

# One White Tent: Selling to the Secular Market

Betânia Pirola ([www.betaniapirola.com](http://www.betaniapirola.com)), a church planter and book distributor in Portugal, shared about her success in general markets with *InterLit* staff member Jolene Robinson.

**T**o be Portuguese is to be Catholic." At least, that is what is said. In Portugal, 90 percent of the population is Catholic. Almost 8 percent profess no religious beliefs at all, the percentage of evangelical Christians is less than 1 percent, and the remainder profess other religions, including Buddhism and Islam. In addition, tolerance for institutional religion is very slim. Many are cultural Catholics and do not practice their faith. How could an evangelical Christian distributor survive with such a small market?

Betânia Pirola's answer is: by reaching the secular market. A Brazilian national who, with her husband, moved to Portugal to spread the news of God's love to this post-

modern society, Pirola found her mission field outside of their church plant. The field God gave her was the secular book market.

## *Service and professionalism*

Pirola argues the key to success is one's attitude.

"Are Christian publishers booksellers, or ministers? They are both," she says. "If publishers are ministers who serve people, then our mindset about secular bookstores and outlets must change. Everyone should be treated the same. Treat others as you would other Christians at church. You treat them with respect, kindness and a good attitude. You are not afraid to pray for them or to share what God is doing in your life. You are concerned for their welfare and desire their success. Why would you be different with unbelievers?"

"In serving the secular market, it is very important to be professional," says Pirola. "It doesn't matter if you have a large office backing you or not. Secular companies

expect shipments on time, fulfilled correctly, with simple and efficient billing.

"Call on the bookstores to introduce yourself and your company. Be confident. You know you have a good product that is helpful for society. Readers are truly interested in books that help them to lead better lives. Bookstores want proof that your books meet quality standards and have an audience. Your books are well-written and well-made, so trust in them and their message."

## *Partnerships of mutual benefit*

Pirola's customer service orientation led her to take advantage of the opportunities she found. For example, one *Reader's Digest* article about marriage and divorce in Portugal mentioned the book *His Needs, Her Needs* as a helpful tool for relationships but said it was not available in Portuguese. Pirola checked her sources and soon found that Editora Candeia, a Christian company in São Paulo, Brazil, had published the translation. She created fliers announcing that this book mentioned in *Reader's Digest* was now available at FNAC, a European bookstore chain



"Be confident," affirms Betânia Pirola. "Have faith in the quality of your Christian books."

and the largest in Portugal. FNAC was thrilled and purchased the books right away. Pirola's initiative paid off. FNAC used Pirola's promotional materials in their stores and advertisements.

The relationship Pirola cultivated with FNAC gave her the opportunity to arrange public events at their stores. "If you have marriage books," says Pirola, "arrange a debate among scholars with differing views. People will be interested in the discussion and may purchase your books after the debate."

On another occasion, Pirola arranged a concert for the Salvation Army Band and promoted a book at the concert. She made arrangements for FNAC to sponsor the event and let attendees know



Pirola used this flier to advertise Christian books on end times to general audiences.