

How to Sell Through All Retailers (Not just bookstores)

By Brian Jud

Bookstores are retailers. And there are many other retail establishments that sell books, but most authors ignore them. Examples are airport stores, supermarkets, gift shops, discount stores and specialty stores, and you can increase your sales by selling through them.

The good news is that you already know how to do it, since most retailers operate the same way as bookstores. You work through a distribution partner, and books are placed on shelves for sale. Here are some things you can do to compete and grow profitably selling through other retailers.

Define your prospective buyers. Using the 5 Ws technique Define who they are, where, when, why and what they buy. Knowing where and when they shop will lead you to the appropriate retailers.

Know the customer of your customer. Before you try to get into a retail store, visit it and get a feel for who their customers are. Customers of a Hallmark store are much different from those of a Spencer's store.

Learn what they are already selling. While you are in their stores, find out what types of books they are already selling. What are the topics, bindings, sizes and prices of their existing line? How will your book fit in? You may have to redesign it in order to compete with those in your genre for that retailer.

Know why retailers buy. They want increased store traffic, inventory turns and profit per square foot. If your book does not help them accomplish those goals, they will take it off the shelf, return it and replace it with something that does. Let them know that your promotion will mention that your book is available in their store.

Find out who the distributor or wholesaler is for the store. Ask the store buyers who their distribution partners are. Your current distributor may already be selling to them. Here are two other examples.

- Symak Sales Co Inc. (<https://symaksales.com/Home/>) "is a leading importer and distributor of general merchandise throughout North America. Symak 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."
- Readerlink Distribution Services, LLC (<http://readerlink.com/>) "is the largest full-service distributor of hardcover, trade and paperback books to non-trade channel booksellers in North America, including the biggest names in retail across multiple retail channels."

Work with your distribution partners. Retailers do not sell books -- they *display* books. The job of distributors is get the stores to carry your books and fill the pipeline to the retailers when the books are sold. Neither sells your book for you. It's up to the author to do the promotion that

gets your books sold. When you submit a plan to a potential distribution partner, make sure you describe the promotion that you have done -- and will do -- to help sell your book. Describe the research you have done, and why your book is particularly appropriate for the retailers you have investigated.

Know the distribution discounts and fees. Read their contract carefully to make sure that you understand all the costs involved when partnering with them. Work with your printer and suppliers to reduce the cost of producing your book so you can be profitable in this segment.

Expand your outlook to include sales through retailers other than bookstores. Expand your endeavor to include retailers online, too. The more strategic places in which you have your book available, the more likely your target buyers will find and buy it.

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