

Dream Bigger, See Further

by Alemayehu Mamo

After writing, translating and publishing some books in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, I can offer a few practical suggestions on publishing from my own experience. If you practice these things I hope and pray you will have no time to lament about high production costs and poor distribution channels.

1. Choose your market carefully.

My books are mainly targeted to Christians, though they sometimes reach a broader audience.

2. Be timely. God's Word tells us that "A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver," (Prov. 25:11). If you write earthly news in heavenly views you can attract not only church members but also secular readers.

3. Think of promotion during the product development stage. Can you get someone known by the public to write a foreword for your book? Or, can you ask two or three well-known persons to write a blurb for the back cover? Look for recommendations.

4. Seek support. Recently I published 7,000 copies of my fourth book, a translation of *Sickness and Healing*, with the generous sponsorship of Sovereign World Trust, a ministry in the United Kingdom. Do not hesitate to look for support. Be confident! Remember that you are labouring for the extension of God's kingdom and salvation of precious souls.

5. Consider your price. Print small books at affordable prices. In Ethiopia, mattboard is cheaper for the cover than 250 gm art paper; saddle-stitch binding is cheaper than glue, and so on. Give priority to your message rather than to your profit margin. Set a price that will enable you to do future reprints.

6. Aim for quality. It is not enough to collect several bids and decide to use the cheapest. Ask for the best.



Most printers can advise you on how to print the best quality books you can afford. Meet with them and do not hesitate to ask questions.

7. Promote what you produce. Can somebody review your book in a magazine or a newspaper? Can you adapt an article from your book and publish it elsewhere? Create promotional pieces and fliers. Advertise. Give away free copies of your books to influential people like evangelists and pastors. Once these men and women read a book and find it interesting, they will not hesitate to recommend it.

8. Use the distribution channels that serve your market. There will be a number of church stores and Christian book and music shops that are involved in Christian book distribution in your area. Those are your targets!

9. Look for other distribution opportunities. Can you challenge secular distributors to carry your titles by telling them that you have good news for everyone? Are you ready to try things which no one in your nation has tried? For example, can you develop your own internet page to advertise and sell your books?

10. Believe in your products. When you sell a book, you do not sell just 12 ounces of paper, ink, and glue. Instead, what you sell to book buyers, as writer Christopher Morley eloquently put it, is "a whole new life."

Now, 23,500 copies of my books are in print. Though it may not be financially rewarding to be a writer and publisher in my country, I can surely say it is not discouraging. We are men and women of faith. Dream bigger, see further. Make the most of your opportunities. ❖

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