**Four Tips for Negotiating Large Book Orders**

**By Brian Jud**

Have you ever bargained with a potential employer for a job offer? If so, you already know the basics of negotiating a large, non-returnable book order since there are many parallels in the two situations.

For example, when discussing employment compensation, you probably did not focus on a specific salary, but on a total package that included salary, benefits, vacation time, annual reviews, etc. After summarizing your unique skills, knowledge and positive attitude, you asked for the job. Similarly, when discussing compensation for the sale of your books, you do not fucus on the price, but on the total package consisting of variables such as cost, returns, payment terms, shipping dates, customization, possible referrals and the likelihood of recurring orders. Here are four tips to help you prepare to ask for -- and get -- an order for your books.

**Tip One. Know your ultimate objective**. If you go into a negotiation thinking about how many books you can sell, you will probably not sell any. When bargaining with a corporate buyer, the least important think in the discussion is your book. The most important thing is how your content can help the buyer solve a business problem. Examples are how to introduce a new product, enter a new market, increase lagging sales, or motivate/train employees.

Focus on the long term. A win-win solution now may set the stage for a lucrative relationship over a period of years. That does not mean you lose money on this sale. That is not a win-win solution. Perhaps you could accept a lower – yet still profitable -- price for your books with a promise of forthcoming business establishing a future stream of revenue from the company. Looking at the total compensation package you could request different payment terms or ask for referrals to buyers in different divisions of the company.

**Tip Two: Adapt your tactical approach**. There are three general approaches to consummating a book sale. The first is to *recommend* a course that is standard for a marketing campaign. This might be to use your book as a premium for purchasing a certain number of the company’s products. The second is an *alternative* negotiation in which you propose an unusual arrangement that runs counter to the company’s typical practice. An example is to ask for a bonus if the campaign’s objectives are exceeded. The third is a *participating* negotiation in which you propose a role for yourself in developing the initiative, such as training the company’s employees through a series of online workshops (for which you are paid).

Organizations may be especially receptive to alternative and participating negotiations during challenging or quickly changing times when people seek ways to adapt or innovate. For instance, considering the Covid-19 pandemic, companies may be looking for ways to train or motivate remote employees via Zoom or other platforms.

**Tip Three: Prepare alternative solutions**. Determine in advance the boundaries of an optimum order for you. Before you meet with your prospect, consult your printer to learn your book’s printing costs at a variety of quantities. Learn the cost to customize your books if you must add the customer’s logo to the cover or insert a page with their message. How much time is needed to print and ship various quantities?

This preparation serves you well in two common circumstances. Your prospect might say, “What is my price and delivery date for 10,000 books printed with our logo on the cover?” You can answer quickly and correctly, and close the sale on the spot. Conversely, your prospect may say, “If you can deliver 10,000 customized books in four weeks for $3.00 each, I’ll give you a check now.” You will know immediately if those terms comprise a profitable order. Then you can either accept or counter.

Price and delivery are two areas in which you may find yourself at odds with your prospect. When conflict arises, do not become argumentative, but do not let your prospect take advantage of you, either. Take the focus off price and place it on non-price issues. Focus on variables where your prospect’s interests and yours have more in common. Find and agree upon the best package of product, price, terms and service that most increases the value for your prospect without sacrificing your needs.

**Tip Four: Build relationships**. Concentrate on creating a mutually profitable long-term relationship with everyone involved in making the decision, since large book orders typically involve multiple stakeholders. These could be representatives from corporate marketing, sales, human resources, purchasing and warehousing. Meet with them individually prior to sitting down to negotiate. Discuss their perspectives on your proposal and solicit their feedback and input. You may find that just asking for their opinion will impress them and make them more likely to support your position.

On your side, stakeholders could be designers, printers and shipping companies. Coordinating these various positions requires keeping your eye on the total package, ensuring that you are dealing with the right parties over the right issues, and preventing misunderstandings from derailing the process.

Negotiating a large order can be time consuming, but it can also be worth it when you ask the buyer to approve the agreement and hand you a check. Use these tips to help you forge a long-term, mutually profitable relationship with people in target companies, and you can close many large orders for your books.