



What Authors Should Know Before Launch

INTRODUCTION

There are few days more exciting for authors than the official release date of their book. Only those who have published a book or have been involved in the publishing industry know exactly how much hard work culminates in this one day—multiple rounds of edits, rewrites, discovery calls, back and forth of cover designs, and so forth.

Even though authors may feel tempted to sigh in relief when they finally cross that “finish line,” no one wants their book to fall flat when it is finally released to the market. While the book’s production may be done, the promotion and marketing of the book are just beginning.

Invite Resources wants to see all of our books succeed, which is why we commit to a marketing and promotion plan for all of our book releases. However, no amount of marketing by the publisher can match the hustle of our authors to promote these books in their own spheres of influence.

In this document, we’ll go over a few things you as author should know and some ways you can help catapult your book to success.

BOOK MARKETING IS A MARATHON, NOT A SPRINT

By the time your book is completed and ready for release, you have written it, rewritten it, rearranged it, edited it, and read it about a million times. You might not even like it anymore! However, marketing your book is not a “one-and-done” activity. It is a commitment that you will need to continue fulfilling in the weeks and months after your book’s release.

That said, momentum at the onset of a book campaign is vitally important, so it’s important that authors start leveraging their relationships early and often.

This is sometimes a bit uncomfortable for Invite Resources’ authors. Many of our authors are pastors or denominational leaders. Promoting their books feels a lot like promoting themselves, something a good pastor naturally shies away from. We appreciate this and will try to help our authors

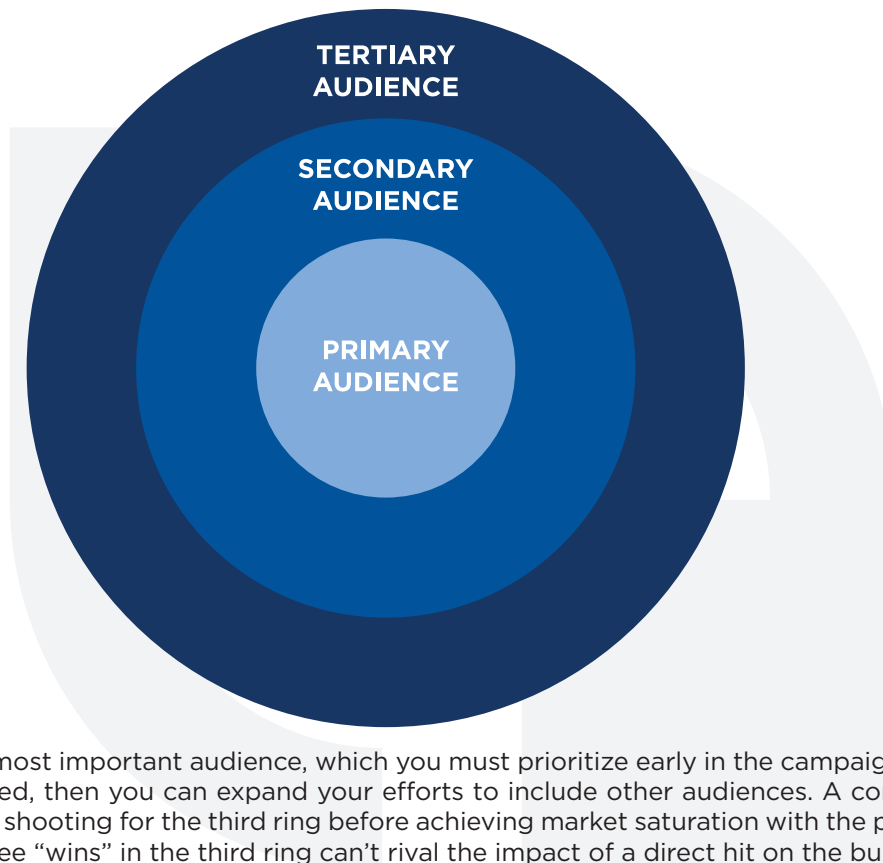


navigate this on a case-by-case basis. However, we also encourage our authors to prayerfully consider where they can promote their books. Instead of thinking of book promotion as promoting oneself, think of it as promoting the important message God laid on your heart—the message that inspired you to write the book to begin with. Prayerfully consider how God’s call to faithfully proclaim this message in written form may also include faithfully sharing the book with those who need it.

