



News for and about publishing for our publishers.

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The holiday season is in full swing now, isn't it? My neighborhood bookstores are all decked out with tables full of "gift ideas." I try to resist shopping until after Thanksgiving, but it's hard to avoid with all of the not-so-subtle reminders everywhere I go.

Over the last two months, I have been on the road a great deal—I attended regional bookseller association shows in St. Paul (UMBA) and Providence (NEBA), and I spent 10 days in New York meeting with bookstore buyers (more on that below). Fortunately, Davida and Theresa are so good at their jobs that I don't think my absence was even noticed! And Biblio sales have been fabulous—thanks to all of you—so all is well here in the Biblio offices.

This will be our last issue until 2004. Please have a wonderful and safe holiday season!

### **"The Buck Starts Here"**

Brian Jud, President of Book Marketing Works, LLC, a marketing consultancy firm for independent publishers, has a new book out this month called *Beyond the Bookstore: How To Sell More Books Profitably to Non-Bookstore Markets*. He has generously given us permission to reprint portions of his book in *Bibliophile* to help spread the word about the benefits of non-bookstore sales.

Here's our first excerpt:

### Strategy #24: Stop Selling Your Books

Charles Revlon, then CEO of Revlon Company, was asked to describe what his company sold. He responded, "In the factory we make cosmetics, but in the stores we sell hope." He knew that people do not buy a product, they buy what the product does *for them*. This may be more important in non-bookstore marketing than it is in traditional marketing.

Most products, including books, are combinations of tangible and intangible elements. People do not buy the tangible features of a book, i.e., the paper and ink that create it. They buy the intangible benefits they receive from reading fiction: a vicarious feeling of fantasy, romance, adventure or mystery. And when purchasing nonfiction they are buying information, motivation and help.

As a publisher, you will become more successful at marketing when you stop selling your products and begin selling what they *do for* the people who purchase them. That is the difference between marketing a *feature*, an *advantage* and a *benefit*. A *feature* is an attribute of your product. For a book, it could be its size, binding, title or number of pages. An *advantage* describes the purpose or function of a feature, and a *benefit* is the value the reader receives in exchange for purchasing your book. People buy value, not generic products.

One way of distinguishing among these three definitions is to use the "So What?" test. When thinking of a reason why someone would purchase your book, put yourself in the place of the prospective buyer and ask yourself, "So what?" Keep doing that until your imaginary customer says, "Oh. Now I understand." Then communicate *that* concept in your promotional literature and they will be more likely to buy.

**Feature:** A four-color cookbook with a spiral binding. (*So what?*)

**Advantage:** It will lay flat while you are preparing the meal, making it easy to read. (*So What?*)

**Benefit:** It contains recipes that are easy to prepare and guaranteed to please your guests. You will have more time to socialize and enjoy yourself at your parties. (*Oh. Now I understand.*)

### **Impact on special-sales strategy**

Just as individuals have a variety of reasons for purchasing your books, businesses also have diverse reasons for buying them. Just think about the companies in your channels of distribution.

People at each level of the distribution network have a unique reason for buying your books, and a plea to an incorrect appeal will not motivate them. The key to persuading each to carry your books is to show them why it is in their best interest to work with you. For example, when selling to the buyer at a retail operation you could demonstrate that your superior promotional plan would bring more people into their stores, increasing their inventory turns and profitability. However, an appeal to profitability would not entice a librarian to purchase your book, nor would it persuade a college instructor to buy it as a textbook. The key is to match the appropriate benefit to each prospective customer's reason for wanting to own it.

To demonstrate this concept, assume you are selling a product containing information about child safety. Choose the benefit in the right column that corresponds to the customer in the left column.

