

WELCOME!

2014 ABA Spring Forum

Portland, OR
March 26, 2014



ABA EDUCATION

Conversations That Work

Agenda

- Inventory
- Competitors
- Censorship and Content
- Self-Publishing
- Events
- Freeloaders and Uncomfortable Situations
- Markdowns and Showrooming
- Music
- Upcoming ABA Events

Conversations That Work

How do you respond
when your customer
says...

Inventory

“You don’t have the book I’m looking for? I’ll just order it online.”

- “I can order it for you online right now through our store website. Do you want it shipped to your home, or would you like to pick it up here? If you read digitally, we can provide that book to you digitally right now. Let me show you. “

➤ Note: Train staff to not react negatively.

Inventory

When you are handselling a book and a customer elbows her friend and says, “Oh, you can get that on your Kindle.”

- “Oh, you read e-books? We can sell this title to you as an e-book. If you have a tablet, you can download the Kobo e-reading app and buy any book from us in electronic format. Let me show you.”

Competitors

“It is okay for me to use my Amazon credit card here, right?”

- “Of course! And thank you for your purchase and for visiting a local and independent business.”
 - Note: Take this opportunity to talk about the importance of local and independent businesses.
 - Note: Train staff to not react negatively.

Competitors

Situation: When you share your bookselling expertise and knowledge in order to provide free content to media outlets, community organizations, schools, or other groups and they add it to other book-related editorial content with buy buttons that link to your competitors:

- Reach out to them and explain that they can offer the community a local option for online, in-store, and e-purchases – you!

Competitors

“We are grateful that the bookstore has been a loyal contributor to our community nonprofit, but we need to bring in as much money as we can. The Amazon affiliate program is one way we can do this.”

- “I understand your financial concerns. But in case you don’t know, we have a similar affiliate program through IndieBound. Can I take a little of your time to explain that to you?”
- “I understand! As a small and independent business, we are in a similar financial position. However, we have found that as our business continues to support the community by offering events for adults and children in our store, as well as myriad off-site events at schools, fairs, and other businesses, the community is more interested and willing to support us.”

Censorship and Content

“I can’t believe you carry these books in your Young Adult section. How can I let my daughter browse when I know she will find books like INSERT TITLE?”

- “I am glad you asked. The inventory of our store reflects a multitude of opinions and outlooks. We believe in diversity, and carry books for a wide range of customers. What is it about this title specifically? I can help you navigate the Young Adult section.”
 - Note: Remember to listen and let the customer talk through frustrations.

Censorship and Content

“I can’t believe you don’t carry INSERT
TITLE/AUTHOR.”

- “Generally speaking, we have discovered that we don’t have an audience for a title such as this, but we can special order any title you would like.”

Censorship and Content

“No thanks, I don’t need the entire cookbook. I just need to copy this one recipe. I can’t wait to try it!”

- “Yes, that is great cookbook and very popular. I hope you enjoy the recipe. If you like, I can put the book on hold for you so you can purchase it. Like so many cookbooks, this one has a number of related recipes. If you like this recipe, I’m sure you will enjoy the others.”
- “And you know, it’s the continual support of the community that allows us to stay in business and bring books like this to you!”
 - Note: Every interaction is about building the lifetime customer, not necessarily making a sale.

Self-Publishing

“I just finished writing my first novel. Can I give you the manuscript to review? Can you help me publish it? And you are going to stock it once it comes out, right?”

Self-Publishing

- “Congratulations! Actually, we host a Self-Published Authors’ Night. Would you like the details?”
- “Also, we do have some self-publishing resources that you may be interested in: Ingram Spark, Kobo Writing Life, or Kirkus Indie.”
- “Oh, your book is for children? Fabulous. You should check out the Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI) for education and connections.”
- “We have developed a Meet the Buyer program. For \$20, you can buy a 15 minute meeting with our adult and/or kids buyer. This will help you learn about the book business and what a buyer looks for.”

Self-Publishing

“I published a book through CreateSpace. Can I get my book into your store?”

- “Many self-published contracts are non-exclusive. Would you like some information on how you can self-publish through companies that we work with, so we can stock self-published books?
 - Note: You need to decide for yourself if you want to stock CreateSpace titles.

Events

“I’m not drunk. I’m just happy. And I have a front row seat! Your events should have an open bar. I bet you would get more people to attend...”

- “I’m sorry, but these seats at the front with reserved signs are for those who have purchased the book. There may be standing room at the back.”
 - Note: Develop a store policy that explains how staff should handle problems with event attendees and train employees to respond based on this policy.

Events

“I’m so excited to see this author. I’m a huge fan. I brought these other books for her to sign too.”

