Q. What is a good way to find the benefits prospective buyers want from a book?

A. The best way is to schedule a meeting with the prospective buyers and discuss their objectives. Each prospect will probably have different needs in the non-retail segment. In retail, their needs revolve around increased store traffic, increased inventory, and more profit per square foot.

Q. What are the typical steps in making a large-quantity sale?

A. Sometimes the only way to get from here to there is not a straight line. Sales people/distributors learn their prospects’ needs, propose solutions, make multiple presentations, negotiate the terms of each sale and service the business once the order is placed. This takes considerable time, if for no other reason then that the buyer’s risk of making the wrong decision is considerably higher since the purchases are not returnable. Here is a description of the typical process for making a large-quantity, non-returnable sale to a professional buyer, perhaps in a corporation, association or school.

Step One: Sales people search for new prospects.

Step Two: Qualify and prioritize the prospects. The sales people must decide which are the best sales prospects at this time so they concentrate their efforts where they should get the greatest return.

Step Three: Meetings with each prospect to set purchasing criteria and campaign objectives (one to two months).

Step Four: Product search. The sales people search the array of available promotional products available to find those that best meet the agreed upon criteria (two weeks per prospect).

Step Five: Planning. Once they have campaign ideas, the sales people prepare plans and budgets (a proposal) describing how the various programs will most cost-effectively reach the stated objectives (three to four weeks).

Step Six: Initial presentation. The sales people present their proposals to the decision makers (one to two months).

Step Seven: Due diligence. The prospect will investigate its impact on sales, competitive position, customers and marketing plans (one to three months).

Step Eight: Follow-up presentations. The sales person may have to return multiple times to meet with higher-level people who can influence the decision (one to two months).
Step Nine: Negotiation. The parties negotiate in good faith to get the best deal for their sides (one to two months).

Step Ten: Close the sale and then service and maintain the business.

Q. How long does it normally take to close a large-quantity sale?

A. Corporate book sales are not made on our time frames, but on the corporations’ schedules. Selling books to non-retail buyers is different from selling to bookstores. In the promotional-products business, the salespeople help their customers solve their marketing problems. If your book could be a solution to that buyer, the salesperson will present it. The likelihood of that combination occurring could happen at any time over a period of years.

Q. As a self-publisher I’m limited on time and resources, how do you suggest I approach this, where do I start?

A. Create a marketing plan and budget. Allocate your resources that give you the biggest return on their investment. Join a local publishers association to gain resources and to get answers to your questions (ex. APSS, www.bookapss.org).

Q. What sort of buy-in is required for airport chains, what is the upfront cost?

A. It depends. If you go with a national buy-in – face out displays, end caps, and prime position – it could be several thousand dollars per week. Negotiate with the store for regional positioning or promotion at select airports. There are many variables that go into the final number – which is usually negotiated.

Q. Is it beneficial to partner with a good distributor to reach some of these markets?

A. It is mandatory in most of the retail segments and for libraries. You can go direct to book clubs, catalogs, display marketing companies, corporations, associations, schools, etc.