

Distributing your resource

What is distribution?

Distribution includes the storage, insurance, packaging, postage and invoicing of a product. Distribution is often done in association with promotion.

Who does distribution?

Distribution houses provide dedicated distribution services. Publishers can also be distributors, as they generally distribute products as part of their overall publishing service. They may also offer distribution as a discrete service.

Mailing houses generally do one off mail outs of large quantities of a resource. You will need to provide information on quantities and destinations and check how long they will take to complete a mail out. Mail houses can do ongoing arrangements but this tends to be expensive unless you have very high volumes.

Should we distribute our product ourselves?

Depending on your organisation's resources, it is possible to distribute a product yourself. However, you need to consider the following in relation to the ongoing costs and administrative demands on your organisation:

- storage space
- resources required for taking orders, packaging and mailing
- systems for recording where stock is going and how much is left
- your ability to process payments
- your ability to take online and/or credit card orders.

A less resource intensive alternative is to use existing channels to get your resource to people when they need it. For example, in NSW real estate agents must give new tenants a copy of the *Renting guide* when they sign the lease to rent a residential property, and in Victoria *Your day in court* is sent out with every summons.

Another less resource intensive way to distribute a resource is to send bulk copies to agencies that your target group deals with, e.g. councils, libraries, Legal Aid. However, this makes it difficult to keep track of who is using your resource and requires a degree of relationship building and negotiation.

You can also put your resource online for people to print hard copies for themselves. The best format for this is PDF but, as this is not accessible to people with vision impairment, you should also provide a Word or HTML version. If you decide to do this, contact LawAccess NSW to discuss whether they can provide a link to your resource.

Questions to ask a distributor

How much will it cost?

Distribution costs vary depending on the distributor. Find out:

- if they charge a flat rate or a percentage of the net invoice cost (check if GST is included)
- what they charge for free publications
- if a postage and handling fee is additional
- whether there are discounted prices for bulk orders
- whether the fee covers storage in the distributor's warehouse and insurance
- whether it is possible to distribute some copies of the resource for free.



Are there limits on what the distributor will do?

- Will they distribute single items *and* bulk orders?
- Are there limits on the quantity that they will package?
- Do they distribute nationally? Internationally?
- Can you distribute copies yourself?

Do they have reporting mechanisms?

Most distributors report on how much stock has been distributed and to whom. Find out how often the distributor provides these reports and what they include, e.g. details of organisations that have been sent copies. Also find out if they alert you when stocks are getting low.

How will people order the product?

Find out if the distributor has a web site where the product is displayed. Check whether they provide online, email, telephone or fax facilities for ordering.

Provide ordering details on your promotional materials, directing people to the distributor as the supplier of the product.

Can the distributor provide promotional services?

Some distributors provide promotional services for an additional cost. For example, they may publish catalogues which are mailed to various sectors, e.g. libraries, schools, TAFEs/universities.

Distributors

The following distributors have experience in working with community organisations to produce plain language law publications. The Law and Justice Foundation does not specifically recommend them, they are simply suggested starting points for your own investigations.

- Federation Press*
www.federationpress.com.au
- Australian Book Group*
www.australianbookgroup.com.au

Both will distribute (store, pack and send) and promote a resource and have a national reach.

Mailing houses

The following mailing houses have experience in working with community organisations. The Law and Justice Foundation does not specifically recommend them, they are simply suggested starting points for your own investigations.

- Salmat*
www.salmat.com.au
Salmat generally only do large quantity, one-off distributions.
- Ozanam mailing house*
www.vinnies.org.au/ozanam/services.php
Ozanam Enterprises package and post one-off orders.

For more information, please contact the *Plain Language Law Unit* on 02 8227 3200 or visit www.lawfoundation.net.au/information

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