1. Research. Don't kid yourself. Creating and self-publishing a magazine can end up being an expensive task, both mentally and financially. Research is required!

* What makes it a winner?
* What makes it a loser?
* How will your magazine be better?
* Or, will your magazine be absolutely the only one of its kind reaching your target demographic?
* What is your target demographic looking for in a magazine?
* What other magazines are targeting the same demographic?
* From which can you learn the successes?
* From which can you learn the failures?

1. Consider your options and costs, together. Realistically. We know your circulation will be one million copies by the end of the first year, and your profit margin will be 85%. But, let's pretend, just for fun, that you might have a few hiccups along the way. What are your printing options versus your budget?

* How many pages need to be color, and how many can be black and white?
* What is your circulation target?
* What are your circulation and distribution options?
* Is sponsorship an option?
* Is it possible to secure advertisers for your first run before going to press?

3

Find your exact audience - not just the general audience. You need to know exactly who your target demographic is. Without knowing this, it will be difficult to properly layout your magazine content, market your magazine, or secure serious advertisers. Assuming you know quite a lot about your magazine's subject, this shouldn't be too difficult. Sign up for discussion groups (such as Yahoo), subscribe to other magazines, join local groups, etc.

4

Create a website. Before you get the word out about your new endeavor, you MUST publish a website. Work to make the site as professional as possible. Don't advertise the fact that this is a one-person gig. On your site, you should have a page for contributors. This allows you to mark deadlines, point out what sorts of articles you'd like to receive, and let writers know how you'll be using their work. List your pay rates and what rights you intend to purchase.

You should also have a way for people to subscribe online, if at all possible. Paypal is a good way to do this, at least when you're just starting out. If you don't want to take subscription orders online, make sure your address is easy to find and note what forms of payment you DO take. If you accept checks or money orders, you'll need to get a DBA (doing business as) so that your bank will accept checks made out to your magazine name.

5

Solicit articles. Post a "call for submissions" to your newfound groups. Try to get your notice on a few high traffic blogs. If you're looking for more general articles, try posting your notice at the local library. Consider placing a classified ad in magazines with a cross-over audience. A call for submissions will not only net you articles; it will drum up anticipation for your new publication. Don't forget to point people to your website!

6

Search out advertisers. Since your magazine isn't established, you might consider charging a nominal amount for ads ($20-$50). Consider who might want to advertise in your publication, and don't be squeamish about contacting them. You might look for members of your online discussion groups who place business links in their signatures.

7

Edit. Once you're armed with a binder full of possible articles, choose the most interesting, best-written pieces of the bunch, and grab your red pen. Try not to be too heavy-handed. Writers will submit more often to an editor who doesn't mangle their work.

8

Send the edited articles back to the writers for them to look over. You don't necessarily have to wait for them to approve all changes, but allow them to question or challenge any editorial decisions you've made.

9

Adobe Creative Suite includes Acrobat, Dreamweaver, Illustrator, Premiere, Photoshop, InDesign and After Effects Begin laying out the magazine. Professionals use desktop publishing (DTP) software such as QuarkXPress (the industry standard), Adobe InDesign (or the older version, PageMaker) but Scribus and even word processors (which can handle layout) such as OpenOffice.org Writer are free. Get to know your layout program inside and out. Look at other magazines for design tips. You might also check out books devoted to the subject. Have the authors sent you photos to run with their work? Do you have photos of your own? If not, consider purchasing stock photos (easily found on the Internet). Buying a bundle of cheap stock photos may be the best purchase you ever make.

10

Once you've got the layout set - inside cover, outside cover and pages - find yourself a reliable, well-priced print shop. Printers' prices vary greatly, so plan on spending some time asking around and getting samples. Look for one that will do laser, rather than off-set, printing. This will save you TONS of money.

11

If you're starting cheap, buy yourself a decent black and white laser printer with duplexing. Duplexing will prove to be the most important feature of the printer. If you put some time into your search, you should be able to find a good printer for a few hundred dollars. This should be sufficient for the inside pages. The cover should still be done at a print shop, if at all possible.

12 While you're busy printing, market the heck out of your publication. Online groups, other magazines, blogs (consider starting your own), MySpace, Google's AdWords, etc.

13 Send out the magazines! Keeping a database of subscribers might only need a spreadsheet program such as Excel or the free OpenOffice.org Calc but a dedicated database program is better. Make sure to talk with your post office about the best way to send out your new publication. They'll have great, time-tested ideas and may be able to save you quite a bit in postage costs.

Edit Tips

Keep your subscribers happy. Read marketing books for tips on how to do this, but the bottom line is, make sure they get all they expect - and more. Surprise them, from time to time, with extras.

Don't be afraid to contact experts in your magazine's field and ask them to contribute.

Set yourself up as an expert. You'll automatically get points for publishing a magazine on your subject, but consider blogging (daily, if at all possible), speaking at gatherings or conferences, putting out a book, etc. Writing occasionally (not too often) for your own magazine is also a good idea.

Try to set up your website as a resource, rather than just a subscription porthole. If you can build your site up enough with sought-after material, you'll have a much easier time finding subscribers.

Consider getting an ISSN (International Standard Serial Number) so that your publication can be listed in the US Library of Congress. Visit the LOC's website for more info.

Remember to keep all receipts and records for tax time.

CorelDraw is a very effective tool for laying out pages at a much lower cost then the Adobe family of products.

things to consider

Font Sizes