1. Car manufacturer      A. Help patrons keep their families protected

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| 2. Distributor    | B. Use as a premium to sell more cars                          |
| 3. Parent         | C. Help students learn how to stay safe                        |
| 4. Librarian      | D. Your promotion will make their sales people more productive |
| 5. School teacher | E. Keep children secure and feel like a good parent            |

(Answers: 1B, 2D, 3E, 4A, 5C)

### **Production**

The process begins with the design of your book. To demonstrate this, think about its size. You may have designed it as 8.5" x 11" so the readers will be able to use it as a workbook and make notes in the large margins. In this case you would not promote its size but the fact that the information may be conveniently recorded and saved. If your leather-bound book is designed for a corporation to use as a gift, then promote the feel, smell and status of leather and not the information in the book.

### **Pricing**

The *price* of your book is a feature. The *value* of your book is a benefit. Customers attach value to books in proportion to the perceived ability of it to help them solve their problems. If your book is more expensive than competitors' books, your promotional material must translate the price into value for the consumer. One way to do this is to describe the *incremental difference* and what the reader receives for it. If your \$19.95 book is \$5 more than the competition, demonstrate to the readers what they will gain in exchange for that amount. Or, you could appeal to their fear of making a wrong decision and how much they will lose by not spending the additional \$5. In either case you will be more effective if you communicate the value your book offers your customers.

You can also use a surrogate indicator, a cue that takes the place of a buying criterion, to demonstrate the benefits of your higher price. These cues include endorsements, guarantees and slogans. Even the way you write the price makes a difference. For example, which looks like a larger figure, \$5 or \$5.00? If you want to make a price look smaller do not include the numbers to the right of the decimal point. On the other hand, if you want to accentuate the difference, include the decimal point and zeroes.

### **Practical application**

Organize this information for everyday use by condensing it into a handy action guide that will regularly remind you of your item's benefits. To create this useful plan, align a page horizontally and divide it into four columns. In the left-hand column list the different market segments that are potential targets for your title. In the next column define the decision maker for this segment. Use column three to describe the benefits your title provides this group, the *potential* you should communicate. Column four lists the general marketing strategies you will implement to describe the respective benefits to each decision maker. (*The book provides an example.*)

People do not buy features; they buy benefits. They buy what your book will do *for them*. Each decision maker has a unique reason for buying. Know what that is and communicate that benefit to them. Keep this in mind when you are creating your book or convincing people to buy it and you will sell more books, have fewer returns and become more profitable. (*Oh. Now I understand.*)

(Reprinted from *Beyond the Bookstore* by Brian Jud, Reed Press 1-59429-005-9; See Brian's website at <http://www.bookmarketingworks.com/>)

## NOTES FROM THE FIELD: SELLING TO A NATIONAL CHAIN

The two major national chains in the U.S. both have a group of buyers who decide what books to purchase for his/her specific categories. There are many "rules and regulations" involved in presenting books to these buyers and getting the titles into the many databases, but the biggest hurdle is convincing an extremely discerning, knowledgeable book buyer to use his/her allotted budget money and shelf space on your book. I'd like to share some feedback I received from the book buyers for one of these chains, in hopes that it will help you plan your future titles.

- Defining your audience is crucial. Tell us who the reader is and where they would be looking for books—be specific (for example, religion has many sub-sections). This is especially important when it comes to New Age and Religion, because of the often subtle differences.
- You must tell us where your author lives and the closest metro area. While the buyer may decide not to buy books for the whole country, you can at least get copies in your author's area.
- Know your subject and its affiliated bookstore placement. For example, personal journeys need to have a focus in a traditional sub-section of Religion, otherwise, the book belongs in New Age. And Biography isn't even a category at Borders, so you need to specify what other section the book is appropriate for—history, women's studies, etc.
- Keep your price points low! The #1 reason that buyers "skip" (meaning they don't buy any copies) a title is because it's over-priced. Make sure your book stays on the low side of the price range in your category. Although John Grisham can charge \$26.95 for his new hardcover novel, that doesn't mean you should (unless you've had 3 or more novels on the NYT bestseller list).
- Cover design is the second most common reason for a "skip." Buyers are often pre-disposed to thinking an independent publisher can't produce a good cover, so you're often fighting an uphill battle to impress them. Stay away from white covers, amateur drawings, endorsements from anyone but famous people, the author's picture, etc. We all know this is subjective, but most industry professionals agree when a cover is "great."
- There must be promotion. The buyer won't even consider taking up shelf space for a book that's not being promoted. No one makes any money on returns. Your tip sheet has to reflect some kind of promotion—author tour (even regional is fine), direct mail campaign, ads in niche publications, etc. Make sure you're targeting your customer!
- If your author has previous titles, include them on the tip sheet. An author's previous titles play a significant role in the buying decision. And, you can't hide a book that didn't sell well—the buyer WILL check their database and the sales history is there.

