will be starting your business with certain skills that are individual to desktop publishing. Your personal strengths should be the underpinning for your business.

Continue To Improve And Develop

Persist in your efforts to increase your skills in areas you feel you are weak for it will pay dividends in a greater talent to meet your clients' needs. Your skill enhancement will also allow you to decrease your need for outside experts and expand your business into new and potentially very rewarding areas.

There are countless resources for increasing skills in your desired field, such as:

- Both credit and noncredit courses offered by many local colleges, together with community colleges.
- Professional associations, which offer training courses in *DTP* at both beginner and advanced levels.
- General business organizations such as the *chamber of commerce* or your city's business association.
- There's the 'Small Business Administration' (SBA). This government-sponsored organization provides free business assistance in a wide variety of ways, including training. So regularly attend local professional association conferences.
- Networking groups. These are an excellent source of individualized assistance as well as information. Becoming involved in a networking group may present great opportunities for increased learning.
- Periodicals and books. Rest assured that someone, somewhere, has written a book on whatever it is that you need to know! Check out your local library it is an excellent resource for all kinds of books and periodicals.
- Seminars and conferences cover many subjects and are accessible throughout the year in most major cities.
- The Internet, this is an information source that is unparalleled expanding.

And, don't forget other professionals in your field, including your competitors, take it from me, *you really can teach an old dog new tricks.*



Thanks for reading these brief few pages, of one of the most successful and original career course manuals available on building your own home-based **Desktop Publishing business**. Learning from an established professional is the best way to starting your own profitable home business.

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Whatever, your decision may I talk this opportunity to wish you the best of good fortune, and remember, don't leave your future to *the whim of others*.

Your friend;

Joe Myna