

# Training formats that work

One or a combination of training formats can yield results in local author development. These include:

1. **Writer workshops**

These need the involvement of a local Christian publishing group, when possible. Participants should be carefully selected. Don't fill the time with teaching; allow at least 40% of workshop time to actual writing, with hands-on critique by facilitators.

2. **Internships**

Internships with editors or publishers are best suited for more advanced writers, who can take full advantage and enhance talent and ability already there.

3. **Tutorials**

One-to-one tutorials are extremely effective, but also the most time consuming. Experienced writers could partner with beginners in a mentoring role, both face-to-face and through e-mail. Don't rely solely on on-line training: "In Asia, we need to see faces," a publisher in the Philippines said.

4. **Writing retreats**

Writing retreats, held far from participants' church and other duties, facilitate extended writing time without distractions. Consider using evenings for read-aloud sessions.

5. **Joint authorship**

Certain InterVarsity-related groups and other publishers have used this technique effectively. Members of a team of writers each write a chapter on a different facet of the same book topic. Daniel Bourdanne, head of the InterVarsity-related student movement for Francophone Africa, invited a hand-picked group of writers to each contribute a chapter for a book on the Christian response to violence in Africa.

6. **Magazine projects**

Magazines and newsletters are an excellent training ground for future authors. Participating writers learn to meet deadlines and work with an editor, plus they get the satisfaction of seeing their work in print. In the 1980s Tim Stafford launched the successful *Step* youth magazine in Kenya on the strength of local writers that he trained.

7. **Writer groups**

A successful writers group needs an organized leader able to keep participants involved and interested, with each meeting having a specific focus. The Christian Writer Fellowship in the Philippines has thrived for more than 15 years.

**8. Awareness-raising seminars**

Consider holding a “Day of the Christian Author” in local Christian schools and groups. To harvest the next generation of Christian writers, we need to start watering and cultivating while the future writers are young.

**9. Contests**

Contests are a good way for “casting out the net,” trying to find skilled and potential Christian writers so far lurking under the surface. A group or foundation could create an annual major international award to be given an author in recognition of his work, and this would create media attention that might introduce the author to a broader worldwide audience.

**10. Product-driven training**

Conduct training with a specific product in mind. For instance, Christian magazine editor Elisabeth Isáis in Mexico organized a short-story workshop. Prior to the workshop, she raised funds to cover the production and printing of a short-story anthology composed of the best stories from the workshop. Participants’ motivation and output visibly increased after Elisabeth told participants they would be published in the anthology if they completed a quality manuscript. Indeed, the book got published, and the 1,000 copies quickly sold out.

**11. Seminaries and Bible colleges**

Church leaders and pastors consistently prepare material for teaching and preaching. Why not help them communicate effectively in writing and thereby multiply their present ministries? Surprisingly few seminaries and Bible colleges offer classes in writing for publication.