- Your tip sheet is what the buyers look at to learn more about your book. Make sure that it was written with them in mind. Don't write in first person, use spellcheck, have someone else proof it for you, leave out references to specific accounts (they may be the competition) and never, ever say the words "Oprah" or "no other book like it." These are the kiss of death.
- Buyers don't want to see books more than once. Do not submit your book yourself to Borders or B&N directly. That's what Biblio does. If you do it first then the buyer may skip it because the appropriate info was not included, and they won't let me show it to them again.
- Holiday buying is done by the end of August. If you have a holiday title, you'll need to make sure that your schedule matches Biblio's to make sure it's presented to the buyers before August.
- Some category specific advice:
  - business books combined with "life advice" don't usually sell
  - sports novels are a great niche
  - childrens picture books must have spectacular art and the appropriate amount of text
  - "beginning reader" books (usually 36-48 pages for ages 4-8) won't be picked up if they're hardcover
  - parenting for older kids is an issue-driven section and prescriptive books on specific problems is what sells
  - dealing with "bad news" in the parenting section requires the topic be couched in a positive way to avoid the parental "head in the sand" syndrome

## ONLINE REPORTS

Reports supplied to Biblio client publishers on-line show a wide range of information for the publishers' daily use. Information provided includes information on sales, inventory, receipts and low stock.

Reports are in two formats - Microsoft Excel for any calculations the publisher might need to do with the numbers, and Monarch, which is the information formatted in a easy to use report. Monarch can potentially be used on MACs using a couple of short cuts. If you have a MAC and are interested, please contact Karen Mattscheck at [kmattscheck@nbnbooks.com](mailto:kmattscheck@nbnbooks.com).

We will be explaining a report in each issue of this newsletter.

## GROSS/RETURNS/NET (GRN)

The GRN is a summary of all sales and inventory information on each title. It is run daily. We also keep the last report of each month also in a monthly section. The monthly reports will stay on line for at least 13 months.

The first information shown on the GRN is inventory data. For those using the Monarch version, these are the first three columns of data directly underneath the ISBN and title on the report. Key data in this section includes the total quantity of books in the warehouse (QOH) and the total quantity of

books that are available for sale (QAV). The difference between these two numbers is the inventory that has been allocated for orders (QCTD), or quantity committed.

The quantity committed is in process of being shipped to our customers. Inventory will stay in the committed column until the goods have been invoiced to the customer. The committed quantity is always a changing number as orders are shipped and new orders are taken. At times you will see the committed quantity remain at a constant level for a period of over a week. This is not something to be concerned about. It is generally due to one of two situations: an account that has placed an order but has requested a delay in shipping, or an order placed by an account that has certain criteria selected for shipment. The smaller customers require orders be held for a minimum quantity of books and/or a maximum number of days to keep freight costs down.

You can also see any backorders (CBKO), and how many books have been shipped from NBN at no charge, generally due to requests from the publishers (QGRA). Also, if the publisher or our sales department has requested that books be held for a specific sale, the quantity is taken out of inventory and held aside or reserved (QRES).

We also show you the books found damaged in the warehouse (MDAJ) or books that are returned and cannot be restocked to the shelf (MNRT). Other information in the inventory data area includes price, format of the title and carton quantity.

The remaining part of the report shows sales history for the title. The information is sorted into three areas. The first is the gross sales, which is shown for the current month-to-date, the current calendar year-to-date and for the life of the ISBN with NBN. Sales are shown in units and dollars (column titled amount).

