



# MIXING MARKETING WITH FAITH

BY ROB EAGAR

**\*\*Bonus article based on Rob Eagar's *Sell Your Book Like Wildfire* (bookwildfire.com)**

There is a large group of authors, especially writers of religious books, who unknowingly hinder their book sales due to the belief that marketing is ungodly. They feel that a truly spiritual person would never stoop to the level of self-promotion. I've met many authors who believe that drawing attention to their work smacks of arrogance or a lack of faith in God's provision. But nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, I believe that genuine marketing is one of the most spiritual activities an author can undertake.

Before I explain why, I would like to state how I've come to this conclusion, along with two caveats. First, I speak from a Christian perspective, and I trust you to translate my ideas into your own thought forms. Second, I know that marketing is not a Christian issue, but something that people of all religions use to spread their message. Having said that, I've found that my faith plays a major influence in how I create successful book promotion campaigns for myself and hundreds of my clients. That's because the principles of marketing and precepts of ministry have more in com-

mon than most people think. I'll even argue that God should get credit for the invention of marketing.

For example, consider the biblical passage that says, "Taste and see that the Lord is good."<sup>1</sup> Notice how God doesn't expect anyone to blindly accept His message. Rather He encourages people to taste His goodness before making a decision. The idea of tasting goodness is the same idea as an author giving away sample chapters and free resources to help convince skeptical readers.

In addition, consider this quote from Jesus who said, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father."<sup>2</sup> God knew that people would struggle to believe in His existence without dwelling in a physical form. Therefore you could say that God sent Jesus on a high-profile "book tour" to act as His personal representative. God even became an author by compiling everything about Himself into a book (as you would guess, the Bible is the biggest bestseller in history). If God took steps to market Himself, it's safe to say that authors shouldn't fear His wrath by promoting their books.

All too often marketing a book gets misconstrued as a selfish attempt to draw attention to the author or a shallow means to make money off of others. It's true that some authors knowingly turn out shoddy material. Others act like used car salesmen who hawk their books without any concern for the audience. But those individuals aren't engaged in marketing, they're attempting to manipulate people. There's a big difference between authentic marketing and trying to rip off readers.

As I stated earlier, sincere marketing has a lot in common with sincere ministry. Ministry is the activity of giving aid or service to someone in need. Likewise writing a book can be viewed as a similar process of giving information, entertainment, or inspiration to someone in need. When an author focuses on the concerns of the readers, marketing takes on a whole new perspective. The book becomes a catalyst to create life change and positive results for other people, which is a selfless mind-set that benefits both the author and the audience.

People are much more likely to purchase a book when they believe the author has their best interests in mind. For example, a nonfiction book may answer a long-standing problem that has plagued readers for years. In contrast, a novel may provide readers with an escape from the everyday grind of life. Both results are noble if the book is written with the authen-

tic desire to minister to the reader. Guided by this mind-set, the author should feel no reservations about promoting her book to the world. This desire to spread the word and help as many readers as possible should be the foundation for any marketing strategy.

If you've found yourself hesitant to tell others about your book because you fear offending others or displeasing God, take these three steps to re-frame your perspective.

## 1. Define your value

Examine the content of your book, and make a list of the specific results that you want readers to experience. Consider the following questions to get started (refer to Chapter 1 for a more detailed explanation on the subject):

- a. How do I specifically improve the life of my readers?
- b. What tangible results do I create for my readers?
- c. How do I help leaders meet the needs of their organizations?

Your value should be the foundation for marketing your book, because that puts the focus on other people rather than yourself. A value-based approach ensures that your mind-set and accompanying promotional materials are selfless instead of selfish. Therefore you don't have to question your motives or worry about other people's opinions. Remember, you're writing books to minister to the needs of your readers.

## 2. Share your value with others

If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound? Likewise if you write a book and no one reads it, does it make you an author? I would argue no, because the whole point of writing a book is to share it with others. Otherwise you're just writing a diary.

There is a scriptural proverb that says, "No one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead they put it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light."<sup>3</sup> If your book helps people "see the light," then what sense does it make to avoid marketing? Authors should feel obliged to let their value shine.

There's no reason to feel guilt when you reach out to help someone. Therefore marketing should be viewed as a liberating endeavor, not an oppressive burden. I encourage authors to adopt the following maxim: *I have*

*fantastic value that can help people mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, and I'd be selfish not to approach as many people as I can with my value.*

When you take time to write a blog, speak publicly, post on Facebook, offer free resources, or conduct radio and TV interviews, you are drawing people to the light of your book. If you find those activities tedious and difficult, it could be because you may have forgotten your value or the fact that people deeply need it.

### **3. Verify that your value actually produces results**

For some authors, writing a book is easy compared to verifying whether the book actually helped anyone. Yet this is an important step toward making marketing more effective. Readers want to know they're buying a book that is worth the money. They don't want to risk being the guinea pig. But too many authors are petrified of negative feedback, so they avoid asking readers if their book caused real life-change (some authors know they've written their book halfheartedly).

If you don't confirm that your readers experience results, you'll wind up questioning your value. This negative attitude opens the door to a self-fulfilling death spiral that can plague an author's marketing efforts. Why promote a book when you're not sure anyone actually benefits from it?

On the other hand, verifying your value with readers can revolutionize your marketing activities. Nothing injects a greater sense of confidence and excitement than knowing your book improved another person's life. You will never experience this euphoria if you don't ask readers to supply examples of the kind of results your book produced. Fortunately there are simple ways to validate your value:

- Create a focus group of readers who critique your manuscript before you finish it.
- Fill a nonfiction manuscript with examples of actual people who are applying your material.
- After publication, openly ask for testimonials and endorsements from readers.
- Monitor the customer reviews you receive on Amazon and other book websites.
- Encourage people to provide honest feedback at book signings and speaking events.

Don't risk stunting your book sales by classifying God as holy and marketing as unholy. Do the opposite, and integrate your faith into your marketing activities. They are two elements that go hand in hand. Learn to view writing a book as a unique opportunity to serve others. In addition, consider that you may need to unlearn some misconceptions you've harbored in the past.

### **Unlearn the idea that marketing is unspiritual or self-glorifying**

What could be more spiritual than using God-given talents to write a book that benefits others?

### **Unlearn the idea that marketing is unnecessary**

What could be more necessary than letting people know you want to help them?

### **Unlearn the idea that marketing is worthless**

What could be more worthwhile than trying to meet another person's needs?

If you're an author who struggles to promote your book, realize that God wanted to spread His message too. But He didn't choose to sit in Heaven and hope people would someday stumble across His words. He marketed His message in many different ways, even going so far as to take human form and get face-to-face with mankind. If the idea of marketing is good enough for God, why not embrace the concept as well? Let the world taste and see that your book is good.

Footnotes:

1. Psalm 34:8
2. John 14:9
3. Luke 8:16