



# The Guide to Long-Term Profits

**Brian Jud**

After more than ten years in the corporate world, I was laid off my job. I didn't want to return to the 9-to-5 routine, so I decided to try something different: I would become an author. How hard could it be to write a book? Although the writing was difficult, I soon learned that was the easy part.

Thirty years later, I look back to one critical decision that enabled me to build a new, lasting and profitable career. I decided that I was no longer an author, I was starting a business. I had to apply the marketing lessons I learned in college, graduate school and from corporate mentors to build my company. Here are some of the lessons I learned that may help you do the same.

**Create unique content.** The poor economy that led to my lay-off inspired me to choose the topic for my first book. I wrote and self-published *Job Search 101* to help unemployed people get back to work. There were many books existing on that topic, so I had to create exclusive content, something different from my competitors. Rather than regurgitate available content about writing resumes and interviewing, I described how to create a career marketing plan to sell the product (the unemployed person), and price, distribute and promote it properly to a targeted audience.

**Produce a quality product.** I knew that I would be competing on the shelf with books published by the big names. I went to chain and independent stores to research my competition. All the career books were in one section, alphabetical by author. I looked at those surrounding the space waiting for the Jud book, to learn their pricing, design, size and content. One immediate lesson was that I had to have a professional cover and layout, with edited copy.

**Focus on unserved niches.** Unemployed people would not pay for a book when they could get the same information for free – in libraries. I secured a library wholesaler and conducted personal presentations in many libraries. That strategy was not scalable, so I asked another crucial question, “*Who else* needs my content?” which led me to a large, defined and non-competitive niche – colleges. Most of the 3500 four-year colleges have a career-development officer. I purchased a list of them, produced a direct-mail campaign and within two weeks sold almost 3500 books – non-returnable and at full price.

Drilling down into this segment uncovered additional sales opportunities. I sold *Job Search 101* as a textbook and to alumni associations as a premium for those who made donations. I contacted campus chapters of the American Marketing Association and sold them cases of books at half price to use as a fundraising item. Many personal presentations and appearances on college radio shows honed my skills in both functions.

**Modify the product form.** Unfortunately, college students did not want to spend \$14.95 on a book, nor did that want to spend an inordinate amount of time reading. In response, I created a series of 32-page booklets based on the chapters in my book, with only minor copy changes. I sold these to the colleges, who in turn gave them to the students.

**Customize promotional actions.** Each unique niche has its own distinctive reasons for buying the identical product. People in the 55+ age group have different employment needs than do college graduates. Women, blue-collar and part-time job seekers all approach their searches differently. This eliminated one-size-fits-all literature. I also had to vary the information and examples used for each audience while conducting TV and radio interviews.

**Build a core base with line extensions.** A long-term business cannot be built on one product, so I created additional – yet complementary -- products and services. There was a large, unserved market comprised of people who had been out of work for an extended period and needed emotional support. I met that need by publishing *Coping With Unemployment*. Similarly, people with a good attitude and tactical knowledge did not know where to find prospective employers. I published *Help Wanted, Inquire Within* to solve their problem.

Further research demonstrated the need for two more products. First, there was a lack of job-search material for the growing Hispanic market. I had *Job Search 101* translated into Spanish as *Elementos basicos, para buscar trabajo* and used it to enter another large, defined and non-competitive segment.

Second, there was no video to demonstrate the difficult-to-describe actions of body language during a job interview. I created the video program, *The Art of Interviewing*, to show the proper use of gestures, posture and facial expression for maximum impact.

**Vary your pricing strategy.** These new products, combined with the fact that college students do not want to spend \$14.95 on a book, led me to a different pricing strategy. I thought, “Who wants a college student to get a job more than the student does?” The parents of the student. I purchased a list of the parents of graduating college students and produced a direct mail package offering them a non-returnable bundle of three products: *Job Search 101*, *Help Wanted*, *Inquire Within* and *The Art of Interviewing*. The price of the bundle was \$20 less than purchasing the three items separately, but they paid the shipping charges.

Additionally, I wanted to help people having trouble dealing with the negative emotions of prolonged unemployment. Following personal presentations, I offered *Coping With Unemployment* for free – if they promised to pay me when they got a job. Few people took me up on the offer, and most purchased the book after thanking me for making the offer.

**Seek new distribution.** I had a distributor for selling through bookstores and a wholesaler for public libraries, but there were other opportunities not responsive to existing distribution. For example, *Coping With Unemployment* did not sell well through bookstores because people did not want to be seen buying a product like it. I found a catalog offering non-pornographic products people did not want to be seen buying, and my book did very well through it.

I received a call from a prison librarian asking to purchase *Job Search 101*. After learning that the librarian wanted to help soon-to-be released prisoners find a job, I contacted other prison librarians with the same concept and sold another 1500 book in about two weeks. This led me to a new segment of people in similar circumstances -- the military. After a given period they seek employment, as do the spouses who move with the service person for different assignments. I performed presentations – and sold many books – to these people.

Again asking the question, “*Who else* needs my content?” led me to directly contact 50 state Departments of Labor, each trying to reduce their unemployment numbers. Many purchased a slightly revised version of my booklets to give to people when they applied for unemployment compensation, and copies of the *Art of Interviewing* as required viewing before receiving unemployment benefits. Some also hired me to conduct personal presentations (and sell books) at state-sponsored job fairs.

**Expand upon your core foundation.** As the economy improved, I knew the sale of job-search content was limited. Rather than create an entirely new core business,

I extended my existing content. For example, the proper use of gestures, posture, facial expressions and voice necessary for a successful job interview is identical to that required by authors to make effective presentations on TV and radio shows. I created a bundle made up of a video (*You're On The Air*) and two companion guides (*It's Show Time* and *Perpetual Promotion*) to demonstrate those functions, including a rental program for *You're On The Air*.

My book, *Help Wanted, Inquire Within*, showed job seekers where to find employment opportunities in (pre-Internet) places other than newspapers. The same techniques applied to showing authors where to find sales opportunities in places other than in bookstores. I met this need in a large, defined and non-competitive segment by writing and publishing *Beyond the Bookstore* and *How to Make Real Money Selling Books*.

There are many more tactics I implemented to build my business, but these examples demonstrate the major business strategies. Perhaps the most important lesson is to be strategic, methodical and creatively persistent. Do not follow the crowd by doing what everybody else is doing. Create new, unique, high-quality products to reinforce and extend your core offerings. Look to non-bookstore markets to eliminate your competition and find new users and uses for your content. Adapt different pricing strategies and customize your promotional material to address the needs of each segment. Do these and more, and you can build a lasting and profitable business.

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Brian Jud is a book-marketing consultant, Executive Director of the Association of Publishers for Special Sales (APSS – [www.bookapss.org](http://www.bookapss.org)) and author of *How to Make Real Money Selling Books* and *Beyond the Bookstore*. Contact Brian at [brianjud@bookmarketing.com](mailto:brianjud@bookmarketing.com) or [www.premiumbookcompany.com](http://www.premiumbookcompany.com)