



Writers want to know that you share their vision for ministry.

by Kim Pettit

Sell Marketing to your Authors

The Christians I know who earn their wages as writers are motivated by the message they want to share with their readers. They invest energy into their work because they have something to say. They want to communicate specific ideas. They want to engage the hearts and minds of their readers.

Do these writers care about marketing? No, not when they perceive marketing to be about ad campaigns, discounts or publicity. They hope good marketing will bring them more readers and greater revenue from royalties, but aside from that they are not especially interested in their publisher's marketing plans. "I am a creative person," one author told me, "I do not want to worry about sales."

However, marketing is not just about sales, but about ideas. A ministry whose focus is Bible education will seek authors with manuscripts that support its mission. A publisher promoting Christian entertainment will seek novelists whose fiction incorporates Christian characters and themes in a positive way.

Publishers need to remember that marketing is not just about promotion. Show your authors that you are working together to achieve the same goals. When you communicate with them about marketing, do not focus only on the sales tactics you will use. Instead:

1. Share your commitment to the ideas your authors want to convey. Often, authors find that no one else in their circle of family, friends, and acquaintances shares their passion. Writers are the ones who have invested the sleepless nights, the time, the research, the sweat, the tears, and the work necessary to bring those ideas to light. Your support and validation of their efforts is a wonderful affirmation of the worth of their work. Your words can be like a drink of cool spring water to a thirsty soul.

2. Show how you are packaging the author's ideas. Any printer can transform an author's manuscript into a bound book for mass distribution. A publisher, however, is occupied with far more than the production of the book. Tell the author how your role differs from that of a printer. Publishers do not just assist authors

through the editorial process. They participate in the selection of the cover and interior design of the book, and in the design of sales fliers, posters, direct mail and other promotional material to support the book.

3. Review how your publishing house's sales tactics fit with the author's message. An author who writes a book for pastors in pain, for instance, wants to know specifically how the book will be brought to the attention of the readers who need it. Describe how your publicity will target the people the author most wants to reach. If your marketing staff is sending a review copy of the book to a magazine for pastors, or if you are offering a special discount to denominational buyers, mention your efforts.

4. Describe how your involvement helps convey the author's ideas to the public. If your publishing company is effective in reaching a particular segment of the market, then discuss with the author how his or her ideas are especially significant to persons in that market. The author of a children's storybook about a handicapped girl, for instance, may not know that your firm has good sales to school libraries.

5. Describe the contribution of the author's work to the publishing house's mission. If your organization, for example, is committed to publishing theological literature, tell the author how the work he or she has done adds to the material already offered in your catalog. If your publishing company's association with this particular writer has created new contacts and opportunities for your sales people, say so.

6. Place your partnership in context. When Christian writers and publishers talk about sales tactics, ad campaigns, direct mail promotions, and other aspects of marketing, they do so because they are committed to shared values. When you discuss marketing with your authors, rejoice in the opportunities you have to work together with them in obedience to God's call. ❖