

Transcript, Session 8

Sales

Putting Your Book into the Reader's Hands

This is Section 8, on Sales, or as we also like to call it, putting the book into the reader's hands.

Many people often have a question: What does sales do? Do they call up people on the phone to sell them books? Are they like used car salesmen? While hard-sell tactics might have been part of sales organizations in the past, there is so much more to sales now. In this presentation we will walk you through the life cycle of sales, and give you knowledge and action steps to enable your book to find as many readers as possible. A couple years ago the sales department did an exercise that challenged staff to craft a 7-word mission statement. Out of that exercise we crafted the one that we use today. It is very simple:

Identify Readers

Forge Connections

Fuel the Mission

We identify readers through partnering with the best stores and distributors in the industry. We make connections between the IVP and the wider world of business and between readers and ideas. We do all this for one reason alone: to fuel the mission, not only to help your book reach as many people as possible but also to further the kingdom of God, both through our books and also through InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students.

Another thing that people often wonder about is the difference is between sales and marketing. These departments can be merged or completely separated at some publishing houses. At IVP, they work side by side. On a very basic level, marketing is about both creating awareness and fostering demand, and sales is about creating presence and fulfilling demand. Creating awareness is being out there in media and publications to create the pull demand for a book. Creating presence is placing books where they are needed with retailers and distributors to push demand and present books to consumers.

The very first step in this process is data.

Data is the bread and butter of publishing.

The data process starts about 5 to 8 months before publication when we send what's called an ONIX feed to over 30 industry partners in the United States, Canada, and throughout the world. ONIX is a computer file format that tells partners all of the information about your book, from its size and price to its format and publication date. It also includes author information and endorsements.

This lays the foundations for distribution of our books that come to us from the printers and then ship out from our warehouse at 430 Plaza Drive in Westmont, Illinois.

These will go to major wholesalers, online retailers, libraries, and bookstores throughout the world.

After the books leave the warehouse, we partner with local and national retailers in both the Christian and general markets to get your book onto their shelves.

We also partner with Noble Marketing Group to visit as many stores as possible throughout the United States. There is no way that a publisher the size of IVP alone could possibly get to all of the great stores that would like to carry your books.

We also partner with online retailers and meet with key cataloguers to decide on promotional opportunities such as in-store or email newsletter placement.

We also sell to institutions,

libraries,

colleges and universities,

churches,

and other organizations. We have dedicated teams who get books adopted in college classrooms and curate bulk sales to churches and organizations.

We have also pushed into digital books in a big way in the past decade or so. IVP was one of the first Christian publishers to create a digital book and our efforts in this area have only grown since then, especially in the past few years.

So much so that digital sales now make up 11% of our total sales annually.

These sales are split evenly between Amazon Kindle on one side and other resellers including Faithlife, Olive Tree, and the iBookstore on the other.

One other aspect that you might not have thought about is International sales and Rights.

Long before we send out data, we have a dedicated department that attempts to sell rights to republish or translate your books in other countries. Some of our largest translation markets have been Korea and France, but in the past few years we've seen increasing interest from Indonesia and Brazil. We also sell International republication rights to Partners in Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada, and other parts of the English-speaking world.

Later in the selling cycle we also visit the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia to sell distributed books.

Increasingly, one of the ways that we work with authors to maximize sales for their books is to originate and promote author events.

This can be anything from a small church gathering of a dozen people who want to hear about your new book, up to being placed on the stage of a major conference where your book will be given away to over 10,000 people.

Everything in between is covered by our author event team that tries to make sure that your books are available anywhere you speak, whether you to resell them yourself or partner with a local organization. This special sales department is also instrumental in negotiating any large quantity buys for your book.

As the date of your book's publication approaches, you will get ready for your launch day!

Here are ways that we maximize the post-launch marketplace.

Local retailers will begin to put merchandise plans in place. Perhaps your book has been selected for a catalog or for end-cap display at a national retailer.

In the mean time, InterVarsity press goes to over 100 conferences a year where we hand-select a book list that appeals to the folks at the event.

Here just two examples, the Wheaton Theology Conference and Books Expo America

where we've invested in getting IVP books in front of readers who are most likely to enjoy them.

As your book is published you'll receive a series of sales reports.

We send sales reports at the 3-, 6-, 9-, and 12-month marks.

The most positive ones are typically the three and six-month reports, although sometimes books catch on in the first year and continue with fairly good backlist sales in years 2, 3, and beyond.

We also send

annual royalties reports in October for the previous year's July to June sales, although some contracts request biennial royalties as well.

As we like to say, the highest hope for our books is that they find readers and continue to sell year after year. We call these sorts of gems "backlist favorites."

Many of your favorite books were originally a front-list book for a press and put into a few select stores and yet, over time, found a readership and continued to do so year after year. People often remark that InterVarsity Press books tend to stick around to a greater degree than most others. We're proud of this fact

and we try to keep books in print as long as it is feasible to continue to printing them.

We're often asked what an author can do to maximize sales.

The first thing you can do is talk to local booksellers, though there are fewer and fewer of them. Many of them have a local author section and this is a great way to build community engagement. Any local independent Christian bookstore or American Booksellers Association or IndieBound type of bookstore would also love to hear from a local author, especially one that has been published by a reputable press. Even chain bookstores such as Barnes & Noble and Books-A-Million can be receptive to hearing from local authors.

You can talk to potential organizational buyers, whether this is your church, your denomination, local Christian organizations, or even your alma mater. There are many organizations that might find it useful to sell or give away your book. We have seen institutional buys from every type of organization: from think tanks to hospitals and even a running club. You never know who will find your particular message useful for their constituency.

You might also want to purchase additional author copies beyond your allotment of complimentary copies. To help, IVP has a generous discount schedule that starts at 50% off. This is a great option if you've decided you'd like to sell at events and conferences out of your own personal stock.

So that's about it for sales! If you still have questions, anyone on the InterVarsity Press sales team will be happy to answer your questions. All of our names and faces are at ivpbooksellers.com where you can find more information about who does what and information on some of the places we go to sell at conferences and events throughout the country in the world.