



## Editorial Policies for Entering New Markets

by Ian Thompson

Publishing companies cannot always exist purely on home market sales. If this is your situation, at some point you will ask, "Where else can we sell our books?"

Our decision to take Christian Focus' books into another major new market had an impact on our editorial policies. Below are a few lessons we learnt in entering another culture. They come from a company that benefits from publishing in English, but the principles hold true for other language transitions as well.

### ***1. Keep your best authors***

Stop licensing your best authors into your new market. Indigenous publishers in your new market will only want to license the authors who will succeed in their market – so keep them, or you will never make a breakthrough! If you do not have success in this new market with your existing authors, then you will not be able to tempt new authors from that market to write for you (see point 2). We used to license our authors into larger markets, and in turn take up licenses of authors from larger markets into our own. This meant that we could not sell anything into the larger market (our best authors had been taken) and had to accept licensed books into our market largely unchanged (see point 3).

### ***2. Add indigenous authors***

Add authors of every major market you enter: Africans for Africa, Australians for Australia, Canadians or Americans for North

America, etc. Having local authors will help you make progress when you speak to buyers in that market. It will help you 'sell in' your existing authors too.

### ***3. Internationalize your books***

Get all your authors to internationalize their books so as to broaden their appeal in all markets. We recently published a book on dating by an American author who agreed to use data from Europe and Asia, as well as America. This prevented people outside the United States from rejecting the book and made it a better book for Americans too.

### ***4. Localise your books***

This seems to contradict the point above, but that had to do with how relevant the books are. Here, we focus their 'flavour.' If they are American, make them read like American books; Mexican, like Mexican books; Cameroonians like... you get the picture! It helps in their market and usually (not always) helps you sell them in other markets too. Do not make all your authors adopt your spellings. You are losing part of what makes them who they are - you are losing character. If 'flavour' is an obstacle, then use local endorsers - both for your books into the new market, and the new authors into your own markets. A 'no' can become a 'yes' with a positive comment from a well-known local, national or international figure.

Using these principles we have managed to make our new market authors work in our other markets. Our home market used to reject American books because of their narrow focus. Now some of our best American books are bestsellers in non-U.S. markets, too.

***5. Don't forget the personal touch.***

“If the books are the right ones, then it's guaranteed to work.” Wrong! You still have to speak to buyers in the new market. Make sure that you understand how they want to do business. They have so many opportunities to say ‘no’ to new titles that you want to make sure that when they say it to you it's because they don't like your book rather than some small obstacle you put in their way by trying to do business differently.

It can be difficult to do business in another country, so you need to have a love for the people in order to overcome the pain. After all, no one ever got to really love someone by never meeting them! Go to events—trade shows, consumer conferences—anywhere you can meet customers and buyers. Immerse yourself in the new market... and overcome the limitations of your home market.

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