



Diamond
Comic Distributors, Inc.

SUBMISSION GUIDE **FOR NEW PUBLISHERS**

(version 4-2017b)

This guide is designed for **publishers of printed material** and is not intended for manufacturers of games, toys, movies, novelties, etc. If you are a manufacturer for these types of merchandise, please contact Amanda Kelbaugh at kamanda@diamondcomics.com.

PLEASE READ THIS GUIDE THOROUGHLY BEFORE SUBMITTING YOUR PRODUCTS FOR CONSIDERATION.

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your interest in distribution through Diamond Comic Distributors. “DCD” is the primary distributor of English language comic books, graphic novels and other pop culture merchandise for the “direct market” (comic shops and other independent stores) across the world. DCD does not publish their own comic books or graphic novels but works with existing publishers to solicit their product to retailers in the direct market. DCD produces a monthly catalog called **PREVIEWS** which is distributed to our retailer accounts. Retailers use this catalog to place orders on the comics, graphic novels and other merchandise they wish to sell in their stores and DCD, in turn, orders this product from the publisher based on the total retailer orders received. Once the publisher has shipped the requested product to the DCD warehouse, DCD then fulfills those retailer orders on behalf of the publishers.

THE INDUSTRY

Comic book publishing is a challenging industry that requires a significant amount of time and finances to do successfully. Publishers should consider the resources needed to create a comic (writer, illustrator, inker, colorist, letterer and editor) as well as the many resources needed to market the comic book to potential customers (online ads, Previews ads, reviews and features on popular comic book websites, promotions to retailers, etc.) Even with a large amount of time and expense paid to creating and marketing a comic book, most publishers will receive low orders and spend at least the first year building their relationship with customers and retailers in order to build sales to a more substantial number. For this reason, any creators with plans for just one book will typically be encouraged to find another established publisher to co-publish the book for the direct market. On any given month, the top 5 publishers (Marvel, DC, Image, IDW and Dark Horse) make up approximately 80% of the comic books sold in the direct market. DCD services between 3000-3400 retailers on a given month and new publishers can expect their initial sales of their comic book to average between 1000 and 2000 copies while graphic novels will typically sell an average between 100-300 copies.

BEFORE YOU SUBMIT

Before you submit your project to DCD, we strongly recommend that you do an extensive amount of research about the industry and determine where your company will thrive best in the current market. Understanding how your product compares to other publishers will help you better understand how and where to market your company for the best possible attention. Please review a copy of **PREVIEWS** (DCD’s monthly catalog) in order to see what established publishers are selling and how they are selling it. This will also give you an idea of how your product would appear in the catalog and how to better improve your chances of being seen by potential customers. We also highly recommend that you research the most popular websites devoted to comic book fans since this is where many of your potential customers will be seeing and reading about their future purchases. Our last recommendation is that you build your company’s “brand” in the comic book community via conventions, websites, and social media for a minimum of one year before submitting to Diamond Comics. Building a publisher’s presence in the market takes time, but it is absolutely essential in selling your product. If a publisher waits until Diamond has accepted their submission to begin promoting their brand, it’s already far too late.

THE SUBMISSION PACKAGE

In order to be considered as a potential vendor, we require a formal **submission package BY MAIL** that includes the following:

1. **PRODUCT SAMPLE** – A sample of each product you wish to be considered. This sample can be a fully printed book if it is available. If the product is not yet formally printed, you may print the cover and interior pages from a computer and bind them together by staples, clips, etc. Our goal is to read the product from page to page and get a sense of how the story and art may look as a finished piece.
2. **PRODUCT INFO SHEET** – A product info sheet filled out according to the product(s) you are submitting (found on page 4). You may send more than one product at a time but each separate item should have its own unique sheet included in the package. (use “PRODUCT INFO SHEET” on page 5)
3. **COVER LETTER** – A letter that introduces yourself, your company, and any other details about your submission that you feel our staff should understand when reviewing your package.
4. **MARKETING PLAN** – A document that gives a clear and thorough agenda on how you plan to market this book to customers and retailers in order to make it successful in the comic book market (use “MARKETING OUTLINE” on page 4).

Please mail your physical submission package to our head office:

**Diamond Comic Distributors
ATTN: Jay Spence
10150 York Rd Suite 300
Hunt Valley MD. 21030**

THE REVIEW PROCESS

Upon receipt of your submission, it is reviewed by several members of our purchasing staff. Our staff considers many variables when making their decision to distribute a product, including but not limited to; price, format, quality, and overall potential in the current comics market. The review process can take up to 6 weeks to complete but typically less. We ask for your patience in times where submission volume may be higher than usual. Once our staff has made their decision, you will receive a response from one of our staff members either by mail, email, or phone. In some cases, a brand manager may contact you in order to clarify a particular detail of your product before a final decision can be made. Please do not send any original artwork. Diamond Comics does not send any submissions back to the publisher unless otherwise requested with a self-addressed, stamped envelope included in the submission package.

