



Book shoppers come in two kinds. The first is a customer who knows exactly which title they want. This is the sort of person who keeps lists of the books they want to read, or have read, and buys books on a regular basis. They are a store's best special-order customers.

The second kind of book buyer is the person who has no idea what to read, and perhaps lacks the confidence to select a book on their own. These are the customers who really need, and are eager for, a helpful recommendation.

Here are some ways you can help shoppers, and increase sales, by pointing visitors to particular titles and products.

**Leaders:** Create a special section highlighting materials recommended by church staff members or other leaders in the church. Titles can include books, DVDs or CDs. This section should be clearly marked with signage.

Display each book face-out, with a small sign that lists the title and author, the name of the staff person, their title or job and a sentence or two detailing why they recommend the item. Depending on exactly how the book is displayed, you can use a small acrylic stand-up sign holder or an acrylic shelf sign holder to hold the review information.

Endorsements by a pastor are particularly influential. We compile our “staff recs” list by emailing staff members a couple of times a year to ask for their input. Even though most church staff are busy people, we have found most more than willing to contribute.

It's easy to get started with a staff recommendation area—the key is to maintain it. That requires some follow-up and consistency by bookstore staff.

**Children:** Summer reading programs are a great way to recommend titles to young readers and their parents. Each year, we partner with our children's ministry program to sponsor summer reading. Children keep track of time they spend reading and come into the store to record their minutes.

They can select a small prize—a novelty, sticker or some candy—each time they come in and also enter their names for a monthly drawing for larger prizes, usually books. There is also a drawing at the end of the summer for a grand prize.

**Best-sellers:** Many stores have a separate display of best-selling books. Although they don't have the "personal touch" of an endorsement by someone they may know, these lists tell shoppers that the books are important in a different way, because so many other people are reading them.

You can find several category lists in each issue of *Christian Retailing* magazine, and at the Web sites of CBA and the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association ([www.cbaonline.org](http://www.cbaonline.org) and [www.ecpa.org](http://www.ecpa.org)). Some publishers and distributors have lists of their own, too.

**Categories:** Aside from special displays, it's also important to have several titles in each category and/or that staff are ready to recommend when they get into conversation with a shopper. When someone comes in for a book to read on vacation, they don't just want to hear, "The fiction section is over there," or, "The grief books are on this shelf."

They want someone to pick up a book and say, "I really enjoyed this one because ..." or, "I'm hearing great things about that one," or "This has been a blessing for many people."

—Heidi Macias is manager of Books of Hope at Community of Hope Church in Rosemont, Minn.