

Possibility Planning

By Brian Jud

Before you embark on a long drive, one that you take periodically, you check traffic conditions and make appropriate adjustments. If there are no problems, you embark on your regular route. However, on the way an accident happens. Traffic is backed up for miles, but your intrepid GPS warned you in time to take an alternate route. As you travel this new path you may discover that it is an equally pleasant or even better course than your standard one, and it becomes your new “regular.”

As we travel the highway to our publishing objectives, unforeseen developments will occur. Murphy’s Law is active and potentially pernicious in our industry, periodically forcing us to seek different paths to achieving our goals. Fortunately, some of these alternative routes yield unexpected benefits.

For example, suppose you are turned down by a distributor that could take your book to bookstores. What are alternate options? Possibility planning is your GPS to book-publishing success, alerting you to plausible alternatives. In this case, here are four different actions you could take.

1. **Find out why you were turned down.** Was it a poor cover design? No competitive differentiation or advantage? Was it poorly written or not edited? Perhaps your promotion plan was not sufficient, or your price was unreasonable. You may now choose to make the required changes and resubmit your book to the distributor – or a different one. Note that making those changes may be a prerequisite for success with any of the following choices.
2. **Sell exclusively on Amazon.com.** While this is a legitimate response it brings up a new set of issues. How will you drive potential buyers to your page? How will you distinguish your content from the hundreds of other competitive books there? If those same issues that prevented you from getting a distributor still exist, your book will languish there, too.
3. **Sell through non-bookstore retailers.** Defining your prospective buyers properly can point to other retail-sales opportunities. A book on parenting could be sold in supermarkets or discount stores. If so, contact Symak Sales Co Inc. (<https://symaksales.com>) whose “products can be found in a wide range of retailers and wholesalers, including discount stores, variety stores, supermarkets, pharmacies, distributors, department stores, and dollar stores.” Do you have a product destined for the pet industry? Then contact the Pet Industry Distributors Association (<https://www.pida.org>). Look for similar distribution partners pertaining to your content, including ReaderLink (<http://readerlink.com>) “the largest full-service book distributor in North America. ReaderLink reaches 99% of the U.S. population every week and sells one-third of all printed trade books.”

4. **Sell to non-retail buyers.** Examples are corporations, associations, schools, the military and government agencies. These buyers typically purchase books in large, non-returnable quantities, not for resale but for use as promotional items. A corporation could purchase your book as a Holiday gift for customers. The membership chair at an association may buy it to give to those who renew their memberships or join for the first time. Homeschooling is a fast-growing industry in need of books for every level of learning. The military buys fiction and nonfiction books for service personnel and their families worldwide..

This option eliminates the middleman completely since you become the source of your books. Even if you do not want, have the time or know how to sell to these buyers, this can still be an opportunity for you. Find salespeople to sell for you at www.manufacturers-representatives.com or www.rephunter.net. Or, sell books to businesses and teachers through Collective Goods (www.collectivegoods.com). The Premium Book Company (my company at www.premiumbookcompany.com) can place your book before thousands of people who sell products as premium items.

These are not mutually exclusive alternatives. Possibility planning helps you discover one or more alternatives to your habitual route of selling through bookstores. First learn the “why” and then discover the “how.” Your initial dilemma will be the *why*. Possibility planning provides the *how*. Find complete directions for how to sell to non-bookstore buyers in my book, *How to Make Real Money Selling Books – without worrying about returns* (<https://amzn.to/3FIJAf8>).

Possibility planning is a technique for removing blinders. It expands your vision to see opportunities that were previously hidden. Like viewing an optical illusion, you initially see only one image and assume that is all there is. As you examine it more carefully voila, a different image suddenly appears. Use possibility planning to find the options that are not immediately clear but provide a different way to get what you want.

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