**Think Minimum Instead of Maximum**

**By Brian Jud**

This is the time of year when authors resolve to sell more of their books than they did last year. But “upsurges of enthusiasm in early January are generally followed by flagging commitment in February,” according to an article in the *Wall Street* *Journal* (“On the Journey to New Habits, Take Tiny Steps,” by BJ Fogg, January 4, 2020, page C3). When people see what needs to be done to sell more books, they often feel they cannot do it and they give up.

Change the way you approach a large opportunity (such as selling books to non-bookstore buyers) by not trying to do too much too quickly. Some people looked at Goliath and thought he was too big to hit. David looked at him and thought he was too big to miss. You might look at the non-bookstore market for books and think, “Is that market big enough to approach, or is it too big?” The answer is *yes*. A special-sales market of $14 - $16 billion is too big to pass up. However, it can be too big a market in which to compete profitably -- if you look at it as one goliath market. Divide your special-sales opportunity into manageable segments. The *Wall Street* *Journal* article gives four steps to do that.

**Step One: Get motivated**. Pick a behavior that you want to do rather than one you merely feel obligated to do. Do you really want to sell more books? If set SMART goals for yourself this year.

**Stretch** your goal to sell books. Go a little outside your comfort zone by picking up that 200-pound telephone to call a prospective buyer. Successful performance expands your zone little by little.

**Measurable**. Your objective should not be to “sell more books than last year.” In that case, an increase of one book would meet your goal. Be specific in the number of books you want to sell. Also set goals for specific increases in revenue and profits. You can easily sell more printed books if you sell them for $ .99, but that will not increase your profits.

**Actionable**. Your goal should be in the realm of your abilities. If you don’t have the time, desire or skills to sell to corporate buyers, hire someone to do it for you. Find a distribution partner to sell your books for you to non-bookstore retailers (airport stores, supermarkets, gift shops, etc.)

**Realistic**. A rubber band will break if you stretch it too far. Don’t think in term of millions of books initially, but perhaps a 10% increase over last year. Reach for the stars but keep your feet on the ground.

**Time-oriented**. Set a date to reach your goals. Begin with an annual deadline, but also set and interim goal in six months to monitor your progress and make necessary changes.

**Step Two: Make the step simple and small at first**. Do not look at special sales as a big project requiring you to change your business model overnight. Instead, what is the minimum you can do to get started? Just commit to spending 5 minutes a day for the next week thinking about how a corporation could use your content to help them. How about an association? Could a school use your material? The military? Then next week spend 10 minutes a day searching for potential buyers in each relevant segment. In the following week write a script to use when calling or emailing buyers. Then make a few calls or send emails. As you begin to experience success your enthusiasm will overtake you and you will launch yourself into a new way of doing business – without giving up the old.

**Step Three: Get a personal prompt, a way to reliably trigger the behavior**. The best way to prompt a new habit is to anchor it to an existing routine in your life. When you read and respond to your emails each morning, send one email to a corporate buyer. Then two, then three…

**Step Four: Celebrate your new habit** so that your brain associates it with positive feelings. When you finally connect with a new buyer after leaving several voicemail messages, feel good about yourself in that exact moment with an internal “Good Job!” or an outward fist pump. The article’s author says, “The more intense the positive emotion, the faster your new behavior will become automatic.”

You probably heard the old joke, “How to you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.” The same concept applies to setting and reaching new goals this year – without giving up. Do not try to do too much so soon that you burn out. Approach the enormous opportunity in non-bookstore sales one bite at a time.

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