

Steve Murdock, editor of multicultural resources for the Woman's Missionary Union (www.wmu.com) of the Southern Baptist Convention in the United States, says publishers that choose not to offer translations can miss a blessing.

Lost in Translation

a book is submitted to the translator, a short evaluation of the work is necessary to see if it is appropriate for the target audience. For example, a book about NASCAR racetrack ministry, or one about church planting among post-modern twenty-somethings in New York, may not have much carry-over into Chinese culture. Remember your audience.

What will the publisher say?

The publisher will look at the bottom line. Of course, he or she will be concerned with other issues as well, such as: Does this book or article go along with our mission? Does it fit in well with the genres our readers have grown to expect? Does it advance the Kingdom? But to keep the company going, the publisher knows that a book has to make money, even if the organization is a non-profit.

Books with the greatest potential for success in any market are those written by well-known authors. Some authors have their books translated into several languages. If the author is well known within the target culture, the book will most likely do well. For example, Henry Blackaby, author of *Experiencing God*, is popular not only among Anglos but also Hispanics and many Asian and even some European audiences. Our organization recently obtained rights to translate one of his works in Spanish, and our marketing force tells us that the book has great potential. This will most likely be a

breadwinner. Most importantly, we trust that it will help thousands of Hispanics draw closer to the Savior.

If a book does not have an author with high name recognition but does have a hook that would attract many in your audience, publish it. Examples include books about dealing with major life changes, such as moving to a new place, starting a new job, or getting married. The more universal the subject matter, the more natural the translation can be.

When dealing with high-profile writers, keep royalties in mind. The better known the author, the greater the sales and royalty expectations are likely to be. It is usually less expensive to hire quality target-language writers than pay for royalties plus translation. Royalties play into your "hurdle rate" (the break-even point for sales where the product finally starts making a profit). Royalties can even make the publication cost prohibitive. These are all factors the editor and publisher must consider before translating books of high profile writers. Lesser-known authors will typically be more flexible. It is never an easy choice.

Obtain quality translations

Hire the right translator. Make sure the translator is fluent in the source language, but whenever possible, choose a native speaker of the language into which you will be translating the work. Always include the name of the translator somewhere in the book or

article. This lends credence to the work. It makes it more believable and authoritative.

Aim for readability. A good translator will know the difference between translating a concept and conveying its mood. Nuance is what separates the good from the exceptional. If a book loses most of its nuance in the translation, it loses its quality and ultimately its purpose. Do not aim for a literal translation, but a dynamic equivalent. An example of a literal translation would be the King James Version of the English Bible. A dynamic equivalent would be the New International Version. They both are good translations of God's Word, but the latter is much more understandable to us today, and flows more naturally than the former.

Don't get lost in translation!

Like the well-meaning young missionary who told the church that she was pregnant and it was all the pastor's fault, we too can get lost in the world of translation. If something gets lost in translation, you not only lose a few key words or thoughts; eventually you will lose readership.

Your translations must make sense and have the same effect on the target-language readers as they did on their original audience. Anything less than the closest equivalent to the original is poor quality. If translation is your best option, do it right. ▽