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NEXT STEP

How to get published as an author

Every writer dreams of having a paperback book of their own sitting on the shelves of bookstores, and snugly fitting into the readers' palms. The route to turning this dream into reality, however, is a rather bumpy one.

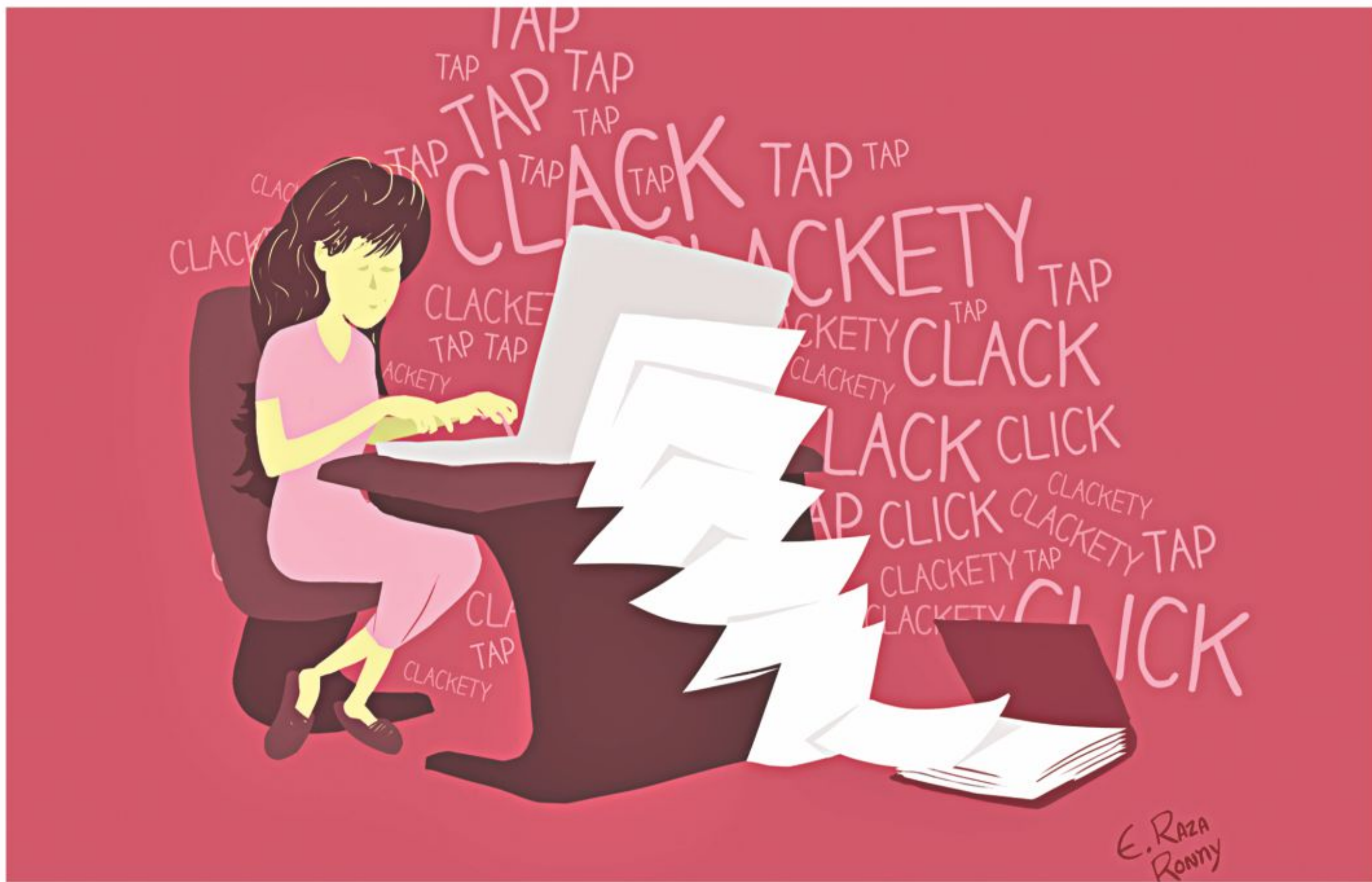


ILLUSTRATION: EHSANUR RAZA RONNY

Zahid Hussain, writer of the thriller Iswarer Mukhos gives his two cents on the profession — "Writing is not an easy job. One must solely be driven by the passion for the craft if he wants to succeed. You have to convince publishers that your book is good enough. Then you need to convince readers that your book is worth reading. Often the monetary rewards are far too modest, but if this is your dream, keep at it. Big breaks are rare but they aren't impossible."

If you are trying to establish yourself as a published author, the first thing that should do is research. Make sure your fiction idea is original, and published books in the genre do not have similar storylines. In case of non-fiction, make sure you get enough references to back your idea up.

Once you start writing the book, you'll find that it's quite a laborious process. You have to spend many days brainstorming, planning, writing, and then editing your work. Go back and review your earlier chapters every few days. Type it on a computer so that you have a neat manuscript. But when you're proofing, it helps to get print-outs.

What does a publisher do?

Publishers aren't there to just print the book; they edit the manuscript, design the cover, and compose the write-ups. They also handle the promotional activities and distribution. What you must remember is

that their main goal is to make money, and you might not have full creative freedom when publishing through this channel. But If you're just starting out in this industry, it help to have an experienced publishing company at your side, as they'll make sure that everything goes smoothly.

How does it work?

Your book is only as good as the first chapter. Publishers get tonnes of manuscripts daily, and they only read the first few pages. They look for original ideas in popular genres, but usually steer clear of controversial topics. Publishing houses also prefer authors who already have an established fan-base or authors who plan on further publications with the company.

"If we like the manuscript, we arrange a meeting with the writer. We provide feedback on their work and discuss some important details such as the number of copies we plan on publishing, and the amount of royalties. We usually give 8% to 15% as royalty," said Dipankar Das, proprietor of Batighar Prokashoni.

