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Foreword

I HEAR FROM NEW BOOK AUTHORS all the time whose typical lament is: “I have a book coming out—or my book has come out—but I have no idea what to do to get it out into the marketplace.” I’m always looking for good resources to help, and since I deal almost exclusively with Christian authors, I want those resources to reflect the unique needs of that market.

I can’t tell you how delighted I was to find *Your Guide to Marketing Books in the Christian Marketplace*. It is not only full of great helps and practical ideas for marketing your own book; it is also a wealth of Christian-oriented resources. Since the job of marketing needs to start long before the book is released, this book will be most helpful to those who are market savvy enough to start the process as soon as the contract is signed. However, if you didn’t get started as soon as you should have, you will still find a lot of resources to help you make up for the lost time.

One of the best features of this guide is that it takes you step-by-step through the various aspects of promotion—not just telling you what you should do, but how to find the contacts that will be critical to your success. The listings of organizations, reviewers, consumer groups, and websites alone are worth the price of the book.

I would encourage writers to read through the book first to become aware of all the possibilities for promoting their book, then go back and work through each section applying what looks like it will work for promoting their particular book. It's the application of these tricks of the trade that will make the difference between successful sales and a garage full of unsold books.

One thing that shines through as you read this book is the author's knowledge of the industry. Sarah Bolme has written a book to fill an ongoing need in the industry, based on her years of experience working with authors and small publishers. It's obvious that she's also done her homework to bring you up-to-date resources to make your job easier. You can trust the author and follow the path she has laid out with confidence.

Now, with this tool in hand, you're prepared to launch out into the exciting job that lies ahead.

Sally E. Stuart

Christian Writers' Market Guide

www.stuartmarket.com

Introduction O

*We will shout for joy when you are victorious
and will lift up our banners in the name of our God.
May the Lord grant all your requests.*

—*Psalms 20:5*

AS THE DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN Small Publishers Association (CSPA), I receive many inquiries about marketing and selling books in the Christian marketplace. I have found that the knowledge base both of marketing techniques and of the Christian marketplace varies widely from inquirer to inquirer. I decided to write this book not as a substitute for all the superb books on book marketing already available, but as a supplement to provide an overall view of the Christian marketplace and to equip publishers, self-publishers, and authors alike with specific resource names and contact information for marketing your books in this niche marketplace.

The Christian marketplace is unique. Knowledge is essential to success in reaching this market. Christian retailers and Christian consumers are inundated with Christian products. Many rely heavily on publisher or author name recognition when making purchasing decisions. Marketing research shows that consumers need to see a new product multiple times before they decide to

purchase. For newcomers in the Christian marketplace, knowledge and perseverance are your keys to success.

The three most common mistakes I see new publishers and authors make are:

1. not acquiring the information needed to reach the Christian marketplace effectively,
2. not acquiring distribution for the Christian marketplace, and
3. giving up too soon.

Marketing and selling books is not a sprint; it is a marathon. Especially for newcomers in the Christian marketplace, establishing oneself as a viable resource of quality Christian materials takes time. Many small and self-publishers do experience success in the Christian marketplace through perseverance and a comprehensive marketing strategy.

If you have pondered whether your publishing company should enter the realm of religious books, you will be delighted to hear that this category of books is selling well. Religious book sales have been growing faster than overall book sales.

I pray that this book will be a valuable resource to you as you strive to bring new insights and inspiration to the family of God. May God bless you and the books that He leads you to produce to encourage, teach, and equip His people.

His servant,
Sarah Bolme

P.S.: Correspondence from readers is welcome—just email me at info@marketingchristianbooks.com.

Section I

Launching Your Books

Get Connected 1

Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

—Proverbs 15:22

THE INDUSTRY OF PUBLISHING and bookselling is in constant motion. What is true today for this business will not necessarily be true next year. Knowledge is vital for success in the publishing and bookselling trade. Publishers and authors must strive to stay abreast of industry happenings and trends. Knowing your competition and what they are doing is smart business. Understanding the current trends of Christian retail stores and Christian consumers allows you to market your products wisely. The best way to gather the information required to stay up-to-date about this industry is to get connected.

Join a Publishers Association

Name recognition is an essential ingredient in marketing your book in the Christian marketplace. With the myriad of Christian books available today, Christian retailers are inundated with product choices and do not have the time to screen every book they stock in

their stores. As a result, most Christian retailers rely on name recognition to ensure that the products they carry contain messages that are consistent with Protestant or Catholic Christian views and are not other religious materials dressed up in Christian attire.

