

# indie bookstore entrepreneur

Winter 2011



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## What a great bookstore!

We're here to help you  
develop and improve your  
bookstore business.

## Here's to a new year of opportunities...

After year-end, it's time to get organized, look forward, and imagine how the bookstore will change and grow as the world around us evolves.

This issue is dedicated to looking at ways that books should be far more than commodities at indie bookstores ... and how we can capitalize on these strengths.



## 5 reasons brick-and-mortar stores have more staying power than technology experts would lead you to believe.

The predictions that bookstores will follow the path of indie music stores is an easy leap. But there are some major differences that indicate indie bookstores may actually be entering an era of opportunity. Here are the competitive advantages we'll be using in bookstore marketing materials.

### 1) Interesting & "Indie"

The fascination with "bigger is better" is waning at long last. A selection of what's new, interesting, and not easily found elsewhere will be the hallmark of the indie bookstore. Carry the big name authors, but spotlight the up-and-coming.

### 2) The desire for untethered time

It's great to be connected, but there's also a need to be off the grid. From parents who want to limit their kids' time in front of the TV or a computer screen to grown-ups who are stressed and overwhelmed, escaping to a place that helps put life in balance will be the new attraction. Coming into the bookstore and browsing is a wonderfully rich symbol of freedom





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to make time for yourself.



### 3) A return to the familiar

Have you noticed Restoration Hardware's new line of furniture? They're featuring timeless furniture designs and books galore! We find comfort in things that are familiar. Hardly anyone found charm in looking at spines of music CDs. But bookshelves represent timeless values and priorities in life. Add more comfort to the bookstore.

### 4) Continued need for a "Third Place"

Events and gatherings are an increasingly important competitive advantage. Peterbrooke Chocolates sponsored a chocolatier's camp last summer and charged \$50 per child. Grown-ups pay quite a lot for breakfast with costumed characters at Disney resorts. People will pay for an unforgettable experience.



### 5) Just enough

Time is precious. For just the right book to read next and gift to give, an indie bookstore can be the "go-to" solution. Non-book items that appeal to the reading lifestyle deserve to be considered more than "sidelines" -- they're an important part of the mix. A curated selection that is "just enough" will be more convenient for customers than having to wander miles of aisles. Your selection is thoughtful, authentic and manageable.



**"Indie" can be a tangible competitive advantage.**

**bookstores offer cultural experiences.**



Each time I hear from a friend who has taken children in their lives to Disney World or American Girl Place ... or hosted a birthday party ... I'm reminded of how valuable these experiences are to people - and how much they'll pay for them.

In an age when readers can buy books at any time and most anywhere, there's value in coming together for a shared experience. Here are some trends and "Best Practices:"



- **Develop Programs** - From summer reading camps and birthday parties to storytime brunch with a costume character, hosting a book review series, lecture series, or book group retreat, high tea with dramatic readings, even a storytelling or songwriting festival, some events involve extra work but hold extra value. Charging a fee for the experience makes good sense.
- **Form Partnerships** - Others may enjoy having a relationship with the store to offer their services like birthday party entertainment, interior design, garden design, and more. Your work is minimized with the assistance of a local expert.
- **Offer Tiered Ticket Prices** - Make sure members of your loyalty program get a more favorable price.
- **Include the book in the ticket price** - For a lecture, luncheon, or dinner event, consider bundling the book in with the cost of the event. Request that organizations that ask you to handle book sales consider this as well.
- **Add V.I.P Perks** - In small numbers, invite your loyalty program members to a reception with the author prior to the event. Here they can meet the author, ask questions, and get their copies signed before everyone else.
- **Be a Ticket Outlet** - Support the arts. Sell tickets to cultural programs coordinated by others.

You can do things that simply are not possible for Internet-only booksellers. Use your sense of place to solidify relationships within your community.

**be about the experience.**

**unmistakably indie.**



Fun, funky stuff outside the main entrance of the bookstore ...

Here's the outside of a children's bookstore in Paris. Who could miss this colorful giraffe that is the official greeter and offers some bargain books in his back bin? If your lease allows it, why not use this space to show your personality?



Color and light add so much to the shopping experience. Is it time to add some color to your bookstore? Change out a light fixture, paint a wall, add some fabric to a focal point display, feature some colorful merchandise ... use this opportunity to shine.



**be a fun and fresh oasis.**

### **five great e-newsletter ideas.**

1. **"This Week at..."** - Books & Books uses this in the subject line of the email.
2. **"Look Who's Coming"** - The Changing Hands e-newsletter keeps you reading to find out.
3. **"Can't Make It?"** - Books & Books puts a block at the very top of the email to let you know how to get a signed edition when you can't be there.
4. **"Save"** - It's a magical word in today's economy. Flying Pig Bookstore presents a coupon that offers customers a bargain on books by authors who are visiting the store that month.
5. **"Buy Local"** - Quail Ridge ends every newsletter with a reminder: "Support your locally owned businesses; good cents for your community."

**promote your competitive advantages.**

### **three powerful words to keep your focus.**

#### **Advantage**

An indie bookstore has natural competitive advantages over the big boxes and internet-only sites. Keep enhancing your sense of place, levels of customer care, and ability to create 'serendipitous discovery'.

#### **Opportunity**

Change offers opportunity. Focus on how life is changing for your customers and what they need most. Nearly all inventions are inspired by problems.

#### **Dance**

As an entrepreneur, keep showing up for the dance, moving with

the music, and enjoying the moment. Other people are drawn to those who live life with positive energy. Customers get energy from your team; your team gets energy from you.

### co-op for 2011 outreach marketing.

Soon we'll have a summary of 2011 newsletter co-op plans by publisher. A few publishers are finalizing their plans now. So far, plans look consistent with 2010 ... more than \$10,000 available to all booksellers, regardless of size and volume. We'll send the link to the spreadsheet as soon as the final details are in.

And if you like what you see in this free e-newsletter, *please pass it on* by using the "Forward email" link below.

**Mark & Donna Paz Kaufman**

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