MARKETING YOUR PRODUCT

Inclusion in the *Previews* catalog is a great way to increase your product’s reach in the comic book direct market. Our optional marketing services will assist publishers in strengthening this reach but *Previews* is only the **first** step toward selling your product to comic shop retailers. A publisher’s marketing strategy is often one of the largest factors in cultivating strong sales and this cannot be done with *Previews* alone.

You’ll want to reach as many comic readers as possible and that often means connecting with online sites and social media destinations that focus on comics. In some cases, your project may also appeal to less traditional comic markets that should be considered (ex. a comic about street racing may appeal to car/racing enthusiasts).

Research as much about the current comics market as you can, taking into account the types of comics that are already being sold and by whom. Pay close attention to the visual familiarity of company brands and the visual branding of their books. Your publishing name, logo and cover designs should all be easily

readable and recognizable so retailers and readers will recognize your efforts as a new publisher entering the market. We never recommend that a new publisher reproduce exactly what is being done by other publishers, but it is important to be mindful of other projects that may be similar in story, genre, style, etc.

It is absolutely essential for new publishers with a new product to thoroughly plan out a marketing strategy that can be strong enough to gain attention. Publishers who do not focus enough on marketing will see far less response from their listing in *Previews*. A marketing plan that shows a strong understanding of the industry, and your audience, is essential for Diamond Comics to see when considering a new publisher. **Please use the marketing outline form on page 6 to help you build your plan.**

Below is a list of additional questions you should ask yourself before attempting to submit to Diamond Comics. If you can answer “YES” to all, or nearly all, of these questions, then you are far more likely to be ready for the challenges of direct market distribution.

1. Can I identify the major “hook” of my project that makes it intriguing to consumers and retailers before they’ve even seen the book or read a review?
2. Does your total marketing budget for this project meet or exceed a minimum of \$2500?
3. Can your publishing company afford to produce the entire series of this comic (or the first graphic novel) no matter how low the sales results may be?
4. Does your company have a long-term publishing plan for content over the next 2 years?
5. Have you calculated the cost involved in maintaining your publishing schedule, including printing, shipping and marketing?
6. Does your company have a minimum of 5000 Facebook followers and 1000 Twitter followers?
7. Have I visited a handful of local comic shops as research about what is being sold in the market?
8. Have I reviewed an issue of the *Previews* catalog in order to see what my listing may look like if I’m accepted?

BARCODES

Your submission may not yet have a barcode attached to it at time of submission but your final product **MUST** include at least ONE of the following two barcodes when it is ready to ship to retailers. Diamond will require this number at time of listing in *Previews* and your brand manager will be able to advise you on how to acquire this barcode if necessary.

UPC – This is a 12-digit number **used for periodical comic books**. The same 12 digits can be used for the length of the series and will be accompanied by a 5-digit supplement at the end (ex. 712345678901-00111). The 5-digit supplement conveys information about each issue of the series with the first 3 digits indicating the issue number (“001”), followed by which cover (“1” for 1st cover), and then the printing (“1” for 1st printing). For other examples, please refer to most comics found on comic shop shelves. If your comic book is a one-shot with no subsequent issues, you wouldn’t be required to include a 5-digit supplement. **Diamond does not offer comic books with ISBN numbers unless the comic book is a “one-shot” with no issue #2 planned to follow.**

ISBN/EAN – This is a 10 or 13-digit number **used for graphic novels and other types of square-bound books**. The barcode typically printed on books uses the 13-digit ISBN number followed by a 5-digit supplement which indicates the retail price. If you only have the 10-digit ISBN, this number can easily be converted to 13-digits using a converter found on the internet.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. What types of product is Diamond Comic Distributors looking for?

A. Diamond Comic Distributors prides itself on offering its retailers a wide variety of pop-culture and/or comic book related products for the direct market (comic shops). We consider all genres and formats of comic books and material related to sequential art. Text-only items like novels tend to sell very poorly in the direct market so Diamond does not often distribute text-only product.

Q. Does Diamond Comics require a minimum amount of orders for my product in order to sell it?

A. If Diamond Comics has accepted your product for listing in *Previews*, we will seek to fulfill any and all orders for your product regardless of quantity.

Q. What if I require a minimum quantity of orders for my book in order to proceed with manufacturing my final product?

A. Any item Diamond offers to retailers MUST be available to retailers no matter how low the final orders may be. Therefore, Diamond Comics cannot agree to a pre-set minimum of orders.

Q. How formal should my submission package be?

A. We don't require anything above and beyond the four items of your submission package mentioned above. An elaborately packaged submission, or submission containing "swag" (t-shirts, buttons, stickers, etc.) will not affect the review committee's decision.

Q. How much should I discount my product?

A. The discount percentage (found on the info sheet) is the percentage OFF the retail price that Diamond Comic Distributors will be paying you for each copy of your product. Standard discount is typically 60% for most comics. This discount directly affects the cost retailers will pay for your book so a better discount to Diamond means a better discount to retailers and, typically, stronger sales. Keep in mind that shipping costs for sending your product to Diamond will be the responsibility of the publisher.