IDENTIFYING YOUR AUDIENCE

The first step in promoting your book is to spend some time identifying your audience. To whom is the book written? Who would benefit from reading the book?

It’s helpful to think of audiences in concentric circles. Consider the illustration below.



The “bullseye” is the most important audience, which you must prioritize early in the campaign. Once that audience is maximized, then you can expand your efforts to include other audiences. A common pitfall authors often make is shooting for the third ring before achieving market saturation with the primary audience. Even two or three “wins” in the third ring can’t rival the impact of a direct hit on the bullseye.

Let’s look at this practically. *Dynamite Prayer* is the most successful book released by Invite Resources to date. Here is how the authors would identify their audiences.

- Primary Audience - Pastors and church leaders connected to the authors through their existing respective social media groups, through the Doctor of Ministry students at United Theological Seminary in Dayton where they are both mentors, and through the Innovation Center at United Theological Seminary.
- Secondary Audience - Laypersons in the congregations of those pastors and church leaders
- Tertiary Audience - Christians from all backgrounds

It’s tempting for an author to look at that third ring and dream of becoming the next *The Purpose Driven Life*. We all want to span the denominational divides and impact all of Christendom, but few authors have the name recognition to do this right off the bat. Instead, we need to get our primary audience on board first.

Free Copies

The authors of *Dynamite Prayer* did this, the month the book was released, by gifting a free copy to the 230-plus United Doctor of Ministry students who had convened together in Dayton from across the country and around the world for their bi-annual week of classes, along with an explanation of potential congregational impact and information on how to order. This occasion was quickly followed with the Innovation Center's ongoing frequent e-letters (featuring short recordings of "Here's What Happened after 28 days of *Dynamite Prayer!*" testimonies) sent to the Doctor of Ministry students, as well as to the Innovation Center's extensive email list of pastors and leaders. It was also repeatedly pushed out through the authors' respective social media groups and channels.

Through the authors' personal speaking/training/consulting opportunities across the country, they both recommended *Dynamite Prayer* as a crucial 28-day prayer ingredient for congregational renewal and re-focus forward. Eight months after the book's release, the executive secretary bishop of the United Methodist Council of Bishops agreed to receive and distribute a gift of *Dynamite Prayer* copies to each of the 52 bishops who gathered from around the globe for their annual week of learning. Interestingly, this was the least effective promotional effort overall. The authors noticed little to no "ripple effect" passed from the bishops to their respective conference leadership teams at that time.

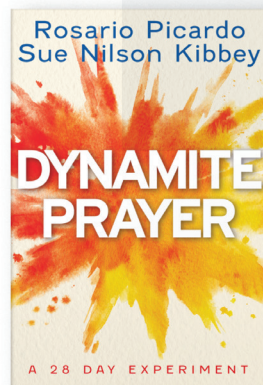
Bulk Discounting

At the authors' suggestion, Invite streamlined its two discounting policies into a single a bulk discounting policy on the Invite Store, which offered a significant advantage to churches over buying quantities over 10 through Amazon or another channel. Following this update, bulk orders began to appear on the Invite website.

Dynamite Prayer sales began to gain momentum in the fifth month after release. Then the biggest acceleration forward happened ten months after release. Two United Methodist bishops, who had been the clients of one of the authors and had already observed *Dynamite Prayer's* impact in dozens of their congregations, announced that their entire respective UM Conferences would embark on a collective 28-day prayer experiment using the book that fall (one year after the book's release).