Christian retailers tend to rely on five main sources for name recognition in considering materials for their stores:

- Known Christian author or personality
- Established Christian publishing house
- Endorsement by a known Christian personality
- Favorable review by a reputable Christian source
- Alliance with a Christian publishers association

Since new small and self-publishers are not established Christian publishing houses and typically are not publishing titles by established Christian personalities, pursuing the other three choices are your best options for engendering confidence in the content and quality of your books. An alliance with a Christian publishers association is a good place to start.

Joining a publishers association is a wise decision for any publisher. Here are four fundamental benefits of joining a publishers association.

1. You gain respect in the book industry.

In the Christian marketplace, name recognition for credibility purposes is probably the most important reason for a new, small, or self-publisher to join a Christian publishers association. Christian retailers gain confidence in a new publisher's products when they know that publisher is a member of a Christian organization in the industry. Professional organizations hold their members to a high standard of conduct. Membership in a professional association says,

"I am serious about my vocation." Don't you prefer to go to a doctor who is a member of the American Medical Association? Knowing that your doctor belongs to a professional organization makes you feel more secure that she is serious about learning and knowing the latest medical techniques. As a publisher, your membership in a publishers association brings you the same professional respect in the book industry. Book reviews are an essential ingredient in promoting a new title. Membership in a publishers association lends your publishing company credibility with book review sources. One example of this is The Midwest Book Review. This review source specializes in reviewing titles from small publishers, self-publishers, academic publishers, and specialty presses. However, they give priority consideration to those titles from publishers that belong to a publishers association.

2. You receive cutting-edge information.

Publishers associations provide their members with some form of regular communication (usually a newsletter) containing the latest developments and resources in the publishing industry. Many hold seminars and conferences to further their members' education and expertise in publishing issues. The information you glean from belonging to a publishers association can improve your business and bring you more success in your endeavors. Knowing what is currently working for other publishers helps you learn what to do to sell more copies of your books.

3. You save money.

Joining a professional publishers association costs money. However, if you take advantage of the many membership benefits these associations offer (which can include discounts on shipping costs, co-op marketing opportunities, health insurance programs for

self-employed individuals, and liability insurance), you will save money in the long run. Some small publishers claim that the money they have saved on a freight discount benefit alone more than pays for their annual membership fees in one publishers association.

4. Doors of opportunity open for you.

Professional publishers associations provide many opportunities for you to network with other professionals in the book industry. Aside from the aforementioned seminars or conferences to attend, some associations also provide an online discussion group for member publishers. These opportunities allow you not only to find out what is working for other publishers but they lend you a venue to share your expertise.

Networking in this manner can also lead to other prospects such as a co-publishing agreement. Displaying your titles at a trade convention can lead to great deals. While generally a costly endeavor, some publishers associations provide opportunities for you to affordably display your titles. Some small publishers have sold international rights for their books through displaying titles at the Frankfurt Book Fair through a publishers association.

There are currently four professional publishers associations for those publishing materials for the Christian marketplace.

- **Catholic Book Publishers Association (CBPA)**

CBPA is for publishers publishing materials for the Catholic marketplace. While not exclusively for the small publisher, they do have a sliding membership fee based on the size of the publishing house. CBPA produces a newsletter, provides co-op marketing opportunities, sponsors seminars, and gives publisher service awards.

www.cbpa.org

- **Christian Small Publishers Association (CSPA)**

CSPA is a newer organization for small and self-publishers publishing materials for the Christian marketplace. CSPA produces an e-newsletter, offers co-op advertising, exhibits members' books at Christian trade conventions, and offers distribution and credit card payment processing programs for their members.

www.christianpublishers.net

- **Evangelical Christian Publishers Association (ECPA)**

ECPA is a publishers association for established Christian publishers. It has the highest membership fee of the Christian publishers associations. ECPA considers a small publisher one with annual revenues under one million dollars. To become a member of ECPA, an existing ECPA publisher member must recommend you for membership.

www.ecpa.org

- **Protestant Church-Owned Publishers Association (PCPA)**

PCPA is an association of not-for-profit official Protestant church-owned publishing houses, directly connected to their respective denominations. PCPA supports publishers as they serve congregations within their denominations.

www.pcpanews.org

Even if you publish only Christian materials, you don't have to limit yourself to just Christian publishers associations. Most book stores and public libraries today offer many religious titles for their patrons. Additional membership in a general market publishers association can provide you information and cost-saving marketing opportunities to reach the general book market also.

