



Pursue new distribution channels to reach more customers.

Distribution is Key

In the United States, only a small percentage of Christians regularly visit Christian bookstores. This means that publishers who only sell their books through traditional Christian outlets never reach the 50 million believers and seekers who never visit bookstores.

As a leader of a publishing organization, the chief executive officer has two primary responsibilities. The first is to set the vision for the organization. We at Cook want to help Christians embrace wholeness of life in Christ and develop the gifts God has given them. This includes believers who visit Christian bookstores, and those who do not. If we want to fulfill our mission of helping believers grow to maturity as disciples of Christ, then our mandate is clear: we must look for ways to reach readers by expanding distribution whenever possible.

The second responsibility of CEOs is to allocate the organization's resources. What is required to pursue the mission and vision of the publishing house? If new distribution channels are necessary, what does this entail?

Market research. Around 80 percent of Christians shop at mass market outlets, stores that sell all kinds of consumer goods—clothing, household goods, toys, and even books. To get books to places where Christians shop, Cook had to investigate how to partner with supermarkets,

pharmacies and mass market retailers. We had to review our capacity to meet these stores' packaging needs, display specifications and delivery requirements.

New financial models. Mass market outlets require a far greater discount than is usually offered to distributors in traditional retail channels. A publishing house that wants to sell its books in both channels will have a smaller profit from the books sold in the mass market arena, and must plan accordingly. The publishing house must budget based on receiving a smaller percentage of each dollar that customers spend to buy its books.

New competencies. Publishers must do everything in their power to stimulate their employees to be better today than yesterday. Encourage them to develop new skills, or seek staff who do have the necessary competencies. A company's resources are limited. To pursue new distribution channels in addition to existing ones, publishers need trained personnel, people who know what tasks are most important and can allocate their time accordingly.

Assigning a publishing house's limited resources so as to achieve the widest possible distribution is not an easy task, but a necessary one. Distribution is the key to serving our customers more efficiently and effectively.❖

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