**Seven Secrets for Successfully Selling Books**

**By Brian Jud**

My recent article (*Why It Can Take Months To Sell Books To Non-Retail Buyers*) described how the trek to special-sales success can be long, arduous and frustrating – but profitable. Through it all, a strong and determined attitude can serve as your GPS on your path to success. There are several basic axioms in book marketing in general -- and special sales in particular -- that may have a negative impact on your attitude. If you can know in advance that these are going to occur, the negative impact on your attitude may be reduced.

* **Rejection is a way of life**. Be forewarned that you will be rejected far more times than you will be accepted, and this may wear away at your attitude. But do not take rejection personally. That is easy to say, but it can be done if you accept rejection as a challenge to learn, improve your strategy and tactics and thereby increase the likelihood that you will close the sale next time.
* **People make decisions on their schedules, not on yours**. One of the problems with setting a sales objective is that it is based on *your* forecasts and *your* presumptions of what people will buy and when they will buy it. However, your potential customers do not know this. They only know what they want and when they want it. Their needs and deadlines may not coincide with yours. Your prospects may have promotions planned for next year and your book will fit nicely with them. But they will not buy until next year regardless of *your* goal.
* **The order is rarely as much as you had hoped**. Again, buyers purchase what they need, not what you forecast. And since many buy on a non-returnable basis, they will not commit to a large quantity until it has proven successful.

Think of your attitude as you would the spokes of a wheel on an old Conestoga wagon. All the spokes must be in place if the wheel is to function properly for the length of the trip. If one or more of them is broken, the wheel could be crushed under the pressure of the wagon. Similarly, you have seven "spokes" to maintain for an effective book-marketing attitude. They enable you to remain competent, professional, enthusiastic and successful throughout your journey to sell your books in special markets. These seven Cs are:

**1) Courage**. It takes a little bravery to break free from your habits of selling only to bookstores. Leaving your comfort zone is never easy, yet it must be done. In special-sales marketing, it also takes courage to…

• seek assistance in your quest. You do not have to go through all this alone. For example, if you need sales help, hire a consultant or join an APSS [Mastermind Group](http://www.bookapss.org/MastermindGroup.pdf) and benefit form OPM – Other People’s Minds.

• accept responsibility for your circumstances. Blaming unresponsive prospects for lost sales will not solve your problem. Discover what went wrong and then correct it.

• go on the offense. At times you may feel as if you have lost control and that the potential customers "hold all the cards." If you relinquish control of your actions, you will end up selling only to bookstores and libraries rather than soliciting new markets and opportunities.

One way to go on the offensive is to be assertive during negotiations. A sales call is analogous to a sporting event: you can only score when you have possession of the ball. If the interviewer controls the ball for the entire game, you may not get to make your presentation. If you simply "attend" a negotiation without actively participating, you will not score many points.

• try different approaches. It takes valor to attempt something untried, and this is exactly what you must do to shake up your thinking and be creative in the action you take.

**2) Commitment** is the knowledge that “If it’s to be it’s up to me,” as Brian Tracy implores. Commitment is also the ability to devote your entire focus on the attainment of your objective. It is the discipline to continue trying in the face of adversity and rejection. Commitment is the understanding that you are not perfect, and therefore you must continue evaluating your results and trying different tactics, using trial-and-error and learning from your mistakes.

**3) Competition**, or the spirit of vying with others for a prize, may be more successful if you direct your competition toward yourself instead of others. Competition does not have to be against others for you to win.

Compete with yourself to contact one more person per day this week than you did last week. Look for ways to make your selling skills better than they were yesterday but not as good as they will be tomorrow. Seek one more idea to solve a problem. Attempt to improve yourself in some way, every day. Improve on your actions and skills and you are more likely to become successful more quickly.

From a different perspective, some authors feel that their content is unique and they have no competition. That is untrue in retail marketing where you are competing against other books for shelf space and share of wallet. It is also untrue among corporate buyers when you compete against coffee mugs, umbrellas, golf shirts and many other promotional items.

**4) Confidence** is the ability to entrust yourself with your future. Self-confidence will bolster your courage to perform all the tasks you may be reluctant to do. It will enable you to make cold-calls in person or to pick up that “200-pound telephone” and make more sales calls.

**5) Concentration**. The most points scored in a football game are made in the last two minutes before the end of each half. The players are concentrating on getting the points on the board before time runs out. They are not thinking about what happens if they lose, but on scoring the points necessary to win. Play the special-sales game as if you are always in the last two minutes of the second half. Concentrate on the rewards of success, not the consequences of failure.

Progress in special sales has less to do with speed than it does with direction. Concentration serves as the compass with the arrow pointed directly and unfailingly at your goal.

**6) Creativity** can help you make a molehill out of a mountain. The dictionary defines creativity, "to cause to exist; bring into being; originate." If you are to be successful in special-sales marketing, you must cause opportunities to happen. There will be cases in which your prospective customers have never used books as a premium or sold books in their stores. Your creativity will serve you well by demonstrating to them how they could use books in new ways. Sell your romance novel to limousine services, or your book on leadership to coaches in high school or college sports. Find new ways to make sales happen.

**7) Control**. Some people define control as a restraining act, the need to hold back or curb something. But it is really a dynamic process, as one controls a horse with the reins. It is the ability to recognize an opportunity that comes to you on the spur of the moment, evaluate and pursue it even though it was not part of your original plan. Control requires adjustments to compensate for predictable and unforeseen circumstances as you move toward your objective. With control, you can apply your creativity professionally. It directs your commitment so you can pursue your goals. It helps you use your confidence for productive means. A controlled grip on your anxiety will give you the courage to continue with your efforts even after you have been rejected most of the time. And it ensures that you maintain your competitive edge.

Think of controlling your book-marketing activities as you would driving and maintaining your car. You turn it on, put it in gear, direct it toward your destination, determine the speed with which you move ahead, make corrections in your course, schedule it for regular maintenance and add fuel periodically.

Work with the ideas presented here to control your attitude, then increase your sales and profitability in special-sales markets. Use what is good for you and your titles. Keep an open mind, look for new opportunities and make it happen. It is all up to you.

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Brian Jud is the author of *How to Make Real Money Selling Books*, the Executive Director of the Association of Publishers for Special Sales (APSS – [www.bookapss.org](http://www.bookapss.org)), and the administrator of Book Selling University ([www.booksellinguniversity.com](http://www.booksellinguniversity.com)) Contact Brian at brianjud@bookmarketing.com or www.premiumbookcompany.com