

Why you shouldn't just sell on Amazon or B&N

By Ashley Kimler

When making wise decisions, you first need to know the facts. While many self-published authors take the easy road, selling solely on Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and or through retailers who have deals worked out with their printer, this isn't always the best decision.

If you look at commerce as a whole, **those who sell on multiple channels have 91% greater customer retention** than those with a single platform for processing orders. The more sales channels you open, the higher your odds of building a solid fanbase.

But, you can't just offer your book on a million different websites without a robust sales "platform." You need a plan that **automates and integrates multiple fulfilment channels** and makes it easy to keep track of your inventory, orders, and delivery. It shouldn't matter where your orders come from. Here is some advice to streamline your operations.

Do you need an author/ book website?

Some writers have a book or author website, and some do not. But, especially if you're self-published, you need to build a business around your book if you want to be successful – a website is a powerful tool for making this reality.

A book or author website delivers the following perks:

- Sell books and ebooks, cutting out the middleman.
- When selling on or offline, use your website dashboard to fulfil orders.
- Integrate your other sales platforms for a unified view of your sales and inventory.
- Host an author blog for content marketing.
- Connect your social media accounts for fans to interact.
- Run unrestricted promotions.
- Cross-promote with other authors and publications.

Without a website, your creative control is limited. To streamline sales across multiple channels, creative control is necessary.

Integrate your software platforms for a unified view of order fulfilment

Once you've decided to sell your books on a website, opening new sales avenues, you need to integrate your software for easy access to all data from one dashboard. The [new BookFunnel integration](#) can be used to deliver your eBook sales to Payhip, Selz, Shopify, WooCommerce, and PayPal.

Unfortunately, I have not been able to find a plugin or addon for any platform that connects a book printer (Createspace, IngramSpark, etc.) directly to an eCommerce website dashboard (Shopify, WooCommerce, etc.). But, you can connect your Amazon FBA account to Shopify with one of the easy-to-install add-ons and process hard copies through their service.

How to apply this in practical terms:

Remember: each stage of order fulfilment should be automated.

- Receiving
- Printing
- Picking, packing, shipping
- Tracking and confirmation

The fact that integration and automation are central to a simple omnichannel book sales strategy is apparent. Now, you need to know the practical applications.

Keep in mind that you could be selling offline, on your website, and mass sales channels of your choosing. In each case, combine the inventory, order, and fulfilment processes.

Inventory Management

Do you print on demand or store your books in a warehouse? How are you keeping track of what's in stock?

Print-on-demand

If you have established a print-on-demand relationship with a printer, your items will automatically be offered on any sites your printer has a relationship with and the shipping details will be worked out. Drop shipping your own orders will take longer to deliver than sales through, say, Amazon. The perk is that **you will not need to track your inventory**.

Bulk order books

Whether or not you use a print-on-demand service, all bulk purchases will require that you store your books somewhere. Depending on your sales volume, you may need a warehouse rather than just storing books in your home office.

Be sure that any warehouse you use can work seamlessly with your eCommerce platforms, your printer, and your inventory management software.

Order Processing/ Receiving

As mentioned above, you can use your website dashboard to process orders on and offline. Online orders, when set up correctly, should be automatically processed.

Offline orders, however, will be placed somewhat manually. Be sure to use a payment system that tracks all orders holistically.

Shopify is an excellent choice for an eCommerce platform because you can create multiple user accounts (in case more than one salesperson will process orders on or offline), their portable credit card reader integrates sales on and offline, and an abundance of add-ons and integrations make it simple to add new sales features with the click of a button.

Delivery and Fulfillment

Perhaps my least favorite aspect of online book sales is shipping and delivery. With a transportation management system (TMS), you can automate the entire fulfillment process, from order processing to delivery. You can even rate multiple carriers (FedEx, UPS, etc.), in real time, to make the best selection based on the location of the recipient. Shipping software will simplify and optimize fulfillment operations while saving on expenses.

Final Thoughts

Selling your book on multiple channels is a process that can boost your success. If you automate as many of your processes as possible and integrate your systems to work with one another, your operations become simple.

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