



Jerri Williams



Pay to Play; Greedy Givers; FBI Myths and Misconceptions; FBI Word Search Puzzles (Police procedurals and FBI nonfiction reference; Money Pit Press)

WHY SELF-PUBLISH? Initially, traditional publishing was the goal for my debut FBI crime novel, *Pay to Play*. A literary agent with Curtis Brown, Ltd., who I met at a pitch fest session, offered me representation. However, I was devastated when he couldn't sell the novel. My agent and I still believed in my gritty and raw story about a flawed female FBI agent investigating corruption in the Philadelphia strip club industry. When he suggested the literary agency assist me in self-publishing it, I agreed. I refused to bury the manuscript in a drawer. The story had a redemption theme, so I wrote a sequel to complete my main character's arc. I knew a traditional publisher wouldn't be interested in book two in the series, so I indie published that one, too.

I've also indie published two nonfiction books. I knew I had a ready-made audience for these FBI-focused books and felt comfortable using the self-publishing option.

INDIE PUBLISHING APPEAL? ... I am intimately involved in every single aspect of publishing my books. I select my editors, cover designer, beta readers, publishing platforms, marketing tools, and promotional venues. Having full control means taking 100 percent responsibility for the success or lack of success of the book. That kind of pressure is not for everyone.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE? Keeping up with new technology and services. It's important to keep up with media articles and podcasts to learn about the quickly evolving indie publishing industry.

WISH I'D KNOWN: [That] indie publishing was an option. If I had, I would have been disappointed, but not heartbroken, when my first literary agent couldn't sell my debut novel. We celebrate amazingly successful indie films and indie music, but indie publishing is only now being highlighted as a legitimate publishing pathway.

MARKETING STRATEGY: I've never used paid advertising to market my books. That's because I have a secret weapon: my podcast, "FBI Retired Case File Review." ... Since

the main characters in my books are FBI agents, I decided to produce and host a podcast featuring interviews with retired FBI agents to introduce potential readers to my books. Now more than seven years later, the podcast has nearly 300 episodes which have been downloaded nearly 9 million times. [It's] about true crime cases, but I invite listeners who are also interested in crime fiction to join my reader team where I share information about my author journey, recommend books, and review an FBI TV show or movie for teachable moments on how to create authentic FBI plots and characters.

My nonfiction book, *FBI Myths and Misconceptions: A Manual for Armchair Detectives* is my best-selling book. ... I realized what most people knew about the FBI came from popular culture. *FBI Myths and Misconceptions* debunks 20 clichés and falsehoods about FBI personnel and procedures by presenting educational reality checks supported by excerpts from the FBI website, quotes from retired agent guests from the podcast, and reviews of popular films and fiction featuring FBI agent characters.

This book has led to me presenting about creating authentic FBI characters to writer's groups and at conferences, and to contracts as an FBI consultant on TV shows such as *Class of '09* on Hulu and the upcoming *Duster* on Max with creator and executive producer J.J. Abrams and showrunner LaToya Morgan.

WEBSITE: JerriWilliams.com **WD**

Amy Jones is editor-in-chief of WD.