Returns are then summarized. Please note that the units only reflect the quantity that could be restocked to the shelf (the units returned which could not be restocked is shown under MNRT in the area under the title). The dollars, however, reflect the total credited back to the customer. Again, the information is shown for the month, year and life to date of the title.

Finally, you see the net numbers for the title, again for the month, year and life of the ISBN.

The *Gross/Net/Returns* is a summary report that gives an excellent snapshot of all the critical data on your titles. Other reports show detailed information of activity on the titles. I look forward to explaining these reports in later issues of this newsletter. Please e-mail me at [kmattscheck@nbnbooks.com](mailto:kmattscheck@nbnbooks.com) if you have any questions. (Courtesy of Karen Mattscheck)

## **"THE REST OF US 2003"**

Publishers Marketing Association, in conjunction with the Book Industry Study Group, has released *The Rest of Us 2003: An Update of the 1998 Report on America's Independent, Smaller Book Publishers*. Among the key findings of this report are:

- Independent and smaller publishers in the aggregate have annual sales of between \$29.4 billion and \$34.3 billion - approximately 10%-27% greater than the reported base for the entire publishing industry.
- The independent and smaller publisher base has grown at an annual rate of 21% since the original Rest of Us survey was taken in 1997.
- Growth is coming primarily from publishers in the \$120,000 to \$249,000 category (from 9% then to 15% now).

Both the 1998 and 2003 studies indicate that independent publishers are more important to the publishing industry than ever before. Also, that while America's economic problems have virtually halted the unit growth of the larger book publishers, 73,000 "smaller" and 11,887 "medium-sized" publishers listed in the Bowker ISBN database, are a vital, growing segment of the publishing industry "with greater revenues than does the the entire book publishing industry."

PMA will be promoting this report to Congress, media, agents, authors, book manufacturers, business supply companies, as well as wholesalers and retailers to garner more attention and support for small presses. To purchase the full report, see the PMA website:

<http://www.pma-online.org/benefits/whitepapers.cfm>

(By the way, if you're not already a member of PMA, you should be. And think about attending PMA University at BEA in Chicago in June.)

### **AMAZON'S NEW "SEARCH INSIDE THE BOOK" PROGRAM**

I've heard from several of you who are concerned about this new initiative from Amazon, however, you can feel comfortable that Amazon does need a publisher's permission to do this. They are starting with a test sample of books and they have gotten the publisher's signed ok for every title currently in the program.

While we are all aware of the negative implications of the program, the November 10 issue of Time Magazine included a positive article on it called "*Google' Your Books.*" The article said about the program: "The No. 1 online bookseller just added an astonishingly clever feature called 'Search Inside the Book,' which turns the site into the Google of literature. Every page of some 120,000 in-print titles has been scanned into a vast computer database and can be accessed as text. This doesn't mean you'll be reading your favorite best sellers on Amazon for free; there are limits on how many pages you can browse in a single book.

"The upshot is probably the most useful tool for shoppers, scholars and bibliophiles ever invented. In fact, there's no reason why you can't use the service to search books you already have on your shelves. No matter how fast you try to thumb to and from the index pages, Amazon's computers can do it faster.

"The only downside is that before you can look inside the books, you have to either have an account already or give Amazon a credit card number for 'security purposes,' which might keep a lot of kids

and teens away. While this is a nod to publishers worried about people gaining too much free access to their literature, it's a shame. What Amazon would lose in sales by being used as a giant Cliffs Notes, it would gain 10 times over by becoming widely known as a search destination."

I think it's too soon for us to be worried about this curveball from Amazon. We should wait and see how it plays out—it may even result in more book sales! In the meantime, you might want to begin checking with your authors to make sure that you have their approval to respond to Amazon should they request permission on any of your current titles. And check your author contracts to make sure these rights are covered going forward.

