

Sales & Marketing

Selling & Distributing A Rural Church Newsletter

by Simon Kahoko Mureu

Once, I was asked to train writers by a youth group who wanted to publish *Spotlight*, a newsletter for a rural church. Then, after the workshop, I was invited to help sell and distribute the newsletter.

I declined. I did not have any past experience in sales or distribution, let alone promotion. I did not know the market.

"But, as a writer," the group leader insisted, "You are the best placed person among us."

I took up the duty... fearfully. Distributing a Christian publication in Kenya has always been very frustrating, and there is a need to be very careful with the very limited resources available.

Planning

Could our new product succeed? Our youth group came up with some ideas.

Prayer. We had to seek God's guidance, as without Him the project could hardly move.

Posters. We printed posters announcing the coming of the newsletter. These had the details of what *Spotlight* intended to bring out, the news and stories to be carried. The posters were placed at outlets like shops and hotels. They asked those who would be interested in the publication to place their paid-up orders in advance.

Disciples. The area where we worked had more than 50 denominations, so people were sent out to preach about our product at open-air meetings and fellowships. Attendance at the meetings not only served as bait to generate sales, but enabled us to cover news.

Word-of-mouth. We thought members of the youth group could take just a minute to introduce the newsletter to their friends even before it was born.

Letters. Many letters were sent out to pastors, ministers and other church co-workers asking them to inform their church followers about *Spotlight's* mission. Also, those who needed the newsletter to be posted to them were asked to place their orders at the church, with the editor.

Launch

We brought out our newborn baby with a run of 500 copies. The sales turned out to be a surprise as church members grabbed all 500 copies on a single Sunday, leaving us without anything to distribute to others in the area. We had to make two more runs of 500 copies each.

What helped us even more was a story about an Anglican Bishop who was embattled on a sex scandal. The story was well investigated, bringing out truths that even the national papers could hardly come by.

Although *Spotlight* was targeted to a readership aged 17-25 years old, even the older readers felt they had to buy it... and the first issue became a sell-out with 1500 copies sold.

Results

Spotlight was published several times using the same methods as before. In fact, it was so successful that there were plans of publishing it on a national level. Sadly, those entrusted with managing the funds ran away with the money.

Hosea 4:6 says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." *Spotlight* perished because of greed. Even so, it planted seeds for ongoing ministry in its brief life. Mugo Mbitu, *Spotlight* editor, became a very good writer, contributing to two national newspapers.

Even though *Spotlight* went under, the means that helped it achieve its sales and distribution are still good today. They remain fresh and could always be followed by anyone out to publish a rural newsletter. Who knows what the results may be? Even a short-lived newsletter can accomplish something for God. ❖

Simon Kahoko Mureu (simonmureu@yahoo.com) is a self-trained writer in Nairobi, Kenya, with an interest in writers' training.