



Look Out for Costly Cost-Cutting

Make cost-cutting decisions for good end results.

by Isaac Phiri

Cost-cutting gets everyone's attention. Publishers are always looking for ways to reduce cost of goods. The articles in this issue of *InterLit* provide suggestions and tactics that many publishers should find useful.

Cost reduction is critical, particularly to small publishing enterprises. However, leaders must pay close attention to *what* costs to cut. Without a clear idea as to what costs are expendable and which ones are critical to the viability of the enterprise, publishers can make decisions that strangle their own businesses.

Effective cost-cutting decisions must fit with the publisher's mission and vision.

In editorial development, for instance, publishers can save money by using inexpensive, inexperienced writers and editors. This can reduce up-front costs, but the result may be poorly written and edited books. Such books frustrate readers, sell poorly and damage the image of the publisher.

In manufacturing, you may select a cheaper printer who in the end does a bad job, or choose lower cost binding and end up with pages that spill out when the book is opened. You may choose a lower cost paper and find you have created an ugly book that repels readers. Your publishing house may gain the reputation of producing badly manufactured books. This is bad for business.

Cutting corners in marketing may save some pennies but cost a lot more in lost business. A badly designed and

produced catalogue can detract from the good books the publisher puts out. A promotional piece on newsprint, smudged with black ink, may not give the product the desired level of attention from your audience.

Technology is another area where publishers can make cost-saving measures that are detrimental in the long run. Buying the least expensive computer hardware or software may save your organization a little today but turn out to be a nightmare later.

If you think we do not make those errors here at *InterLit*, you are mistaken. A few years ago, to save costs and offer low prices, we produced several 40-page manuals for publishers on inexpensive paper. But guess what? We found out mailing a 40-page manual to India costs as much as shipping a 200-page book. Furthermore, our self-cover resources are difficult to store in tropical environments and so do not last long. We are now reconsidering how to package our books for publishers.

Impromptu cost cutting can be hazardous for the publisher. Effective cost-cutting decisions must be informed and guided by the overall mission, vision and strategy of the enterprise. These overriding goals help the director, editor, marketer, accountant and other decision-makers determine what cost-cutting tactics are acceptable and which ones are not.

For example, one publishing house puts out quality reference books and commentaries for pastors. They translate materials from English into their national language. Their mission constrains their cost saving decisions.

33 WAYS TO CUT COSTS



Ian Montagnes, international publishing consultant and author, describes how publishers can reduce expenses and maximize profits.

Prudent publishers watch over cash costs of production. They encourage authors and staff to work as efficiently as possible. They reduce the time it takes to produce a book (because during those months capital is tied up in wages and direct costs). Publishers want to get their investment back through sales as soon as possible.

It should be emphasized that cutting costs should not be at the expense of editorial, physical or educational quality. Considerable development costs are incurred in evaluating and revising manuscripts, but eliminating those costs reduces the effectiveness of the publications and wastes the entire investment. Even savings in costs of materials should be considered carefully. A book printed on newsprint will cost less than one printed on proper book paper, but will wear out quicker and may therefore be less acceptable. On the other hand, a workbook that will be used only once need not be printed on high-quality paper or in more than one color.

There are many ways to save time and money in book development and production. Here are some that have helped publishers around the world.

Editing

1 Remove unnecessary words and repetition. Simplify difficult words and sentences. This can often shorten a manuscript by 10 percent without eliminating any information. This will not only make the text easier to read, but will also reduce the cost of typesetting, paper and press work.

2 Make sure the manuscript is clean and easy to read. Manuscripts that are poorly typed or have many handwritten changes slow down typesetting and add to its cost. Changes also result in typesetting errors that must be corrected, creating delays.

3 Ensure that the manuscript is complete before beginning copy-editing. This makes it easier to ensure consistency throughout the

book. When the manuscript comes in bits and pieces, and especially if those pieces come in a haphazard order, it will usually be necessary to review all the editing once the manuscript is complete. Schedules sometimes require editing of partial manuscripts, but it is never desirable.

4 Have illustrations ready. If possible, have at least preliminary versions of all illustrations on hand before final editing begins, so that their accuracy can be checked against the text before it is sent for typesetting.

5 Get author involvement early. Ask the author to approve the text of the manuscript before sending it for typesetting. Warn the author that any changes made after typesetting will be expensive in time and money, and may be refused by the editor or may be charged to the author. Even if changes in proof do not cost the author money, they may seriously delay publication.

6 *Send the entire manuscript to the typesetter at one time.* Sending it in bits and pieces adds to the cost and the possibility of error.

7 *Provide clear instructions to the typesetter.* Any time there is a chance of confusion, there is also a chance the typesetter will not provide what is wanted. Corrections will then have to be made in proof at extra cost and delay.

Illustration

8 *Use no more illustrations than needed.* Make sure each one makes a solid contribution to the book. Make them only as large as necessary. Illustrations are expensive to produce and take up space. Reducing the number and size of illustrations saves film and paper.

9 *Simplify illustrations.* They will be easier to understand, and may be cheaper to reproduce.

10 *Economize in the number of colors used.* Attractive effects can be achieved with black and only one, or at most, two other colors, using different screens to achieve variations in tone.

11 *Avoid requiring tight registration.* When using color, consider asking the illustrator for line drawings and spot colors that do not require tight registration.