Events

- “I’m a fan too, and I’m so glad you are here!”
- “We always appreciate when you purchase from us. Without your support, we won’t be able to continue hosting these author talks and signings. If we don’t sell the books at these events the publisher won’t think it is worth sending authors in the future.”
- “Please continue to help us bring great authors to the store by purchasing a book today. Thank you!”
 - Note: Sometimes the author or publisher decides ahead of the event how many books (and which ones) will be signed.

Events

“My husband and I want to attend this event. We support your store all the time. But we don’t need two copies of this book!”

- “Oh. Yes. I’m sorry you didn’t know that this is our policy now. But if you like, you can exchange the second book for a store gift card.”
- “And just so you know, publishers do have mandates about making sure a bookseller sells enough books to make the event worthwhile for the publishing house. I hope you understand.”
 - Note: Also, you can talk to the publisher about waiving the two-book mandate.

Freeloaders and Uncomfortable Situations

“I love your café. It is the perfect place for me to meet my clients who are planning weddings. We will be here for about three hours. Is there someplace I can plug in? My battery is low. Oh, no coffee for me. Thanks.”

Freeloaders and Uncomfortable Situations

- “I’m sorry, but we do require a purchase from the café if you would like to spend some time at a table.”
- “I’m glad you like the café. We actually do not have outlets available here. I’m sorry for the inconvenience.”
 - Note: Create signage for each table explaining the policy.
 - Note: Consider a system that allows you to change the customer WiFi password daily.

Freeloaders and Uncomfortable Situations

“I don’t know if you have noticed or not, but it seems like the homeless are using the store as a place to hang out. Also, someone is panhandling near your front door.”

- “Thank you for telling me. Yes, we have some rules in place for these customers.”
 - Note: Establish some rules regarding how people can use your space. (For example, no sleeping or a one-hour rule for the stay.) Remember to treat people with dignity and to be polite; walk away from a person once you have asked them to leave, so he or she is not publicly escorted out. Be aware of how your actions impact other customers.
 - Work on creating good relationships with local police.

Freeloaders and Uncomfortable Situations

Loud customer on a cell phone: "I know. Can you believe it! Yeah. I feel bad for her. But he was crazy. Literally. Did I tell you about the time when - what? Oh. Can you hear me now? How about now? I don't know - a bookstore, I think."

- Hand the customer a business card with a polite note printed on the back to take the call outside or to conclude the conversation.

Freeloaders and Uncomfortable Situations

Situation: When a child is having a loud or physical meltdown:

- Keep an eye on children in the store so you can help the parent by stepping in before the meltdown happens. Offer a sticker or something to capture the child's interest.
- Be supportive and encouraging to the parent involved. This cuts down on the parent's stress and makes them feel welcome in your store.

Freeloaders and Uncomfortable Situations

Situation: When teens are using your store as a hangout or makeout space:

- First, don't assume teens are there to cause trouble! Welcome them and tell them you can help them find what they are looking for.
- If teens become loud or disturb others, give them a warning or two and then ask them to leave if they disregard your warnings.
- Use social media to make comments to parents generally so you don't call out any specific child. This informs the community and parents about the issue.

Markdowns and Showrooming

“Why are your hardcovers SO expensive? You should discount more.”

- “I know. They are expensive. You are right. But they are also a great bargain for entertainment value. Think about how much you pay for a sporting event, a movie, or a concert.”
- “And you know, this store does more than sell books. We contribute to the community by employing local booksellers; we provide authors for school events; we create a rich schedule of free events that anyone can attend; participate in festivals; and so much more. That full-priced book helps to pay for all of that!”

Markdowns and Showrooming

When you pick up the phone and your local school contact says, “We need to buy X amount of INSERT TITLE. I got a great deal from an online retailer. Can you match it?”

Markdowns and Showrooming

- “When do you need the title? We can get it for you. We can also try to get the author for an event if you are interested.”
- “We may not be able to match your quoted price, but when you do business with us you get so much more than just a box of books. You will discover that we have excellent customer service, and that as we work together we will offer great ideas for you on whatever books and/or author events you have planned. We are specialists in this area!”
- “Also, we have done enough events to know that things happen. We are committed to responding quickly to all our customers.”

Markdowns and Showrooming

Situation: When you think customers are price checking with phones:

- Don't assume they are price checking! Some customers will use devices to update wish lists, etc.
- Be proactive and post DIY signs like: "See it here. Buy it here. Keep us here." or use the "This Is What You Just Did" list.
- If you are having a conversation, try to explain the full scope of what a customer is buying when they purchase any product in your store.

Music Selection Played in the Store

“This music is really distracting” or “Wow, this music is really lame for such a cool store,” etc.

- “Let me change the selection for you. You are right.”
 - Note: Consider your music choices. Has your community changed? Your customer base?

Upcoming ABA Events

ABC Children's Institute

- San Antonio, TX
- April 6 - 7

BookExpo America

- New York, NY
- May 28 - 31

Thanks for Attending!

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