The turnkey factor happened when Invite Press agreed to significantly reduce *Dynamite Prayer's* royalty payments in exchange for offering a one-time, 50% bulk discount code for orders of 10 copies or more. This decision was made based on the prospect of thousands of units (which came to pass) that were to come through the commitment of an entire United Methodist conference promoting the book to its constituent congregations. Invite issued a unique discount code to UM conferences to provide their churches for ordering *Dynamite Prayer* books on the Invite website.

One author individually connected (email, zoom and phone) with colleagues and clients in more than 15 different United Methodist Conference offices, providing stories about the impact of *Dynamite Prayer* use, offering each the 50% bulk discount code for their churches, and challenging each to become part of an overall "*Dynamite Prayer Wave*" unfolding across the United Methodist denomination. Additionally, at the same time the Innovation Center at United built an entire dynamiteprayer.com website with free downloadable resources, *Dynamite Prayer* sermon series examples, "how-to" video stories from pastors and leaders who had led their congregations through the 28-day prayer experiment, and more to offer congregations everywhere for implementation assistance. The "Join the *Dynamite Prayer Wave*" was promoted by the Innovation Center and both authors through e-let-



DYNAMITE PRAYER

A 28 Day Experiment

AUTHORS: ROSARIO PICARDO, SUE NILSON KIBBEY

SKU: 978-1-953495-36-5

BOOK - PAPERBACK

\$14.99 each

QUANTITY

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ADD TO CART

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Digital \$9.99 Digital - Spanish \$100.00

PRODUCT INFO +

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BULK DISCOUNTS -

We have implemented bulk pricing discounts for books. Simply enter the quantity; discounts will be visible in the cart.

20-49 units:	20% off
50-99 units:	25% off
100-199 units:	30% off
200-299 units:	35% off
300-499 units:	40% off
500-999 units:	45% off
1000+ units:	50% off

ters, all social media channels, and other free promotional venues.

Dynamite Prayer moved into the PCUSA denomination in September 2023, and was launched across all Free Methodist denominational leadership nationally this fall with a full denominational “wave” to follow the next spring. At the request of individual denominational leaders, *Dynamite Prayer* was made available one year after release as a downloadable Spanish language PDF translation, and 15 months after release as a Korean language translation.

If *Dynamite Prayer* had skipped that vital first step during the month of its initial release (gifting a free copy of the book, along with explanation for its use and impact, to the in-person gathering at United of 230 multi-denominational Doctor of Ministry students from across the country and around the world), it might not be the success it is today.

SELL THROUGH, NOT SELL TO

Another key marketing principle that *Dynamite Prayer* implemented successfully is identifying a “sell-through” audience. Your marketing and promotion efforts will be far more effective if you can bring on champions who will then sell the book to their own networks, rather than going directly to consumers for one-by-one sales. *Dynamite Prayer* leveraged relationships with denominational leaders within the United Methodist Church. Perhaps you are part of a pastor network, a professional organization, a university, and so forth. Think about who you can reach out to who will sell many copies of the book, not just one.

ENDORSEMENTS

During the book preparation process, you will be asked to provide the Invite Resources team with a list of individuals you would like us to approach for an endorsement of your book. This is a chance for you to be very strategic in who you select for the list.

Lending Credibility on Subject Matter

Sometimes, an endorser can lend credibility to your expertise on a subject matter, particularly if you are not generally considered to be a foremost expert on it. No one would question Gary Chapman’s expertise in writing a book on marriage, as his *The Five Love Languages* has been widely regarded as a leading marriage book for years. However, if you’re new to writing on marriage, an endorsement from someone like Gary Chapman or even a leading marriage and family counselor would help prove your bona fides in this area.

Lending Credibility among Target Audiences

Another area in which endorsers can be helpful is providing credibility among a target audience. Perhaps you are a 50-something pastor, but you really want your book to speak to Gen-Z. Well, likely it would be helpful for you to get an endorsement from someone Gen-Z respects. Or, maybe you want your book to be utilized by all United Methodist churches as a small group study. In this case, an endorsement from a bishop would be very important.

