**Four Simple, Free Ways to Sell More Books**

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Most authors with whom I speak are frustrated with their inability to get distribution to bookstores or generate any significant book sales. If you are one of them, there are four things you can do immediately to open your gateway to success. They are simple to do, cost nothing and will demonstrate to everyone in the publishing industry that you are Category Five marketing force.

Before a race begins, do you hear the starter chant, “On Your Mark, Go, Get Set?” Of course not. Racers must get set before they can go. So must book marketers. Here are four things you can do to get a good start in your marathon to publishing success: 1) *Separating*, dividing your potential readers into groups based on *their* reasons to buy your book(s), 2) *Differentiating*, making sure your content is different from competition, 3) Reversing perspective,  realizing that changing your viewpoint creates new options, and 4) Eating elephants. You may have heard the old joke, “How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.” In book marketing, use steppingstones, small, incremental steps, to reach your larger objective.

Separating

Suppose your book is about ways women can resolve their fear. Everybody is afraid of something at some level, right? So, you might define your target reader as “every woman.” But how can you tell “every woman” the ways your content will help her specifically? Speak to them individually by dividing your target readers into categories, such as women who are afraid of flying, dying, speaking, failure, being in a relationship or other types of fears.

For example, what if “soccer moms” were singled out as a target segment? These mothers might be fearful for the safety, health and future of their children. In this case, you would define the typical “mom” who will benefit from reading your book. Begin by getting answers to the following questions and creating a composite of the target “mom” to whom you will market.

* What is her average level of education?
* What social media does she use?
* Where does she shop?
* What products might she use for food, clothing or personal hygiene?
* About how old is she?
* How much money does she make?
* What magazines and newspapers does she read?
* What are her problems or pain points?
* To what organizations or associations might she belong?
* To what radio and television shows does she listen/watch?
* Are there geographic concentrations of prospects?
* How can you reach her with publicity? Advertising? Sales promotion?

The way soccer moms respond to these questions would give you information about how to market to them. You would now know the level of vocabulary to use, buzz words that would make sense to her, and the problems she wants to solve. You might have your books for sale in supermarkets and discount stores. You now have a good idea of the social, print and broadcast media in which to place your promotional material. What companies sell food, clothes or personal hygiene items to her? These would be prime candidates for bulk sales, as would the soccer or parenting associations to which she belongs.

Now, think about how a mid-life career woman would answer these questions. Or, what about a recently retired or divorced woman? What about a woman in the military? Women in each segment have different pain points, favorite media and purchase diverse products in different stores. You can see how a one-size-fits -all marketing effort directed to “everybody” would probably fail.

Differentiating.

The opposite of “everybody” is “nobody” which is the answer most authors give when asked, “Who is your competition?” A quick search about your topic on Amazon.com will reveal competitive titles. If there are none, re-analyze the size of your potential market. Your book about how to start your own country may be the only book on that topic, but what is the sales opportunity?

Every book has competition if you look at it more broadly. You are competing for retailers’ shelf space, airtime on broadcast media or column inches in print media. You are competing against other sources of your information that could be accessed for free on the Internet or through online courses, blogs and podcasts. Fiction competes against all other forms of entertainment for your share of your target’s wallet. All books compete with promotional items such as coffee mugs, hats and T-shirts in corporate sales.

Once you realize this, you can make your target readers and buyers understand how your content will benefit them in more ways than any other source. Create and communicate a unique value proposition, showing each niche your singular ability to meet their needs and solve their problems.

Reversing perspective.

When publishers attempt to get their books into retail stores, including bookstores, they describe how great their book is with all its awards, testimonials and beautiful photographs. Unfortunately, retail buyers do not care. They want products that will increase their store traffic, inventory turns and profit per square foot. If your book does not provide those results, it is removed from the shelves and returned.

Distributors to these buyers do not want to handle “boomerang books” that are returned. They want books that are unique, of high quality and supported by intensive promotion so their customers keep reordering.

Reverse your perspective to see your product from their viewpoint. Stop selling what your book *is* and start selling what your content *does*. The bulk of your submission proposal will then describe how your consistent and targeted promotional efforts will keep the pipeline running smoothly.

The same principle holds for getting into print or broadcast media. Every decision maker is listening to that radio station WIIFM: What’s In It For Me? They, too, do not care about selling your book. They want an informed guest who can educate and/or entertain their viewers, listeners, or readers. Prove that you can do that for their audiences rather than describing the virtues of your book. Similarly, librarians in urban, suburban, law, school, prison and religious libraries all have different collections that meet the needs of their patrons.

Think about the users of social media. When you visit your favorite sites, you may be deluged by authors saying how proud they are that their book is published, and “here is the link to buy it on Amazon.com,” or “it’s free today only.” So what? WIIFM?

Then expand from your core buyers and show how your content can solve the problems of non-retail buyers. People in corporations will purchase large, non-returnable quantities of your books if you can demonstrate how your content can help them sell more of their products or motivate or educate their employees. The membership director of an association wants to increase revenue from dues, and might use your book as a giveaway to thank those who join or renew their membership.

Using Steppingstones

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 $16 billion is too big to pass up. However, it can be too big a market in which to compete profitably -- if you try to take it all on at one time.

The steppingstone strategy *i*nvolves approaching the large non-bookstore market with small, intermediate actions rather than gigantic leaps. In fact, you have already taken the first three steps by defining your target buyers and competition, while reversing your perspective.

Separate the special sales market into two categories: retail and non-retail. Initially approach the retail segment since you know where your target buyers shop and you know the benefits those retailers seek. Change your perspective and look for other retailers such as airport stores, pharmacies, supermarkets, discount stores and gift shops that are appropriate given your targets’ shopping habits.

Your current trade distributor may already be selling to these retailers. If not, seek a non-competitive distributor that does. For example, contact ReaderLink (<https://www.readerlink.com>), the largest full-service distributor of hardcover, trade and paperback books to non-trade channel booksellers in North America.

Then as you become more comfortable with non-bookstore marketing, look to selling your books to non-retail buyers in corporations, associations, schools, government agencies and the military. There are no distributors to most of these, so you have two options. You can contact the buyers yourself[[1]](#footnote-1) or find companies or sales representatives who will do it for you. Here are examples of those who can do it for you:

* The Marketing and Sales Group (Guy Achtzehn, guy@msgpromo.com) works through a network of over 60,000 commissioned salespeople who can personally present your books to non-retail buyers (Disclaimer: Guy and Brian Jud are business partners)
* The Advertising Specialty Institute (<https://www.asicentral.com> ) is an industry leader in advertising opportunities, trade shows and events. Its members can sell your books for you.

There you have it. Four things you can do immediately to multiply your sales exponentially. The steps are simple, but not necessarily easy. Those who will take them and do what is required will succeed. Will you be one of them?

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1. For details on finding distribution partners for selling to retailers, or for instructions for contacting non-retail buyers yourself, read Brian Jud’s book, *How To Make Real Money Selling Books (without worrying about returns)* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)