



Gray Bear Publications

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Red flags and green flags to look out for when hiring help with your book

With the growth of print-on-demand and robust self-publishing tools, publishing a book has never been easier or more accessible. Writers can hire help for every step of the process, from writing their book to design to publishing to publicity and branding.

Unfortunately, it can be hard for a writer to tell the difference between a legitimate, high-quality service provider and a charlatan looking to prey on people's hopes, fears, and naivete. Here are some things to look for (green flags) and things to look out for (red flags) when hiring a service provider to help you get your words out into the world.

Not every great business will demonstrate every green flag, and not every red flag indicates a charlatan or incompetent provider. Your mileage may vary, and the old adage "caveat emptor" applies: Let the buyer beware. It's your money on the line, and your name on the ultimate product you produce. While this won't guarantee you find the right provider, it will help.

Three good rules of thumb are

- Do your due diligence
- Check references and testimonials
- Don't buy something you don't understand

About Gray Bear Publications and Gray Bear Coaching LLC

Gray Bear Publications offers hybrid publishing and assisted self-publishing services as well as collaborative book projects aimed at making the world a better place filled with more art and wisdom. Founded in 2023 as an imprint of Gray Bear Coaching LLC, it's run by author and professional coach Peter Dudley. Peter has over 30 years' experience in startups, nonprofits, and big companies, in a diversity of roles from publishing to marketing to social impact to software development and more. He's the author of four novels, a chapter book, and collection of poetry and photography. His latest book, *twist*, will be published on April 27, 2024. It's a second poetry/photography collaboration with his partner, Antoinette LeCouteur. Find out more at graybearpublications.com and graybearcoaching.com.



What to look for	Red Flag	Green Flag
What is the business selling?	The business is selling some version of "success." For example: best-selling author!	The business is selling a clearly defined service or product.
Reputation	The business has poor reviews or is a renamed subsidiary of a known unethical brand. Check with writerbeware.blog online.	The business has good reviews from watchdog organizations or on websites in their service area. Former clients recognize them by name.
Business track record	The business has no successes, clients, or testimonials to share, or their examples are old or low quality.	The business offers examples of prior work or client testimonials at a minimum. Even better: recent testimonials, successes, or awards.
First contact experience	The business replies with autoresponders or stock emails, or moves disturbingly quickly to get you to sign up and pay.	The business is willing to have a conversation with you about your need to make sure it's a good fit.
Project definition and negotiation	The business pushes to work you into a standard workflow or service category without first understanding your needs. Or, worse, they use confusing terms and vague explanations, or they skip or gloss over your questions.	The business asks insightful and pointed questions which will lead to a clear understanding of the scope of work, timeline, and deliverables. The business makes an effort to ensure you understand what you are buying and what they are providing.
Presence in the market	The business has only their website and no other easily findable online or industry presence.	The business has their people and/or brand showing up in relevant online forums, at conferences, or in relevant publications and podcasts.
Demonstrated knowledge	The business is not able to, or refuses to, clearly describe how they will do the work you are hiring them for.	The business can clearly and confidently talk about their workflows, processes, and practices for a project like yours.
Market priced	The price is very expensive or very inexpensive. Either extreme is cause for further investigation. There may be hidden costs, restrictions, or even copyright clauses to be aware of.	The price is within generally expected market rates, or there is a clear and justifiable reason for the anomaly.
Their expectations of you	The business does not clearly explain what they expect from a "good client." They will happily take more of your money for unlimited revisions forever.	The business outlines their expectations of you as a "good client" in order to reduce the possibility of conflict and confusion later in the project.
Warranty, cancellation, or refund policy	The business has no policy (or worse, a confusing policy) for cancellation, refund, or warranty.	The business has a clearly stated policy for warranty, cancellation, and refunds.