The Name Isn’t Enough

Endorsements are helpful, but they are not a solution in and of themselves. Think of endorsements more as a tool you can leverage to prove your credibility or to get the attention of your primary audience.

Furthermore, it’s important to follow-up to see if your endorsers would support your marketing and promotion efforts in any way. Maybe they can post on social media about the book on your behalf. Maybe they would be willing to send a copy of the book and a letter to influencers in their own networks.

Just having the endorsement doesn’t automatically mean the book will be successful. Instead, consider how you can leverage the endorsement for more reach.

BOOK LAUNCH TEAMS

In today's e-commerce economy, books are no longer solely judged by their covers, but also by their readers' reviews. Having quality reviews on Amazon "unlocks" the potential for increased exposure and book sales. First, as the book is spread to new audiences, good reviews lend credibility to the book. Additionally, we know that Amazon considers reviews in their algorithms for search results pages.

All Invite Resources authors are invited to participate in a book launch team process facilitated by the Invite Resources team. These teams are made up of individuals who receive an advanced reader copy of the book in exchange for posting a review on Amazon during the week of release. Our goal with this process is to take the bulk of the heavy lifting off the author, so they can focus more on reaching influencers.

The biggest role the author has in their book launch team is recruitment. The best book launch teams look far and wide for individuals to join, as we can accept up to 250 individuals in most groups. When thinking about where you can recruit from, consider the following:

- Do I have a regular mailing list or a strong social media presence from which I can recruit?
- What large groups can I email to gain many recruits at once, such a church mailing list, professional organization, company-wide email (be sure you have permission from your organization before emailing)?
- Who in my personal circles can I recruit to be a part of the group? (Don't forget friends and family.)

It can take reaching out one or two times before individuals sign up, so don't be afraid to hustle them a bit!

SOCIAL MEDIA, EMAILS, ADVERTISING, OH MY!

Social media is an important component to consider in your marketing and promotion plans. However, a strong social media presence isn't built overnight. If social media is not something you have been actively investing in for six months to a year *before* the release of your book, your time is probably better spent elsewhere. However, if you are six months or more from the release of your book, social media can be a great way to build a loyal audience who will support your book launch team and sales when it comes time to release. Start investing time and resources now, and you will reap the benefits later come release day.

Email marketing can be another great way to promote the release of your book. If you have a strong email list, consider how it can be leveraged to encourage sales of the book. The key here is to not give too much away—just tease the book enough to pique your audience's interest. If you have an email list, discuss ideas with the Invite Resources team. We'll be employing email marketing with our own lists and may be able to offer email copy that can be leveraged for your own lists.

Invite Resources actively invests in advertising each of its titles in various capacities. Each book and its target audience is unique, so each advertising campaign is equally unique. We may ask you for some resources to support these campaigns, such as data/email lists to use in social media targeting or videos to run as ads.

THE BOTTOM LINE

As much as we wish there was a "secret formula" to success for a book release, there just isn't. It sure would simplify our jobs if there were! If we were to draft an equation, it would look something like this:

Great Product + Author Networking & Promotion + Strong Marketing + Healthy Dose of Prayer = Success

We try to take as many of the elements on as possible. Our team works directly with the author to ensure we are putting out high-quality books that are meeting a need in the marketplace. We provide marketing efforts including email campaigns, social media on our platforms, book launch teams, advertising, and more. We certainly are bathing your book in prayer, and we know you are too. But we can't replicate that secret sauce of the author pulling every lever they can to put the book in the hands of the people that matter. That's where that author hustle comes in.

You'll also note that the result is "success" not "best seller list." Success looks different for every book. Fur-

thermore, lists are predicated on having a lot of sales in a short period of time (generally in pre-sales and release-week sales). However, a book can be extremely successful by selling copies over a long period of time, such as the case with *Dynamite Prayer*.

We're honored to be your partners in providing these important books to the world, and we look forward to promoting each one with you!