12 *Check work in progress.* Ask to see a rough sketch before the illustrator prepares the final version.

Design

13 *Find out what sizes of paper are available.* Find out which size is most economical on the press that is likely to be used. Use a page size that can be cut without waste from a standard sheet. Otherwise you will be paying for paper that has to be trimmed off the sheet.

14 *If your printer regularly stocks a particular kind of suitable paper, use it.* You know it will be available when needed.

The printer is probably getting a lower price by buying the paper in large quantities, and should pass some of this savings on to good customers.

15 *Examine the paper stock you are using.* Can you use a lighter weight of the same kind of paper without losing opacity? A lighter weight will cost less; it will also cost less for shipping.

16 *Plan the book so that the total number of printed pages is an even multiple of four—and preferably of 16 or 32.*

Books are made up of signatures—the printed sheets that have been folded into page size. With a little experimentation, it is evident that no signature can have fewer than four pages. Most presses today produce signatures of 16 or 32 pages. One extra page (in a book, for example, of 97 or 161 pages) will add at least three blank pages to the publication; and the extra pages (especially if the press and paper being used have been designed for printing 16 or 32 pages at one time) are expensive. An extra page can often be eliminated by revising the preliminary pages to reduce their number by one page.

17 *Consider whether it is possible to increase the number of words on a page in a current design without making the page harder to read.* Can one line be added to the page, or one pica to the width of the column, without harming readability? Can the space between lines be reduced slightly? This could be an important saving if it reduces the length of the book, especially if it makes it possible to fit the book within an even multiple of four or eight pages and avoid blank pages at the end. Such adjustments are relatively easy to make with desktop-publishing programs.

18 *Avoid frills.* Think twice before using four-color covers, second colors in text, complex designs, and other elements that cost extra and are not needed for clear communication. Watch for details that may create difficulties in registration on the press—for example, two-color rules that run parallel or close

to the edge of the page, or large blocks of solid ink. Remember that all these extra costs will be repeated every time you reprint.

19 *If you are printing in more than one color, plan the publication so that the extra colors can be grouped on as few plates as possible.* Each plate with color involves extra press runs: the fewer times this happens, the better. Just how to plan this will depend on how the pages are imposed: check first with the printer.

Proof-reading

20 *Keep the stages of proof to a minimum.* Each extra set of proof adds to the cost. It may be necessary to see several sets of proof before all typographical errors are corrected, but after that it should be possible to require only a proof suitable to show the author (with a minimal number of typographic errors), revised page proof (if necessary), and final proof. In offset lithography, especially if there are many illustrations to be checked for position, it is wise to see blueprints or ozalids, two varieties of cheap photographic prints made from the actual film flats that will be used in plate-making. Sometimes even one of these stages can be omitted.

21 *Allow authors to see and make changes on only one set of proofs.* Discourage them from making any more changes than necessary. Changes cost money, and they cost more at each successive stage of proof. Authors may be asked to check blueprints if the publication has many illustrations; but at that point they should not be re-reading text, only checking that the illustrations have been placed properly.

22 *Limit changes.* Discourage the editor and the designer, as well as the author, from making changes in proof.

23 *Make any changes in proof as economically as possible.* Revise the wording so that the number of lines does not change. Otherwise, any change on one page will force changes on following pages.



cuss ways to save money and reduces shipping costs.

28 *Consider the method of binding planned or in use.* Can adhesive binding be used instead of sewing? Can short books be saddle-stitched?

29 *Avoid rush jobs and over-time payments.* Try to spread printing orders throughout the year whenever practical. Take advantage of the printer's slack season when prices might be lower. If there is less pressure of time, quality should improve. (But balance any savings made in this way against the extra money that will be tied up while the books are in the warehouse.)

30 *Ask printers about ways to save money.*

They may be able to suggest a more economical grade of paper which they stock, a more economical page size that will make maximum use of the size of paper sheet most suitable for their presses, or a short cut you didn't know.

31 *Don't change typesetters and printers with every job.* Try to work with only a few typesetters and printers on a regular basis. It will save time, because you will each know how the other operates and thinks. It won't be necessary to explain every detail as carefully as it would be with someone who doesn't know you. Also, a new printer may build extra costs into the estimates as a precaution, expecting problems that won't occur. A printer who knows you can give you the best possible estimate of costs from experience. Through friendship, such a printer will also work extra hard to meet your needs. The easiest way to save money is to find a printer who

thinks economically and whom you can trust.

32 *Consider a long-term contract.* You may be able to sign an agreement guaranteeing that you will send a certain amount of work to a particular printer in the next budget year in return for a good discount on the printer's regular price. But do this only with printers in whom you have confidence as a result of experience. Also, be certain you will have enough printing work to meet that guarantee, and that it will be ready at regular intervals throughout the period of the agreement.

Review

33 *Keep re-examining your publications for ways to reduce costs.* Consider this article's suggestions only as a start. ❖

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Printing and finishing

24 *Try to group similar jobs.* If two or more publications will be ready for printing at the same time, and they have the same page size and general design, have them printed together. The printer should charge less because the press can be set up for both jobs at once.

25 *Plan the number of copies required as carefully as possible.* Printing too many copies is wasteful. Printing too few can force an expensive reprinting.

26 *Choose the printer carefully.* Always get comparative quotations. Bargain for the best price and best quality.

27 *Try to use a printer who is close to you.* That saves time. It also makes it easier to dis-

