



*Inject new life  
into sagging  
sales.*

*by Isaac Phiri*

# Ten Sales Boosters

**Y**ou are losing your edge. Less books are being sold. Fewer customers come in. What can you do to boost sales?

**1. Change the way your place of business looks and feels.** Display books in a creative way. Paint the walls. Move the shelves. Make small changes on a monthly basis, and other changes—for example, attractive Christmas displays—according to the season. Bigger changes such as remodeling your facilities can be done every few years because they cost more. The key is that changes, however small or big, will attract attention and possible new customers.

**2. Check your stock.** What kinds of titles do you have? Poor titles make poor sales. Build your business on good sellers that fit your mission and market, are well-crafted, well-designed, and priced right. They may sell slowly, but they bring in revenue year after year.

**3. Know your customers.** Who buys your books? Is it parents buying for their children? Is it pastors? The urban middle class? Youth? Market research can take many forms. Some are more elaborate but also more expensive. Others are simple, costing virtually nothing. You will serve your customers better if you know who they are.

**4. Boost your staff.** When things are not going well, check the work of your staff. Do they make customers feel welcome? Do they go out of their way to make customers happy? Do they love books? Do they have selling skills and talent? Have they ever been to a short course or workshop on bookselling? Give your staff a boost.

**5. Get involved with the community.** Identify a concern that you are able to address. Perhaps you can team up with educators to promote reading in local schools. Whatever community activity you undertake, it should increase the exposure and appreciation of your company and its products.

**6. Say "amen" to the church.** Improve your church relations. Survey the churches in

your area. Design a strategy. Plan some visits with church leaders. Show them samples of your stock. Invite them to your premises. Offer help. Look at churches as a key channel to potential customers. Getting into the churches will give you a unique chance to show what you have to offer.

**7. Go mobile.** If customers are not coming to you, go to them. A man I knew sold more books on crowded trains than many bookstores did on a regular basis. Sell books at churches, at conferences, on the streets.

While this strategy will give a boost to your sales, it requires closer administration. There are many details: Getting the appropriate licenses, recruiting salespeople, and developing an accounting system.

**8. Make the headlines.** Print and electronic media are often looking for new and unusual items that will attract their audience. Invite a political figure to say something about the value of books. Get a popular author to speak on a theme of interest to the media. Newspaper, radio, and television personnel are generally willing to cooperate with people doing something good.

**9. Start a newsletter.** Improve communication with your customers. Announce new books. Publish comments from influential figures and from customers. Describe how you are improving your services. Include human interest stories. Keep production expenses to a minimum.

**10. Give choices to your customers.** I remember two bookstores in Lusaka, Zambia. One displayed a limited number of booklets with evangelistic themes. The other had a wide variety of books covering national politics, regional economics, and Christian living. The latter was always crowded with enthusiastic customers while the former was virtually empty, and from what I gather, was later closed down.

Declining sales indicate that something is running low in the life of your company. You need some boosters. ❖