



MORE EYES = MORE SALES

**UNDERSTANDING AND CREATING ADS FOR
YOUR BOOK ON AMAZON AND FACEBOOK.**

BY KERRIE FLANAGAN

If you plan to self-publish your book (or you already have), you need to think about how you're going to get it into the hands of readers. One tried-and-true way is through paid advertising. Though it can seem like a huge undertaking of both time and money, with the right guidance and information, you can create a successful marketing campaign through Amazon Advertising and Facebook that won't break the bank. Here's how.

AMAZON ADVERTISING

Love it or hate it, Amazon is the largest online retailer in the world, with over 300 million shoppers and a 2018 net revenue in the U.S. of \$232 billion. This makes it *the* place to sell and advertise self-published books.

Generally, people visit Amazon with the intention of buying something. If your self-published book (print and/or eBook) is available through Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP), you can purchase ads to have your book show up as a “sponsored” product in search results for related items. (If someone searches “Southern cookbook” and you wrote a Texan barbecue cookbook, for example, your book could show up in the results, although it would be subtly labeled as “sponsored.”) Each ad contains the book cover and a few lines of text. These ads are pay-per-click (PPC), which means you only pay Amazon if someone clicks on it.

Dave Chesson, founder of Publisher Rocket and Kindlepreneur, is well-known for his expertise regarding Amazon Advertising. He says one of the best things about Amazon ads is that they help eliminate authors' concerns that “*my book's not being seen.*”

“Before [Amazon] ads existed,” he said, “you *had* to choose the right keywords [for someone to find your book]. You had to ensure you ranked at the top. You had to do all these efforts of grabbing somebody from somewhere else and driving them to your book. Ads took all that away.”

If you are willing to pay a few cents for each click, you can get your book in front of people who are shopping for a book in your genre or books similar to yours, he notes.

“Now you get this amazing opportunity to see how many people saw your book, then how many people clicked on your book, then how many of those people ended up buying it,” says Chesson.

How it works

First, decide on a daily budget (\$5-\$10 is plenty) and then decide on the bid you want to set for each click (Chesson suggests around .25 cents).

Next, write a sentence or two about your book. Now it's time to think up your keywords: You can enter up to 1,000 individual keywords or keyword phrases that are somehow related to your book. For instance, you could list other authors/titles in your genre, words related to the topics, themes,

settings, and related hobbies, or a list of movies similar to your book. (For a romance novel starring a Tuscan restaurant owner and her old flame, you might list romance, lost love, second chance romance, childhood sweetheart, books about Italian food, novels set in Italy, *Under the Tuscan Sun*, romance books about Italy...).

Remember, when people shop on Amazon, they use the Amazon search bar just like they use Google. They type in words they believe will help them find what they are looking for. This works to your advantage when trying to find keywords related to your books because you can do the same thing: In the search bar, test different words by slowly typing and seeing what auto-populates in the search box. If you start with *Italy*, suggested words people have already searched with this topic appear automatically. Type *romance* after *Italy* and different words show up. If you add *books*, even more targeted words appear. You can now create a spreadsheet with all of the keywords you've found and copy them into the Keywords box.

Chesson believes authors benefit in two important ways. First, unlike other platforms, Amazon lets you get your book in front of shoppers who are ready to buy. "An example of this is on Facebook when you have an ad," he says. "You have to convince someone who is looking at the latest memes or outrage on *Game of Thrones* or cat videos to stop doing that, come over to Amazon, decide to buy right now, and then buy."

Secondly, he says you can now see where the problem is with elements of your book. "If you have 100,000 people

see your book and nobody clicks on it, that tells you that your book cover is not enticing. That includes your title, subtitle, book cover, and maybe a bit of the blurb you put in for your ad."

If you have people click on your book, but they don't buy it, that tells you your book description may need some work. "I've seen directly where just changing the book description increased the conversion rate by 2.5 times," Chesson says.

Keywords

Chesson states one of the main mistakes authors make is coming up with only a handful of keywords related to their book and setting a high cost per click (paying \$1.50 per click when you only earn a \$2 royalty on each sale, for example). Instead, he says authors need to find as many keywords as possible that are in some way close to their book. Remember, you only pay if people click on the ad, and people will only do that if the book cover, title, and blurb draw their attention.

Don't be afraid to enter too many keywords. Chesson suggests, "Put them out there. See what is working and then experiment. It's a process. It's not selecting a few keywords, throwing them up there, and hope they work. It's figuring out what is working now. Why is it working? Why is Amazon showing [my book] for *that*? Why is it making sales? And then build campaigns centered around that."

He says Amazon ads are not a "set it and forget it" system. You can't create an ad and then just sit back and reap the benefits. It takes effort to find what works.

TOOLS FOR FINDING KEYWORDS

Dave Chesson created a program, Publisher Rocket, where writers can type in one word or phrase, and the software will search Amazon for all related words, authors, and titles, which you can export to a spreadsheet, then cut and paste all the words into the Keyword box. There is a \$97 fee for the program, but it's certainly a time-saver.

Though less directly targeted for authors, free resources abound to help users find relevant keywords, including:

- Keywordtool.io
- Wordstream's Free Keyword Tool (wordstream.com/keywords)
- Ubersuggest (neilpatel.com/ubersuggest)

STEPS TO CREATE AMAZON ADS:

1. Go to advertising.amazon.com.
2. Sign in or create an account.
3. Select "I have a KDP account."
4. Find the three dots with options on the right. Select "Promote and Advertise."
5. Select "Run an Ad Campaign."
6. Select "Sponsored Product."
7. Fill in all the boxes with your information. The "i" in the circle provides information about what to put in each box. In the Targeting section, choose "Manual Targeting" so you can add your own keywords. In the Keywords box, select "Enter Keywords."
8. Launch the campaign.

