

Q&A Ask the Exec

An interview with BroadStreet Publishing President Carlton Garborg

Twin Cities-based BroadStreet Publishing Group brings its own unique style to a wide range of inspirational products. Launched in 2014 by Carlton Garborg, the company publishes devotionals, journals, Bible promise books, Christian Living titles, coloring books and more.

BroadStreet's products also include its biggest project of all: The Passion Translation of the Bible. The translation is still in the works, but BroadStreet has already sold "about a million" copies of



Carlton Garborg

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its individual books, Garborg said.

Christian Retailing spoke with Garborg at UNITE 2017 in Cincinnati about the "personality" of his company and the creative products it brings to the Christian market.

How has your background with Summerside Press, Ellie Claire and other companies shaped what you do at BroadStreet?

I started out in the mid-'90s working for Bob Siemon Designs. For four years, I was a road rep, and I got to know Christian bookstores and the gift side of things really well. I then worked for Barbour Publishing. They're a great company, and I learned a lot working with them. I started Ellie Claire and Summerside Press in 2007 and worked with my brother-in-law Jason Rovenstine. The company grew very quickly, and in about three years, we sold it to Guideposts magazine. They, in turn, sold it to Worthy Publishing, which still carries Ellie Claire products. I was out of publishing for a few years, seeking direction in my life. I started BroadStreet Publishing, partnering with Jerry Bloom at Treasures, in 2014. We started the company with just a few products and ended up doing about 30 books in our first year. We did about 80 products in 2015 and then 150 books in 2016. We will do about another 150 books this year. So we ramped up really, really fast.

Your company is young, but your leadership team has significant industry experience. Who leads BroadStreet alongside you?

Paul Bootes, who ran Koorong and Authentic Media, joined us as an equity partner early on. He and I are now the primary owners of the company. We work closely together and do very well as a team. He's a great businessman and passionate lover of the Lord. We're committed to the long haul, and we're trusting God to continue to lead and guide us.

How would you describe your business to a new Christian retailer?

Every publishing company, gift company or manufacturing company brings a unique personality to the table. We all share, I believe, a similar heart for serving the Lord in our efforts and trying to make a difference for the kingdom. That drives what we do. As far as how BroadStreet Publishing does it, we pray every week as a team, seeking God's direction in all we do. We ask for wisdom, guidance, blessing and favor, and attempt to do business the way we feel God would do business. All our products are faith-based. We offer unique custom programs and packages to all our different accounts and try to meet their felt needs.

What makes your company distinctive?

Our unique flavor, our personality, is that we bring a kind of "giftiness," a high-quality giftiness, to all the products we do. We do a lot of full-color, faux-leather or hardcover gift products, primarily for women. We have a women's gift imprint called Belle City Gifts and a new line of products under our BroadStreet Kids imprint.

What are your plans for those two imprints?

We're trying to expand both of those lines dramatically in the next couple of years, innovating in that space. We don't just want to regurgitate other products. One of the things I say a lot to my team is, "What can we do that's unique, different or better?" We want to represent truth in a new way that will cause people to engage with God or see Him in a way that maybe they hadn't seen Him before. We encourage people to be the best version of themselves and reach out to others, serving those close to them with all their might. ▶

What do you look for in acquiring new product?

We ask ourselves:

1. Do we believe in the message of the product?
2. Do we feel like we're going to enjoy working together on the product?
3. Do we think we can sell enough of the product to break even, or maybe even make a profit?

We try to come out with products that are unique, different or better in some way. We want a fresh interpretation of truth, and we desire to present it in an irresistibly creative way.

What are you doing that's special for children in the Christian market?

We've got a line of kids' books called "Middle School Rules" by Sean Jensen, a sports columnist who covered the NFL for 15 years. This line tells the childhood stories of famous athletes: the struggles they've gone through with their families, disabilities or school. It shares the many obstacles they've overcome. It's an inspirational way to encourage kids to do their best.

We really want to be strategic with what we publish, not just putting out products that don't fit with who we are. We're still exploring exactly what we want BroadStreet Kids to look like.

What makes The Passion Translation (TPT) unique, and what progress are you making in bringing the complete TPT Bible to market?

Brian Simmons, the lead translator, is an amazing man. I feel like this is his calling. He is so passionate about translating this Bible. The Passion Translation is written in such a way that it inspires people to look at God in a different way, to see themselves in a different way, to understand truly how much God loves them. The heart of the Bible is an emotive text that passionately describes God's love for His children. That comes out when you read this translation. It's an expanded translation, not a paraphrase. One of the things that makes it unique is that it incorporates the Aramaic perspective in the footnotes (Aramaic is the language Jesus actually spoke).

We've been releasing the individual books one at a time. The New Testament comes out on Oct. 31, which is the 500-year anniversary of the Reformation. We're not asking people to convert from their favorite translation; we're just asking them to read one more. **CR**

Christine D. Johnson is editor of *Christian Retailing*. She welcomes your feedback on this issue at chris.johnson@charismamedia.com.