Here is a list of general market publishers associations for small and self-publishers.

- **Publishers Marketing Association (PMA)**

PMA publishes a newsletter, sponsors seminars, provides co-op promotional mailings, exhibits members' books at trade conventions, and sponsors the annual Benjamin Franklin Awards for the best books of the year published by independent publishers.

www.pma-online.org

- **Small Publishers Association of North America (SPAN)**

SPAN publishes a newsletter, offers co-op advertising and display opportunities, sponsors an annual conference, and hosts an online discussion group for small and self-publishers.

www.spanet.org

- **Small Publishers, Artists, and Writers Network (SPAWN)**

SPAWN provides opportunities for everyone involved in publishing. SPAWN encourages the exchange of ideas, information, and other mutual benefits.

www.spawn.org

Join as many associations as you feel will gain you optimal information and the opportunities you need to be as successful as you desire in your publishing endeavors. Once you join a publishers association, make sure to include your membership in that association on your letterhead, your website, your press releases, and all your advertising materials to take full advantage of the name recognition and respect your membership brings you.

Subscribe to Industry Publications

A number of publications help publishers and authors stay abreast of current news and trends in the Christian marketplace. Some of these publications are more costly than others. However, there are a number of free e-newsletters that provide condensed news of the industry for those publishers and authors on a tight budget.

1. Subscription Publications

You do not need to subscribe to all of these publications to stay abreast of industry conditions. Since the Christian marketplace is a relatively small subset of publishing, information is often repeated between the publications listed here. A subscription to one of these publications complemented with the free e-newsletters listed below is generally sufficient to stay abreast of industry news.

- ***Publishers Weekly***

The most costly of these publications, *Publishers Weekly*, is the preeminent magazine for publishers and booksellers. *Publishers Weekly* covers the general book publishing market but includes a great deal of information on the religious marketplace. It is a weekly magazine.

www.publishersweekly.com

- ***Christian Retailing***

Produced by Strang Publications, this magazine has been published for over 50 years. The magazine is free to Christian retail stores, but industry suppliers must pay for the periodical. *Christian Retailing* is produced bi-weekly.

www.christianretailing.com

- **Aspiring Retail**

Aspiring Retail is the official publication of CBA (Christian Booksellers Association). This monthly publication is free to all members of CBA. Non-members must pay a subscription fee.

www.aspiringretail.com

- **BookWire Christian Publishing News & Reviews**

This new publication, a joint venture of ECPA (Evangelical Christian Publishers Association) and R.R. Bowker, LLC, is set to launch in September 2006. Published quarterly, this magazine will feature news and information affecting the publishing and selling of Christian books, as well as articles on issues, opportunities, and new technologies shaping the Christian publishing industry.

www.bowker.com

www.bookwire.com

- 2. **Free e-Newsletters**

The beauty of e-newsletters is that they are the most cost-effective means of staying abreast of industry news. Most of the subscription publications listed above also offers a weekly e-newsletter free of charge. Simply sign up for the newsletter on each publication's website and you will receive the newsletter each week in your email inbox.

- **Religion BookLine**

This is *Publishers Weekly's* e-newsletter providing updates on religion publishing and book buying.

www.publishersweekly.com

- **Christian Retailing e-Newsletter**

Produced by *Christian Retailing*, this weekly e-newsletter features industry news for the Christian marketplace.

www.christianretailing.com

- **CBA e-News**

CBA (Christian Booksellers Association) produces this weekly e-newsletter featuring headline news for the Christian publishing and bookselling industry.

www.cbaonline.org

Join Online Discussion Groups

Another good way to get connected, network, and learn from other publishers is to join online discussion groups for publishers. Joining discussion groups is free and it is a good avenue for acquiring information, ideas, and trends from other publishers. A sampling of online discussion groups for publishers is offered here.

- **Christian Small Publishers**

Sponsored by CSPA (Christian Small Publishers Association), Christian Small Publishers is for small publishers who publish materials for the Christian marketplace. The group is designed to provide a forum for networking and discussing issues related to publishing and marketing in the Christian marketplace.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/christianpublishers>

- **Christian Self-Publishing**

This discussion group is for authors and small presses who are involved in self-publishing and marketing material to the

homeschooling or Christian private school markets. This list is run by Harvey and Laurie Bluedorn of Trivium Pursuit.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ChristianSelf-Publishing>

- **Self-Publishing**

Sponsored by SPAN (Small Publishers Association of North America), this discussion forum is a community of authors and small presses interested or involved in self-publishing and book marketing for the general marketplace.