Editing

Editors bring the content, quality, and length to a standardised format. Fictions undergo heavy editing by the copy editors, who work closely with the writer to refine the manuscript. Experts are called to ensure that facts coincide with the storyline in historical fictions. For non-fiction, every

single statement is cross-checked with the provided references.

Cover design

This is a crucial step because potential readers will judge the book by its cover. Go through the works of short-listed artists before selecting someone. Publishing houses often employ graphic designers who will do the work for you. Make sure the designer understands the content and audience of the book. Of course, you (or the publisher) can suggest changes.

Marketing and Distribution

Publishers use social media ads, blog posts and reviews on newspapers to promote the book. Bigger companies such as Prothoma and Onnoprokash carry out over-the-line campaigns. Rokomari plays a huge part in establishing fan-bases for new authors with heavy marketing throughout the country.

Publishing houses have distribution channels countrywide. They partner with businesses, bookshops, educational institutes and online book stores. With fiction, it's a make or break kind of deal. You either hit the bestsellers in a few days or you barely sell any copies. Non-fiction books typically aren't instant hits and sell more slowly due to the target audience being students, researchers, and experts.

"We still have a massive gap between the readers and writers regarding promotions. Unlike Western countries, book

signings and other platforms where the readers can interact with the writer is rare. This makes it even more difficult for struggling writers to create fan-bases as they are unaware of what the readers actually want," explained Kingkor Ehsan, author of the book Swarnabhumi.

Self-publishing

Alternatively, you could consider self-publishing, where you'd have to do everything on your own. You can hire a professional editor to help you out or you could rely on your group of trusted friends.

However, if you are part of a writer's community, put that to good use and ask them for advice. Invest heavily on the cover design since that's what makes the sales. In this age of social media, marketing the book through online channels and sponsored posts is easy. Self-publishing takes a lot of effort, but it has high rewards. You won't have to share the profit with anyone, or give up the rights to the final product.