Q. How should I rate the content of my product?

A. There are THREE main ratings Diamond uses when it lists comic book product. Most comics fall under an "**all ages**" rating and may contain some violence (within reason) and, perhaps, the lightest forms of profanity. A "**mature**" title typically contains full or partial nudity and/or profanity that wouldn't be permitted on network television. An "**adult**" title would be more extreme than "mature" and typically means graphic sexual situations that would be considered pornographic.

Q. Does Diamond sell my product to the "book market" (Amazon, Barnes & Nobles, etc.)?

A. Diamond Comic Distributors' sister company, Diamond Book Distributors (DBD), does sell product to book stores and other "book market" accounts. Distribution to these channels is far more complex, requiring an "invitation" from DBD and subsequent contract. Acceptance to DCD does not necessarily include acceptance to DBD because DBD chooses accounts based on the content's viability in the "book market" as well as a publisher's ability to work within the high cost/high risk returnable sales model required in the "book market".

Q. I still have further questions that are not answered in this guide, can I speak with someone?

A. Please feel free to contact Jay Spence, the Submissions Coordinator, with any questions you may have about your submission. Jay Spence can be reached at sjay@diamondcomics.com or at 443-318-8272.

MARKETING OUTLINE FOR SUBMISSION

(Please complete this form to the best of your ability and include it with your submission package. You may re-format this page in your own word processor in order to expand upon it.)

BEFORE SUBMITTING

- Publisher website address?
- Number of publisher Facebook followers?
- Number of publisher Twitter followers?
- Other forms of social media being used (include number of followers)?
- Number of publisher newsletter/email recipients?
- What creators, celebrities, industry veterans have endorsed your product so far and how?
- What websites have featured your book so far?
- What print publications have featured your book so far?
- What other forms of media have featured your book so far?
- What conventions/events has your company/product appeared at in the last 12 months?
- What types of paid advertising have been done so far?
- What other publications will follow this first item and when do you plan to release them?
- Did you fund this project with a social crowdfunding site like Kickstarter and how do you plan to use these contacts to make **new** fans that will seek your book out at comic shops? Keep in mind that most of your crowdfunding supporters have already “purchased” your book so they will not influence sales in *Previews*.

AFTER BEING ACCEPTED

- What websites do you have commitments from for future promotion?
- What print publications do you have commitments from for future promotion?
- What other forms of media do you have commitments from for future promotion?
- What conventions/events has your company committed to for the next 12 months?
- What creators, celebrities and industry veterans do you have commitments from for future endorsement and how will they do it?
- I have budgeted for the following marketing expenses:
 - Social media ads
 - Comic industry websites: (list them)
 - Non-comic related websites (list them)
 - Other miscellaneous ads (list them)

MARKETING IDEAS TO AVOID

While it could be said that any type of marketing is good marketing, there are some types of marketing that consistently fail to motivate sales in the comic shop direct market.

- Sending promotional posters, postcards, flyers, etc. to retailers. These unsolicited and easily disposable items do not often attract a retailer’s attention or convince them why a product will sell well in their store.
- For-sale merchandise like t-shirts, posters, etc. are good, complimentary items for your book when “direct-selling” at convention/event appearances but they are far less useful for comic shops are rarely successful in *Previews*.
- Contests are a good way to build fans for social media but they will not appeal to retailers ordering from *Previews*.
- Variant and/or signed covers are a common practice with larger, established publishers with recognized creators but the major draw of these books is its increased value. A retailer can generate more revenue from a rare or signed copy of a popular comic title but most comic shop consumers will not pay extra for a book signed by a creator they are not familiar with.

PRODUCT INFO SHEET FOR SUBMISSION

(Please complete this form and include with your submission package.)

This form provides Diamond Comic Distributors with all the vital details of your project so we can better understand how you envision the final product. Some details like price or format can influence our decision to distribute a project so please be prepared to discuss some details that Diamond Comic Distributors may feel need to be adjusted in order to better fit with the current market.

Company Name:

Address:

Email Address:

Phone:

PRODUCT TITLE:

-Issue number:

-Frequency (One-shot, Monthly, Bi-Monthly, etc.):

Frequency pertains to the release schedule of your product and how often you expect the following issues/volumes will be released. For a standard-sized, periodical comic, we suggest releasing on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. A single, one-time comic or graphic novel would be a "one-shot".

-Number of Issues/Volumes in Series (or ongoing/no end):

-Suggested Audience (SEE FAQ for details):

-Genre (Superhero, Sci-Fi, Fantasy, Horror, etc.):

-Format (comic book / softcover / hardcover):

-Page Count:

-Full Color, B&W, or Partial Color:

-Cover Dimensions:

-Retail Price:

-Diamond Discount % (need help? See FAQ):

-Printer name:

We understand that some publishers may be shopping around for a printer during the submission period and this isn't required to be final at time of submission.

-Country of Origin (printer location not publisher):

-Intended release month (or as soon as possible):

Writer(s):

Artist Name(s):

Cover Artist(s):

Synopsis:

Other special notes to consider about the project:

WHEN PRINTING THIS FORM, PLEASE MAINTAIN ITS FORMAT TO ONE PAGE.