

PARTNERSHIPS FOR PUBLISHERS



by Marcos Simas

The press often has coverage of mergers and alliances between large companies. Even competitors form partnerships that make them larger and more powerful, so as to increase market share and profit. Christian publishers can also use partnerships to advance their work.

Seek alliances with responsible and reliable businesses. Partnerships might be temporary, or limited to certain divisions of one's publishing company. Still, when firms join forces, they can become stronger as they complement one other. A partner might be better prepared in an area where one is weak. All firms have their specialties, but partners can exchange technology and experience, and both can learn something new. This can lead to improved quality in products and services, and healthier sales. The result can be a stronger image for both companies.

Six possible partnerships

1. *Publisher to publisher:* Publishers serving different markets can partner to economize on expenditures related to specific areas. For instance, a company that sells children's books might partner with a publisher who sells Christian books for adults. They might share the same warehouse for stock, handling and shipping of their books.

2. *Publisher to church:* A parachurch ministry to pastors and leaders might work with a publisher who has reference works and books on pastoral concerns. These organizations share the same purpose yet accomplish it with different tools. By partnering, they can offer more to their constituencies.

3. *Publisher to printer:* Some printers have idle time at their printing presses, but their profit margin depends on occupying their people and machinery as much as possible. A publisher might negotiate to provide jobs during idle times. He or she might pay paper costs at the time of printing, but pay the balance only after the product is sold and received. Another possibility is to have a printer agree to give a pre-determined discount based on the lowest prices available from competitors. The printer retains a loyal customer, and the publisher in turn can be sure that a continued reliance on that printer is beneficial.

4. *Publisher to freelancers:* Some publishing houses cannot afford to hire full-time editors, translators, proofreaders, and designers. However, freelance help

can be costly. One solution is to give freelancers a share in the profits of each product they work on. They then share the publisher's risk and have greater incentives to ensure products are marketable. With such arrangements, freelancers should have another means of support so there will not be excessive pressure for immediate returns.

5. *Publisher to distributor:* One way to partner with distributors is to allow them to finance the production costs of books by well-known authors that are likely to be of great interest to buyers. Publishers and distributors can arrange joint ventures, where a distributor might receive an extra special discount. They can also partner on consignment sales. In a typical arrangement, a publisher might agree to invoice the books sold by the distributor plus 10 percent on the stock that is consigned every 30 days. When distributors pay promptly, are careful with consigned product, and work to sell and exhibit the product, this type of partnership is very beneficial.

6. *Publisher to bookseller:* To achieve quick turnover, a product must be displayed and offered to the customer. Some bookstores treat the books they receive from your publishing house as just more titles among the many they carry. Seek partnerships with the more important bookstores in your country, to ensure that the products from your publishing house receive preferential treatment and displays in exchange for larger discounts. Monitor these arrangements closely with frequent visits.

Final thoughts

Ensure you have written agreements with clearly defined expectations; verbal agreements are not enough. To work effectively, partners need not be in your same town, state, country or region. With modern technology, you can partner with others around the world. The most important thing is to work with the right partners. Sometimes a deal with a secular company is better than one with a Christian firm. Jesus taught: "In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you" (Mt. 7:12). What could be a better foundation for business partnerships? In Christ, we have every opportunity for success. ❖

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