

# **The Power of Custom Publishing**



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## *The Power of Custom Publishing*

*What is custom publishing?*

*Do you have to be a publisher to produce a custom published product?*

*How can you use custom publishing to build your business?*

Custom publishing is simply the process of taking existing materials or resources and adapting them to a specific business-to-business purpose. The idea is to use publishing as a strategic alliance so that the end publication enhances both businesses and has the potential to increase the visibility and sales of each business partner.

Examples of custom publishing are all around you but if you are not attuned to looking for them you won't notice them. For example, I just found a magazine on the newsstand that was put out by Entrepreneur Magazine. This issue highlighted eBay, the idea was to get entrepreneurs interested in starting their own eBay company. The market for this publication was clear...current small business owners, start-up entrepreneurs and individuals who are thinking of starting their own businesses. The purpose of the magazine was a soft sell for eBay and the magazine was jammed full of ideas for how to work with eBay including a CD with educational information for the start-up.

I came across another wonderful example of custom publishing about a month ago. It was a small glossy magazine customized for Safeway supermarkets but published by Sunset Magazine. This alliance was a marriage made in heaven! Sunset's beautiful quality photographs and recipes were used to enhance the consumer's experience of shopping at Safeway.

When the marriage of two or more companies is this seamless, the end consumer does not generally note who the publisher is. The consumer receives valuable free information, but that information becomes a platform for both companies to sell products or services to this consumer in the future. In addition, the publication's target market may appeal to other companies who wish to advertise as well. For example, in the case of Safeway and Sunset, their joint publication attracted several gourmet food companies who wanted to advertise to this audience.

The two publications mentioned integrated the content and resources of both companies to create a new magazine for a specific target audience, but custom publishing does not have to be this interweaved in order to be effective nor does a new business partnership have to be created. There are many ways for small and mid-sized businesses to adapt existing books, magazines and training materials into custom published products.

Matthew Hill, [www.hillgroup.com](http://www.hillgroup.com), is a consultant to the trade show industry. He wrote an entertaining book called the *Trade Show Survival Guide*. He sold his book very successfully through his consulting packages and kits. He was approached by an exhibit company to create a custom version of the book. Their plan was to give the book and other gifts in a Thank You basket for their clients. Matt had the book cover imprinted with the exhibit company's logo and the company bought books for their client base. The exhibit company heightened their visibility with this good will gesture. Matt got his company name out to more clients and the clients' recipients received valuable, fun information that made them consider more trade shows in their future business planning.

Customized booklets are great business boosters and are one of the easiest publications to adapt to a specific company purpose. Paulette Ensign, [www.tipsbooklets.com](http://www.tipsbooklets.com), showcases booklets written by experts with a broad base of subject knowledge in different industries. The booklets can be customized in a variety of different ways. "Every time we modify a tips booklet for a client, it's some form of customization. The process ranges from putting their logo and contact information on the bottom third of the cover to a more elaborate

customization that includes changing the entire cover so it has their product photography. Sometimes clients want their product line or locations on the back cover or their company mission or history on the inside front and back covers.

“Mod-Systems in South Carolina hired me to adapt one of our business organization tips booklets, 101 Ideas for Organizing Your Business Life to highlight their product. They manufacture flat desktop files used in medical offices and travel agencies so they wanted their product added to the copy of the booklet wherever hanging files were mentioned,” says Paulette. “This addition to the content highlighted their product couched in a soft sell. Since the booklet was about organization in the office, it showed more ways for customers to use their product. They were thrilled with the results—a customized publication to promote their product at a fraction of what they would have spent if they had hired a contract writer or advertising agency to develop the content specifically for them.”

Sometimes materials your company has already generated for a specific purpose can be reconfigured to achieve another goal. In the process of obtaining investors, a Silicon Valley startup company created a detailed business plan. Their plan showed why their product was superior to their competitors with a step-by-step list of consumer benefits and features. About six months before their software was ready to be released, it occurred to them that they could take some of the same material and use it as a short article.

In fact, they ended up republishing various segments of the material in three different ways. First they created a

one-page press release. Then they created a free ebook that gave consumers ideas on how to improve their websites. The ebook was educational in nature but it served a marketing function as well by linking consumers to the informational website the company had pre-established to launch their product. With another segment of the business plan they composed a short article which they submitted to other informational sites frequented by their target customers.

Any information that can be repackaged as a useful item for the end consumer is a prime candidate for custom publishing. A company that manufactures breast pumps worked with a well-known woman physician to create a booklet for nursing mothers. The booklet was written in a style designed to alleviate the fears mothers have that they are not nursing their babies properly. The physician's narrative was soothing to new mothers as they realized the difficulties they were having were also shared by other mothers. The booklet became so popular that the physician was asked to become the company spokeswoman and the company ended up packaging the booklet with every breast pump as well as mailing out the booklet to heighten visibility of their product to new mothers.

Sometimes very simple ideas can be molded into unique custom published products. A few years ago, UPS sent a calendar out to their clients as a holiday gift. But this calendar was no ordinary calendar. It was a small standup paper calendar shaped the size of a business envelope. Once removed from its envelope enclosure the calendar went from two dimensions to three dimensions. It had a backing cover that made it possible to





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