Getting a book published won't be a breeze, but I promise that when you finally get it done, it will be the happiest moment of your life. You can get more information on local publication houses on www.publishers.com.bd.

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THE BOSSMAN

BY E. RAZA RONNY



SUBSTITUTES FOR MONEY

This year we started a brand new digital agency that aims to collaboratively actualise performance based architectures. But the times are difficult. Despite digital marketing being an absolutely new, groundbreaking idea, we have no money. So we will pay you in the following things:

1. Exposure

A budding creative cannot survive without some exposure. After all, your designs and articles are worthless without the likes.

2. Networks

Your work isn't worth any money right now, and they never will be, unless you make the right connections. We have long-term goals, so the connections you make here will help you earn money in the long run, when we will all be dead.

3. Happiness

My grandmother always told me that money doesn't buy happiness. So we will pay you directly in happiness, in the form of free instant coffee. No one needs money when they're happy!



Get recognised:

Sayeeef says, "Focusing on what you have to offer to which audience is very important, because then you can find your own crowd who genuinely likes your style. This will give you more artistic freedom, unlike doing commissioned portraits that you can't really put your own flavour into." You have to keep coming up with new projects so that people have a variety of artworks they can scroll through and be interested in. Drawing and posting your artwork every day on social media will definitely help promote your work, as the algorithm encourages daily posts. Rhythom adds, "Apart from

Complete Inktober, earn money

Inktober is the annual 30-day art challenge that everyone looks forward to – when every news feed becomes adorned with mind-boggling artwork. This platform gives artists the unique opportunity to not only get recognised but also gain commissions from their artwork. The talented Sayeeef Mahmud popularly known as "Inksmith" on social media, and Rafiuzzaman Rhythom who runs the ever popular page "Rhythom" shares their input on how you should approach monetisation.

Inktober, pick any month to show off and experiment with your skills. It doesn't have to be 31 days per se; you can pick small projects like 10 days of watercolour, or 20 days of caricature drawing. This series process helps an artist to upgrade their skills and creates an audience."

Go with the trend:

Following a popular trend helps a great deal and saves an artist the trouble of ripping hair out if they can't find inspiration. If your audience has something to relate to, they are more engaged to your page and look forward to what you're coming up with next. "I completed the Inktober series drawing fan arts from Game of thrones and it helped me gain an audience, thanks to the show's popularity," says Rhythom.

Use different platforms:

"Once you master your own style, you should open a portfolio in Artstation, as you will get professional work from all over the world there," advises Sayeeef. Apart from that you can also try out sites such as DeviantArt, Conceptart.org, Behance, and CGSociety. These sites will help you create portfolios and interact with others in the profession who will provide constructive criticism. Don't forget to regularly post on Facebook and Instagram as well.

Merchandise:

Create some bling showcasing your artwork. You can collaborate with different t-shirt and stationary pages online and feature your items at different exhibitions, such as Made in Bangladesh's seasonal meet-ups. If you're planning to go solo and sell from your own page, find a reliable source that makes t-shirts, mugs, and art prints. Nilkhet has tonnes of shops that provide these services. Art prints of Sayeeef's Inktober drawings were a big hit at this year's Milkshake Collective exhibit (pictured left).

Get connected, take inspiration:

Sayeeef says, "When you are friends with other artists you are talking about art half the time, that makes your brain constantly think of new ideas. You can get information on different tools and techniques that you've wanted to exper-

iment with from this community. You have a better chance in getting a shot at exhibiting your work in collaboration with other artists than doing solo exhibitions. You grow faster and better when you grow with others." AKANTIS, Cartoon People, and The Milkshake Collective are great communities to collaborate with.

NAZIFA RAIDAH

Narifa Raidah is an HSC candidate from Viqarunnisa Noon College.



THE LONG NIGHT IS COMING
AND THE DEAD COME WITH IT