**Reasons Why a Distributor May Turn Down Your Book**

**By Brian Jud**

There are many opportunities for book sales through non-bookstore retailers. These could be airport stores, supermarkets, discount stores, gift shops and many more. The good news is that you sell to them in ways in which you are already familiar: you get a distribution partner and they contact buyers for you. The bad news is that the distributors are inundated with books that they cannot take on and therefore must reject them. Even a good book may be declined if not submitted properly or has missing information.

The Association of Publishers for Special Sales (APSS, [www.bookapss.org](http://www.bookapss.org)) has a program to submit our members’ books to distribution partners, many of which specialize in selling to non-bookstore retailers. Years of experience has helped us develop solid information about what they may or may not accept – and why. There are many reasons why a well-written book may be turned down for purchase, but too often the books are rejected due to several common mistakes. Any one of these may be cause for it being declined. Here are some common reasons why a book might not be accepted by a distributor or wholesaler.

**The book is not a good fit with them**. Most book distributors specialize in certain genres and will not accept books outside them. For example, Cardinal Publishers Group (CPG) will provide distribution for adult non-fiction books (no fiction, inspirational or children’s books) to bookstores and other non-bookstore retailers across the United States and Canada. If you send them your children’s picture book it will be turned down. Check their websites before submitting books so you adhere to their guidelines.

**No marketing plan is submitted**. Demonstrate that you know your target audience, competitive titles and prices, and are willing to promote your book. Give detailed information about the pre-publication promotion you have done and the post-publication marketing you will do. Indicate the size of your platform and what you are doing to maintain and build it.

**Not understanding the retailers’ hot buttons**. Retailers want products that do three things for them. One, bring more people into the stores. Two, increase profit per square foot and three, increase inventory turns. Describe how your heavy promotion will help them meet those criteria. If not, your book won’t sell, will be returned for full credit and replaced by another product.

**Not providing specifications**. What is the size of your book? Case quantities? Number of pages? Photos or illustrations? Is it one of a series? List the ISBN and LCCN or CIP data. What other books have you published? How many did you sell?

**Know the customer of your target retailers**. Think of the types of people who frequent airport stores before submitting your book to the Hudson Group. For example. If your book is not appropriate for travelers, it will not be accepted. Think about how much different the customer is for a Hallmark gift store than those who go to Spencer Gifts.

**What are the author’s credentials**? The author must have credible credentials for writing a book on the topic, not just the fact that he or she has a special experience raising children or overcoming a particular illness. Certain subjects require the education and knowledge of experienced professionals. If fiction, Has the author written other books? How many were sold?

**Cover art and interior design look self-published**. Chose an experienced book designer to produce your cover and page layout. Distributors can look at a book’s cover for just a few seconds and judge the book’s sophistication and professionalism. The cover design includes the spine and rear cover, too.

**The book was not edited**. If your book passes the initial design test, the acquisition people will read the first few pages and other pages chosen at random. If your content is rife with typos and grammatical errors, it will be declined.

**Testimonials should be from people with impressive credentials**. It is common to have a quotation from a businessperson on a business book, but unless that person has nationally recognized credentials it hurts the book’s chances more than it helps. The same concept applies to endorsements attributed to initials only (BJ, Avon, CT).

**The format does not fit the age group**. For example, a children's picture book with pages that have large amounts of text no longer works as a picture book. If your target reader is in an older demographic category you might need a large-print edition.

**The book is inappropriately priced**. It is not difficult to research competitive prices before establishing the retail price. If the price of your book is outside the parameters for your category and format it may not be accepted. The price should also be shown on the rear cover.

To stay in the retail stores – including bookstores -- your book should sell well in 60 to 90 days. It will remain there as only as it is more profitable than a replacement product. And you must keep up the heavy promotion over time to keep it selling, or your unsold books will be returned.

Retailers do not sell books, they display books. And they don’t want your book on their shelves, they want it at their cash register. They want products that can sell themselves in terms of design, content, fit, price and promotion. The easier you can make it for a potential distribution partner to sell you book, the more likely it is they will accept it. Make them confident that your book will be profitable for them by giving them the information they need to make a decision.

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