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indie bookstore entrepreneur

IDEAS, INSPIRATION, BEST PRACTICES

winter 2013

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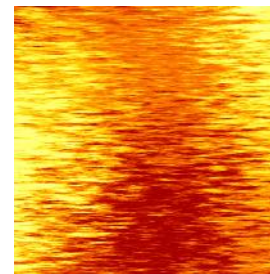
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The news from indie bookstores at the close of 2012 was terrific! And there's every indication that the year ahead will offer even more hope for the sun to be shining on indie businesses of all kinds.



People often ask why some indie bookstores do well while others struggle and close. It's neither a secret nor rocket science -- successful owners are grounded in business fundamentals, are always looking for ways to improve, connect with customers and colleagues in meaningful ways, and find the joy of representing the world of ideas (and possibilities) to their communities.

How will you change and grow your business this year?

indie booksellers outpace national retailers! 3 ways to build on that success.

**Want to learn best
practices of the
bookstore business?**

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Designed for all who are thinking about opening or buying an existing store, already in the planning stages, or recently opened.

Throughout the holiday season, the National Retail Federation reported on the strategies national chains were using to secure strong sales. Interestingly, national chains struggled through the season and relied on technology and discounting (again). It's clear that internet shopping has put these corporations in a dizzying situation.

Let's look at some of the lessons on how it pays to focus on our innate competitive advantages.

1) **balance high tech & high touch.**

The world of technology is continually evolving and tablets were the #1 item on this year's holiday wish list. Even still, people came into bookstores to browse,



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physically hold books, and buy from a bricks-and-mortar bookstore.



While indies can now offer e-readers and e-books, our tangible competitive advantages are still rooted in merchandise you can touch and feel ... and the value of being in a "third place." May we also suggest that a physical book also serves as an invitation to slow down in a crazy-paced world?

Perhaps we're now selling the gifts of time, conversation, and camaraderie. Coming into a bookstore is a welcome retreat. The ability to sit down with a book or talk with others about it is a time to savor and protect!

The words and phrases we use make a difference in newsletters, shelf-talkers and conversations with customers...

- "Just take a look at these illustrations..."
- "This beautifully produced book would make a wonderful Valentine's Day gift"
- "Unplug & unwind ... spend time with a book"

2) focus on caring service (a rarity at so many places).

Where does the President and his family go for their holiday shopping? An indie bookstore! Here is Eileen McGervey, owner of One More Page in Arlington, VA, where the President and his daughters shopped this year.



In a world of automated phone systems and call-center jokes about "Hello, this is Peggy!", we should promote how we're different. Have some fun with this!

- In promotions, use your photo and personal signature
- Use photos of staff members and share some details about their interests
- Keep using the Shop Local & Shop Small logos
- Add more shelf-talkers ... you cannot overdo this important handselling tool

3) make a statement about your sense of place -- kick it up a notch.



During our 20th Anniversary Bookstore



Put ideas to use to inspire the sale:

* **The most valuable retail real estate: the "Front of Store"**

* **Tables & focal point displays**

* **Sections throughout the store**

* **Shelf-talkers**

* **Impulse areas like the cash wrap & service areas**

SPECIAL OFFER BELOW



Make-Over Project, we were amazed at what we found in the back room and owners' garage at Left Bank Books. What pieces might you have tucked away that you could use as a feature table or use to spotlight merchandise in a little nook?

Play up your store's personality or some aspect of your city or region.

Simple things you can do:

- Use tables on top of tables (like the photo above). Just shorten the legs of the smaller table on top to get the right height for an eye-level display.
- Use 'junktique' tables like the one shown here (right) at Collected Works in Santa Fe.
- Add an item of interest. Notice the bleached antlers on the wall behind the table at Collected Works.
- Add a prop to the ceiling if you don't have wall space. This airplane hangs above the kids department at the back of the store at the new location for Litchfield Books.



Improvements don't have to be costly or time-consuming. What will you change this week, this month?

The combination of convenience, caring service, and a memorable sense of place will become even more noteworthy in a hectic, tech-absorbed world.

totally authentic. totally indie.

sustaining the momentum.

We study the ABACUS numbers each year, to learn what's happening within the 'Highly Profitable' stores, those performing way above the book industry average of \$306 per selling square foot to achieve sales in the \$700 to \$990/ssf range.

- **Small is smart.** A smaller space is more efficient and productive ... and will make it easier to ride out difficult economic periods.
- **Keep marketing.** "If you build it, they will come" may have worked in *Field of Dreams*, but we know it's foolish to think that we can



simply open the doors these days and people will show up and buy things. Publisher co-op funds and other industry resources like [**The Readers Edge**](#), [**Shelf Awareness for Readers**](#), and the [**Indie Next List**](#) from ABA



can go a long way to help you continue to promote great books and your great bookstore. Be lean and productive, but keep marketing.

- **Sustain your enthusiasm.** You nourish and feed the energy of the store, your staff, and your customers. The most successful stores have owners who live their careers with big hearts. The energy and enthusiasm is not only present and authentic, it attracts even more energy, good people, and positive results.

here's to a great year!

**nominate your favorites
for this year's Publishers Weekly Awards.**



Nominate your favorite rep or bookseller!

Nominees for **PW Bookstore of the Year** should operate a professional storefront retail bookstore in the U.S. and should excel in buying, vendor relations, marketing, handselling, customer care,

community involvement, management-employee relations, merchandising, and business operations. Candidates cannot nominate themselves, nor can family members nominate them. Nominations should indicate what makes this bookstore stand out.

The **PW Sales Rep of the Year** award is open to both telephone and in-person sales representatives, who booksellers can rely on for information, guidance, and support. As part of their nomination, booksellers should include a story or example of their rep's commitment to excellence.

The deadline for nominations for both awards is: March 1 at 8 a.m. EST.

Please submit nominations to Donna Paz Kaufman or Judith Rosen at PWawards@publishersweekly.com, or fax to 904.261.6742, and include your name, phone number, and industry affiliation. Your nomination will be used by

the judges who select the 2013 award winners.

here's to acknowledging excellence!

Ideas, objective feedback and guidance, encouragement (always) and support ... we are here for you for any bookstore project.

Give us a call. Your first consultation is free and our rates are really quite affordable.



Call us at 904.277.2664. We'd love to work with you!

Warm regards,

Donna & Mark

Mark & Donna Paz Kaufman
[The Bookstore Training Group of Paz & Associates](#)

Free Consult

What's on your mind for 2013?

If you're thinking of making some changes -- big or small -- to your business, or if you're considering opening, buying or selling an existing bookstore, feel free to be in touch to schedule a complimentary 20 minute consultation. Call 904.277.2664 or send a message to mkaufman@pazbookbiz.com

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