## **HELP! MY BOOK HAS BEEN DISCOUNTED!**

Publisher: "I just looked up my book on Amazon.com and am very surprised to see that they are deeply discounting my book. How can this be, when Biblio just started distribution this month? Do you know about this? I hope you can stop them from discounting the book."

Jen: "The discount is there to encourage consumers. It's the same as going to your local bookstore and seeing a 30% off sticker on your title. The discount doesn't affect what you make from sales--and it's encouraging to consumers--so, it's nothing but good for you.

"Books aren't like other products, because they're 100% returnable. So, if a book isn't selling, the retailer doesn't need to "mark it down" --they just return it instead. A discount like this on a book doesn't reflect sales figures or expected sales figures. Usually, the more popular a book is, the more likely it is to have a discount--that's why NYT bestsellers are usually discounted the most."

## **NEW E-MAGAZINE FOCUSES ON AUTHORS**

*Author's Life* is a new online E-Magazine that is looking for published authors to profile and interview. They will also be doing book reviews. This is a free service to all authors. Interested authors should email their personal Bio, a brief summary of their book to Attn: Cindy Butler at AuthorsLife@aol.com.

## **BENJAMIN FRANKLIN AWARDS CALL FOR ENTRIES**

December 31, 2003 is the deadline for submissions to be considered for the 2004 Benjamin Franklin Awards presented by PMA at the Book Expo America. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> call and is primarily for titles published July 1-December 31 of this year. See <http://www.pma-online.org/2.cfm> for more information.

## **WRITER'S DIGEST SELF-PUBLISHED BOOK AWARDS**

Submissions are being accepted for the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual *Writer's Digest* International Self-Published Book Awards. See [http://www.writersdigest.com/contests/self\\_published.asp](http://www.writersdigest.com/contests/self_published.asp) for more information. Deadline: December 15, 2003.

## **PW CALL FOR INFORMATION**

Issue: Spring Children's Announcements (February 16, 2004)  
Deadline: December 12, 2003

NEEDED: Publishers are requested to submit information on children's books that will be published from January through June 2004. A letter has gone out requesting this information; publishers who have not received the letter should fax (646) 746-6738 or email [joybean@reedbusiness.com](mailto:joybean@reedbusiness.com) for a copy. (Please do not send submissions until you have read the letter.) Mark your submission "Spring Children's Announcements" on the envelope and send to Joy Bean, Publishers Weekly, 360 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10010.

OR, if you just want to submit your new book to PW for review (as all publishers should!), here's the link to instructions on how to submit properly:  
<http://publishersweekly.reviewsnews.com/index.asp?layout=submissions&publication=publishersweekly>

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### INFORMATION THAT BEARS REPEATING

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#### To Correct Online Retailer/Database Errors AND to Add Reviews:

<http://www.bibliodistribution.com/publishers/passwordprotect/datacorrections.shtml>  
(Username: bibliopublisher ; Password: bigsales)

Publicity Updates: If you have an update about your publicity and you want the sales reps and our buyers to know about it, please put it into our preferred publicity update format. The format can be found on our website at: <http://www.bibliodistribution.com/publishers/marketing.shtml>

A Plea From the Biblio Staff: Please identify yourself in your e-mails to us. We have quite a few publishers now and we need you to include your name, publishing company, title and ISBN when you contact us. Not including that information will delay response to your request.

Here are a couple of ideas for getting all-important industry information and for networking opportunities:

**Subscribe to *Publishers Weekly*:** [www.publishersweekly.com](http://www.publishersweekly.com)

**JOIN PMA:** <https://pma-online.org/membappl.cfm>

**SUBSCRIBE TO THE *SPAN NEWSLETTER*:** email [Lurina@SPANnet.org](mailto:Lurina@SPANnet.org) and type in "SUBSCRIBE."

Attention Publishers: If there is anything you would like to read about in an upcoming issue of *Bibliophile*, please e-mail your idea to me at [info@bibliodistribution.com](mailto:info@bibliodistribution.com). I will do my best to include it.  
Thank you! -Jen

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