PUBLISHING Across Denominational Boundaries

by Ramon A. Rocha III

"We don't just publish. We publish with a mission!" Any Christian publisher, big or small, self-sufficient or donor-supported, should be able to declare their purpose with conviction.

OMF Literature's ability to build a publishing list that crosses denominational and national boundaries in Manila, Philippines, stems from its adherence to its mission statement. Because it is not affiliated with any single denomination, it does not need to restrict its publishing to fit a specific group's requirements. OMF wants to reach as wide an audience as possible with a broad range of biblical and socially relevant materials.

LIST BUILDING

When our editorial committee meets and evaluates manuscripts, sticking to our mission statement eliminates those that are unbiblical and/or irrelevant. OMF also rejects manuscripts that espouse a strong position where the Bible is silent. We avoid publishing manuscripts that present a strong denominational bias, unless we have been asked to help with a printing job on a book which will not carry our company logo. Over time, our policy has been to avoid printing work that is critical of other groups; our goal is a ministry that builds up rather than tears down. We include among our salaried staff a well respected local pastor/writer who has been released by his congregation to give three days a week to working with us. He submits a written evaluation of books and manuscripts reviewed, with a recommendation whether to publish or not, or in what areas the author could make improvements.

We deliberately seek to also publish more titles that address the needs of unbelievers. These books should not be filled with Christian jargon, and should communicate biblical truths in clear and understandable ways. Attractive covers and page layout are essential.

Beyond our present customers, we are blessed with a local market that is predominantly Catholic. This 80 percent of our population is open to inspirational, self-help and devotional reading materials. Many of our customers know Christian radio personalities who broadcast locally, and we publish some of their books.

We identify the needs of our target audience and seek biblical manuscripts that cater to those needs.

MARKETING EFFORTS

At present, we have a list of almost one hundred heads of congregations, denominations, and churches of all kinds. Each of them is sent, free of charge, a set of our new titles released quarterly or semi-annually. This set comes with a formal letter announcing the new releases, asking them to read the books and endorse them to their constituents. A leader's recommendation will boost our sales. Included in our list are prominent Christian celebrities who have TV or radio programs or columns in major newspapers. Thus, we may receive free TV, radio or print endorsements weeks later.

We are currently strengthening our presence in secular bookshops. We are expanding our list of "cross over" titles to compete head-on with general titles in general bookstores. Store owners and buyers admit there is a growing market for religious and inspirational books. Secular bookstores are allocating more shelf space for us. They have even agreed to put our titles in more prominent display areas, especially during Christmas and Lent.

OMF Literature has also been a major exhibitor in the biggest annual book event in the country, The Philippine Book Fair. We take advantage of the event to showcase our products and generate public interest. We launch all our new titles for the year during this book fair. This is a grand, even pompous affair with guests from bookstores and from the churches of our writers, artists and translators, who are honored during the event. By including guests from a variety of denominations, we highlight our cross-denominational image and create excitement before industry players.

By the grace of God, we have been able to serve all possible readers, across all denominations and persuasions, from fundamentalists to liberals, conservatives to charismatics.❖

OMF LITERATURE INC. MISSION STATEMENT

To develop, publish, promote and distribute excellent, biblical, and socially relevant books and literature that proclaim the Gospel and strengthen the Church in the Philippines and in other developing countries.

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