



Commitment to training is critical for publishing enterprises.

by David Mehlis

Hone Your Craft

Recently, I had the privilege of introducing Jerry Jenkins, co-author of the phenomenally successful *Left Behind* series, to a group of publishers gathered at our offices for our International Christian Publishing Institute. I have known Jerry for a long time; in fact, for a brief time he even worked for Scripture Press, an organization that is now a part of Cook Communications Ministries.

In his career, Jerry has written hundreds of articles and stories, and more than 150 books. Something I have always admired about Jerry is that over the years he has continued to work hard and to push himself to develop his craft as a writer. That push for continuous improvement, that desire for excellence, for mastery of his craft, is an example that speaks to me as a Christian and a publisher.

At Cook Communications Ministries, we continually work to increase our skills and capacities to more effectively fulfill our mission. This desire for excellence in our company was present from the very start. David C. Cook, who founded this ministry in 1875, often prayed: "O, God, make all you can of my life." We depend on God to multiply our efforts. At the same time, we seek to maximize the use of resources He has given to us. One way to do this is to increase our emphasis on mastering our craft as publishers.

Mentor your staff. Having employees who have mastered their tasks will make you more

effective as an organization. For example, no organization can publish every manuscript it receives; very often it is necessary to say "no." Trained editors can quickly determine whether a manuscript is valuable and fits the mission. They can streamline editorial processes so that manuscripts are ready to be published on time.

Cook Communications Ministries wants to be as effective in its use of financial resources as any secular money-making business. We want to reduce the cost of goods of all products, and the costs of fulfillment. Inventory must be kept at acceptable levels. We want our operations systems to provide great customer service at a cost appropriate to our business model.

The chief executive officer of an organization must do everything in his or her power to stimulate the staff to focus on competencies and to collaborate to achieve success. Inspire your staff to be better today than yesterday. Trained people know what tasks are most important and can allocate their time accordingly. Help your employees to achieve the same mastery of their tasks that Jerry Jenkins has modeled for us. What will it take to have that level of commitment to craftsmanship, artistry, excellence in your publishing company? Encourage your staff, pick them up when they fall, and motivate them to go forward, to hone their craft. ♦

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