



What excites sales professionals?

by Kim Pettit

Sales is Ministry

If you should ask me to sell something, my first response would be disbelief. And, once I realized you meant it, I would probably stammer, “Are you *s-s-sure*? You want *me* to sell?”

It’s not that I have anything against sales, but the thought of selling makes me quake. My hands become clammy. My insides churn. My mouth becomes dry.

Why? I don’t know. There is nothing rational about these reactions. When I think about the tasks involved in selling, they seem simple enough. How hard could it be to visit bookstore owners, show them some samples and a catalog, pull out an order form, discuss discounts and shipping, and close the deal?

Sales should be easy—but for me, and many others, “selling” is a term that inspires dread.

That is not the case with Bob Bever, vice president of sales at Cook. He is a man who loves to sell. When he talks about sales, his eyes light up. He becomes animated. He gestures. He begins talking faster and faster. It is easy to see that he loves his work. What is it that excites him about sales?

“What I love about sales,” he says, “is that sales is ministry. I am excited to persuade men and women to put product in people’s hands that will convince them to take the next step in their spiritual life.

“In the third year of his reign, the Bible tells us that Jehoshaphat sent his officials throughout the land to teach the people and bring their hearts back to the Lord (2 Chron. 17:7-9). That is what we do in sales.

“We equip and resource booksellers at the opportune time, with age-appropriate materials, to help others in their life journeys, to give them access to God’s Word. This is an exciting challenge! What a way to invest my life! I am truly blessed.”

Bob’s enthusiasm is contagious. And, unlike me, his focus is not on peripherals—such things as catalogs, order forms, prices, fulfillment—though these are necessary. He is not focused on fear. He does not let his

imagination run wild, picturing a mild-mannered book buyer transformed into a fire-breathing dragon.

No, Bob’s focus is on the opportunity for ministry through sales. His enthusiasm is fueled by the potential impact Cook’s products can have in the lives and hearts of the people who read them.

The same excitement inspires Bob Clark, Cook’s representative in Europe. As I write this column, over 30 publishers are present at our International Christian Publishing Institute. Kent Wilson, publisher of Nav-Press, discusses the chief executive officer’s role in a publishing house. He talks about stewardship, using the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30). “That is the story of selling,” Bob whispers to me as we sit in the back of the room. What does he mean?

“There are hundreds of authors who have a message from God,” adds Kent. “Christian publishers are stewards of all their craft and hard work.”

Maurício Antunes, Cook’s representative for Latin America, also agrees, nodding enthusiastically. Bob whispers as Maurício listens in, “We are the bridge between the publishers and booksellers, to get Christian literature to the people who need them. Sales gets the authors’ message out. We’re the ones who inform the booksellers about the best books around, we’re the conduit.”

At the podium, Kent continues, “Sell thousands of books and reach tens of thousands of people for the Kingdom.”

“No pain, no gain,” whispers Bob, once more. “It’s all worth it. Look at the impact you can have for Christ.”

He smiles. So does Maurício. Their excitement is... contagious, but still I do not think God has given me their gifts and focus. Nevertheless, they show me that some people are called to sell, and through them, sales truly is ministry. And, *that* is a lesson for me. ❖