

Why we are rebranding Strang Communications as Charisma Media

February 1 is a significant day for our company. It's the day we drop the name "Strang Communications" which we have been using for nearly 30 years and go by our new name: Charisma Media. We've sent out "news releases" so you may have heard about this. But I decided to send this to you because I felt you would be interested.

I shared "my heart" in a column in the February issue of Charisma and told why, as the founder of this company, I felt led to make this change. The easiest way for me is to let you read my actual column below. And then below that is the press release we sent out which has the "who, what, when, where and why" journalistic angle to the story for those of you who are interested.

I'd appreciate your comments on our website about this change. Here is my column as it appears in our February issue:

By Steve Strang

Throughout Scripture God often changed a person's name before something significant happened in their life. After a remarkable encounter with the Lord, Abram became Abraham. Jacob became Israel. Saul became Paul.

It's probably not a big deal to you, but I've been going by Steve Strang for the past year after using "Stephen Strang" in print for as long as *Charisma* has been published. Though I'm obviously not in the same category as those biblical giants, this shift has come out of some significant soul-searching.

During my sabbatical in mid-2009 the Lord was dealing with areas of pride in my life, and I realized I always felt a little "puffed up" when using Stephen rather than the name all my friends call me—Steve. The truth is, I first began using my formal given name because I thought it sounded more sophisticated.

I'm not saying anyone who prefers to be called Stephen is prideful. But for me, it boiled down to answering a question someone challenged me with: What does the Lord call me?

When God speaks to me, He calls me Steve. He's not as interested in how sophisticated my name sounds as He is being my closest friend. So at a time when the Lord was pointing out the pride in my life, it was an easy shift to make.

But what about my other name? Strang is more than my last name; it's what we call the company I founded 30-plus years ago. We started using "Strang Communications" partly because of the long tradition of publishing houses being named for their founders. After all, it meant I'd make sure it stood for the highest standards of quality and integrity because it was my name.

As the company grew I began to think maybe it would become a legacy at some point. Maybe someday people would utter "Strang" in the same revered breath as Thomas Nelson, the 18th century Scot who sold books door-to-door and whose company evolved into today's publishing giant. I remember as a 28-year-old meeting Pat Zondervan shortly before he died and wondering if someday I'd be an important publisher too.

Our company's success fueled this fire. The press occasionally wrote about the "Strang empire." We landed a few books on the *New York Times* best-sellers list. I was

named by *Time* magazine as one of the most influential evangelicals and began to be sought after by politicians. It all began to feel pretty good. Yet gradually the very thing I hated in others—pride—crept into my own thinking. I tried to keep my pride in check a couple of times by asking trusted leaders such as Jack Hayford and Mike Bickle if we should change the name of the company. They felt there was no reason to change, that Strang had become a respected and worthy brand.

But as I reached middle age I grew more wary of things we published and how they reflected on me personally—after all, my name was on it. With people working "at Strang" and Google marking our office location by my name, I felt more like a landmark. This was hardly why I began publishing a small Christian magazine that encouraged people to embrace more of the Holy Spirit.

As we realized the company had to retool for a new generation and rebrand ourselves, I decided I had to rid myself of anything that drew attention to me instead of Christ. Was I put on earth to serve Him or to build a legacy to myself? I knew the answer.

The verse "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30) became alive to me. So as I made other changes in my life, I decided to take my name off the company. It took a year to brainstorm with staff, family, authors and customers. But as of Feb. 1, our company will officially be rebranded as Charisma Media.

Charisma is our strongest brand. It refers not just to spiritual gifts, but also to our calling and passion to serve God and the church. *Media* signifies the diversified ways we can communicate—not only in print through magazines and books, but also online via apps and myriad other digital vehicles.

I'm totally focused on serving God by leading this organization. I know I won't be doing this forever. Charisma Media is the legacy I want to leave so others can reach their generation as I've tried to reach mine, just as Jamie Buckingham, Robert Walker and others did before me.

I'm no Saul of Tarsus, nor did Jesus blind me on my way to work one day. But my "encounter" has resulted in some significant name changes, both personally and professionally. And with Strang Communications becoming Charisma Media, we have great faith for big things in the future—all for God's glory.

Here is the press release we sent out. You're invited to retweet this or to send out as you like:



Strang Communications Rebrands Itself as Charisma Media

The company known for the last 30 years as Strang Communications is rebranding itself as Charisma Media beginning Feb. 1.

The name change correlates with a series of recent corporate shifts, including relaunching the company's flagship magazine and renaming its book division. Founder and CEO Steve Strang says the moves not only position Charisma Media for growth in the digital age, but also undergird the organization's purpose of inspiring people to radically change their world through the diversified resources the company produces.

Charisma Media is best known for its magazines such as *Charisma*, *Ministry Today* and *Christian Retailing*. But its book group, now called Charisma House, has grown rapidly in recent years with 10 books on the *New York Times* best-sellers list and has become the largest part of the company. The Spanish

group, called Casa Creación, was the fastest-growing part of the organization in 2009. And the company is moving boldly into digital products that include a free Charisma News app, electronic books, many e-newsletters, a robust website and digital editions of its magazines that have readership in the top tier of digital magazines nationally.

In his column in the February issue of *Charisma*, Strang explained the name change this way: "*Charisma* is our strongest brand. It refers not only to spiritual gifts but also to our calling and passion to serve God and the church. *Media* signifies the diversified ways we can communicate—not only in print through magazines and books, but also online, via apps and the myriad of other digital vehicles."

A new Charisma Media logo has been designed and shows the initials CM as a flame in a pot of oil, signifying the flame of the Holy Spirit. The corporate website has been relaunched as , and a new sign will be erected in front of the company headquarters at 600 Rinehart Road in Lake Mary, Fla. The company's other well-known brands such as *Charisma* magazine, *Ministry Today*, *Christian Retailing*, Creation House and Casa Creación in Spanish will remain the same. However, the entire book division will now go by Charisma House instead of Strang Book Group.

Long recognized as an innovator, the company has become known as the leading charismatic/Pentecostal publisher in the world. Multiple industry leaders and distributors have acknowledged it as the premier publisher of charismatic titles and health books from a Christian perspective.

Many of the company's staff have been recognized for excellence in various ways, mostly through the Evangelical Press Association and the Florida Magazine Association. The Spanish Evangelical Products Association named Casa Creación Publisher of the Year four years in a row. The company also recently had five books sell more than 1 million copies—most

recently *23 Minutes in Hell* by Bill Weise and *Heaven Is So Real* by Choo Thomas. The company staff also reflects the ethnic diversity of the church market it serves, with 43 percent of the staff being considered "minority."

In 1975 Strang, then a 24-year-old newspaper reporter, persuaded the leaders of megachurch Calvary Assembly in Winter Park, Fla., to start a small magazine called *Charisma*. After rapid growth the magazine spun off on its own within six years into the company now called Charisma Media. Since that time, Strang's wife, Joy, has helped him as co-owner to build the company, serving not only as Chief Financial Officer but also in other strategic roles, such as heading up the current rebranding process.