

INCREASE SALES WITH CREATIVE CROSS PROMOTION

by Stephanie Bond

Booksellers have a distinct advantage in the aisles of the bookstore—you know where everything is! Romance readers, on the other hand, wander into your store, perhaps with a particular title in mind, but always with the secret hope that they'll stumble across the most wonderful book they've ever read. Little do they know that an amazing romance novel sits under disguise in the "Women's Literature" section. Or in the "African-American Studies" section. Or even in the "Mystery" section.

When publishers categorize their new releases, they try to anticipate the largest audience. For instance, romance readers, being volume buyers, seem to buy fewer hardcover books. On the other hand, some readers outside the romance genre buy only hardcover books. So, for instance, a publisher releasing a hardcover book by an author who has built a following in romance might categorize the hardcover as "Women's Literature" to tap into an audience there, then release the paperback a year later with "romance" on the spine to capture the romance audience, too. The end result, hopefully, is more of a crossover audience for the book and for the author. Savvy, yes, but confusing for the bookseller who is used to shelving the author in a different section, and for the reader who knows the author has a new release, but can't find it!

Cross-promotion is the best tool to ensure sales on every front—simply shelve the books in more than one section. But to stay on top of the potential crossover market, enlist the help of your publishers' sales reps. Also, read romance review magazines to know which authors have something "unusual" coming out that might be categorized under "Fantasy" or "Christian-based" or the ever popular "Women's Fiction."

You can also try to hook more romance readers through cross-promotion by placing a few romances in other sections of the store where women frequent, such as "Self-Help," "Cooking," "Crafts," "Business," and "Pregnancy." Be bold—post a sign that reads, "How long has it been since you've curled up with a good romance novel?"

And if you have a multi-media store, you can take cross-promotion one step further. Why not display a CD of Scottish music with a Scottish Historical Romance? Or a romantic comedy video alongside a romantic comedy novel? Or a mystery fan-zine next to a romantic suspense novel?

The bottom line of cross promotion is to try to turn as many customers as possible onto romance in order to cultivate that volume buyer, and because the romance genre offers something for everyone, you can use it as a tool to sell other items in your store! ~**SBond**

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