



*Focus on the products
that your audience
desires.*

Relate to Your Audience

An editor from Africa was frustrated because the book-buying public only seemed to want popular books. She wanted them to be interested in deeper theological works. She wanted them to have something more substantive.

However, Jesus taught us to reach people where they are. Think of the way he related to the Samaritan woman at the well. Jews believed Samaritans were unclean, and avoided contact with them. When the woman arrived at the well, however, Jesus immediately asked her for a drink. His action was a radical departure from tradition, and the woman is quick to point this out. Jesus responded by offering her living water and whetting her interest. He paid close attention to her concerns and demonstrated a personal interest in her. He gradually enabled her to discover He had the answers to her questions and then revealed he was the Messiah.

If you are an editor, seek to understand where your audience is. What interests them? What concerns do they have? Value your audience and look for ways to relate to them.

The African editor might tailor her decisions to respond to her audience's concerns. In this way she will be more effective in using her limited resources. When Jesus was at the well with the Samaritan woman, he sought to reach her where she was. The Scriptures tell us that she responded by testifying about him to her whole village. His ministry was effective.

Establish a relationship with your audience. Remember that editors are not merely the communicators and protectors of an organization's message, they are the guardians of a publishing house's relationship with the audience. Their task is to find a way to make the message fit the audience so that their publishing organization can fulfill its mission.

An editor cannot force a reader to be interested in a certain type of book. Unless readers want that type of content, they will not buy it or read it. Christian editors, writers and publishers must value their audience's preferences. The editor from Africa, if in line with the mission of the organization, may still publish theological books—but must work to make them relevant. Her products may need to reflect the relational nature of Christ and not just list facts about him. She may need to emphasize the personal growth that is possible for people who depend on God. Her products may need to include more illustrations, more drama, more life stories, more practical applications to assist readers to become disciples of Christ.

Find a way to make your audience and your message fit. Target your message to address your readers' interests and concerns, and you will be more efficient. Study your market. Know what your readers expect and look at the types of books they want. Decide how you will tailor your literature to reach them. Then act to follow Jesus' example. ❖

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