<http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/self-publishing>

- **Publish-L**

This email discussion group is for issues related to publishing. It is a forum for the exchange of ideas and information about publishing and marketing books to the general marketplace. Anyone interested in publishing or engaged in the industry is welcome.

www.publish-l.com

- **Inde-Pubs**

A group for independent publishers currently involved or interested in being involved in e-publishing. Discussion mostly covers general market e-publishing issues.

www.inde-pubs.com

- **POD Publishers**

POD Publishers is a business discussion group for publishers of print-on-demand books. This group is primarily comprised of general market POD publishers.

http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/pod_publishers

Connections for Christian Authors

For Christian authors, staying abreast of the industry is very important for you to effectively promote your books. Keeping informed about industry trends also helps you be aware of the types of materials the marketplace needs so you can be successful in your next writing project. Publishers should encourage their authors to stay connected with other Christian authors in the Christian marketplace. Here are a few ways authors can get connected.

1. Join a Christian Writers Association

A number of Christian writers associations exist to support, encourage, educate, and inform writers writing for the Christian marketplace.

- **American Christian Fiction Writers Association (ACFW)**

Membership in ACFW provides Christian writers access to a monthly e-zine, critique groups, mentor groups, access to the ACFW online forum, and promotional opportunities for published authors.

www.americanchristianfictionwriters.com

- **American Christian Writers Association (ACW)**

ACW offers regional writers conferences around the country, regional charters providing local writers groups, and two publications: *Christian Communicator* and *Advanced Christian Writer*. Membership in ACW is not required to access any of these great services. Subscriptions are available for the association's two print publications.

www.acwriters.com

- **Christian Writers Fellowship International (CWFII)**

CWFII is a multi-service ministry to Christians in publishing. Member benefits include a bi-monthly newsletter, *Cross & Quill*; local Christian writers groups around the country; a critique service; and an online discussion group.

www.cwfi-online.org

- **Fellowship of Christian Writers (FCW)**

Located in Tulsa, Oklahoma, FCW began as a local Christian writers ministry, but is now available to writers at large. Membership provides a monthly newsletter; access to local writers groups featuring speakers, workshops, and critique groups; and entry into their writing contest. FCW also hosts an online discussion group that is open to any Christian writer. Membership in FCW is not required to participate in the discussion group.

www.fellowshipofchristianwriters.org

- **Writers Information Network (WIN)**

WIN is a professional association for Christian writers. The organization provides its members with a bi-monthly magazine, WIN-Informer, and seeks to furnish its members with up-to-date market information on religious book and magazine publishers. WIN also provides a referral system for connecting WIN members who are seeking speaking engagements with organizations in need of speakers for events.

www.christianwritersinfo.net

2. Attend Christian Writers Conferences

Writers conferences provide you excellent opportunities to meet and connect with other Christian authors as well as to stay abreast of

the industry trends. More Christian writers conferences take place across the United States each year than can be mentioned here. The most comprehensive listing of Christian conferences around the country can be found online at www.startmarket.com/conferences.html.

3. Join Online Author Discussion Groups

Another good way to get connected, network, and learn from others is to join online discussion groups for Christian authors. Joining discussion groups is free and it is a good avenue for acquiring encouragement and information. A sampling of online discussion groups for Christian authors is offered here.

- **Christian Writers.com (CW)**

The CW community includes a number of forums or discussion boards and a chat room for Christian authors. This group requires membership, but membership is free and easy to obtain online.

www.christianwriters.com

- **Christian Writers Group (CWG)**

CWG offers an online discussion group as well as a message board for Christian writers.

www.christianwritersgroup.org

- **FaithWriters.com**

FaithWriters also requires membership, but membership is free and easy to obtain online. This community provides message boards and discussion forums as well as other opportunities for writers to network and grow.

www.faithwriters.com

● **Christian Electronic Authors**

Owned by Christian e-Author, this group discusses electronic publishing and inspirational writing for electronic books. They investigate inspirational writing, promotional opportunities for electronic books, e-publishers, and the world of electronic publishing.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Christian-e-author>

Summary

C.S. Lewis once said, “The next best thing to being wise oneself is to live in a circle of those who are.” Being a member of an association or discussion group places you in a circle of wise people. Associating with and learning from other people in your field helps you become wiser in your own business.

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