EFFECTIVE ADS ARE A BLEND OF ART & ANALYTICS.

In January, Amazon updated its dashboard, giving users more data and information to better understand how their ads perform. It shows statistics about the number of impressions (how many times your book is shown on the page of a search result), how many clicks from shoppers, how much you spent on clicks, and the number of sales. This allows you to check daily to see what works, make adjustments on what isn't, and fine tune your ads to make them as effective as possible. Keep in mind, Amazon isn't always the best at reporting sales right away, so don't jump in too quickly to stop an ad campaign.

Another data point is the ACOS (Advertising Cost of Sale), which is the percent of attributed sales spent on advertising within 14 days of clicks on your ads. According to Chesson, a 70% ACOS is breaking even between

what you spent per click and the sales you are making. Anything below this percentage is great, but an effective ad will also have a much farther reach, increasing natural sales (anything not related to the ad) of your book because it will get more attention from Amazon and move your book up in the rankings. This is important to understand if you find your book hovering around this 70%, because if sales are steady or you see an increase in sales, your ad is working.

When done right, Amazon ads are an essential piece of any marketing plan or a successful book launch, but they can also breathe life into the sales of an older book. Remember, Amazon doesn't care if the book is a few years old. If it detects a sales increase, it will show your book to more potential buyers, which means more sales.

FACEBOOK ADVERTISING

Facebook has over 2 billion users worldwide, making it a great platform to reach potential readers. But think about the reasons people are on social media: Unlike Amazon, where users are usually there with the purpose of buying items, Facebook is a place where people go to connect.

Independent author Adam Croft has sold over 1.5 million thriller and crime fiction books to date. He's also the author of *The Indie Author Mindset*. When Croft began his indie career, he says, he approached ads with a "this is my book, I think it's great, why don't you buy it" mindset. He admits he wasn't thinking about the psychology behind the various platforms and why people were there.

Croft feels that effective ads are a blend of art and analytics. When he made that shift in how he thought about advertising, he got better results. With the release of his 2015 book, *Her Last Tomorrow*, he approached his ads under a new mindset. He produced ads that said, "could you murder your wife to save your daughter?" along with an eye-catching image. The suggestive tagline resonated with Facebook users and received a lot of attention, causing Croft's book to move up in the sales rankings, eventually making it a bestseller.

Amy Alcorn, owner and directing manager of Aspen Grove Marketing, works with clients to help them effectively use Facebook and other social media platforms to grow their business or, in the case of authors, sell more



books. Creating effective ads is one important piece of a successful marketing plan.

Alcorn says every successful ad campaign targets the correct audience, then includes effective imagery and messaging. Which, when you think about it, is not that different from writing a book where you have a certain reader or genre in mind, and you craft your words to form the plot and visuals to fit that audience.

Audience

There are billions of people on Facebook. Not every user is going to be interested in your book. You need to think about your target reader. “You don’t need to target everybody; you need to target the right people,” Alcorn says.

If you wrote a young adult fantasy novel, your audience might be male and female readers between the ages of 16 and 25. But that’s not enough. Go even deeper: What movies do these readers enjoy? Where do they shop? What are their hobbies? What music do they listen to? Think about all these things because knowing your reader goes beyond just age and gender. Your target audience could be readers between 16 and 25 who enjoy attending comic conventions, watching superhero movies, and playing Dungeons & Dragons. That’s very different from a reader in this age group who enjoys rock climbing, outdoor sports, watching action thrillers, and back-country camping. Members of the same age group can have very different interests – interests that can all be directly targeted with Facebook ads.

Alcorn says the biggest mistake people make is not putting enough time into understanding their audience. “You need to spend the time to create the foundation with the audience. Build that ad appropriately,” she advises.

Imagery

Images can be powerful. They evoke emotions, convey a tone or mood, and pull us in. The tendency for many authors is to rely on their book cover as the only image in their ads. But since people are on Facebook to be social, you should think more broadly about the images you use in a post or ad.

Are there scenes from your book that can be represented with an image? Are there concepts, themes, recurring jokes, locations, or other elements that can be shown with an image? For example, having warm, inviting images of Italian food and classic images of the Tuscan countryside immediately give your target reader an idea of what your Italian romance is about.

Having a person in the photo can be enticing, too, because humans are drawn to and connect better with people rather than objects, especially on a social site like Facebook. Alcorn suggests thinking about the emotions in the image and your target audience. How will they react when they see it?

“Having an image that really tells the story and captures people is huge,” she says. (To create eye-catching imagery, Canva is an easy-to-use program that has both a free and paid version. It allows you to easily layer photos and text to create the mood and feel you want for your ad.)

Once you decide on your image, you then create your messaging for the ad. Think again about your objective. Are you trying to get people to buy the book, sign up for your newsletter, comment on a post, etc.? Whatever your goal, make sure your text conveys a message to drive your desired results.

How it works

Facebook ads will only work on a business page, not on your personal page. If you don’t have an author page, set one up first. To begin, you need to log in to your Facebook author page. Click the small triangle to the very right of the menu bar, which shows more menu choices. Choose “manage ads.”

Create an ad account and then start your ad campaigns. Facebook’s Ads Manager will walk you through the various steps of the process. It starts by asking about your objective. Do you want to reach more people, generate leads to build your newsletter, increase engagement or traffic to your website? There are many different choices to consider, and it explains each one.

Next, create the audience. As mentioned earlier, you don’t want to target everyone. Think about your target reader. On Facebook, you can break down your audience by location, age, and gender in addition to interests, occupation, or behavior. In the Detailed Targeting box that says, “Include people who match at least one of the following,” the goal is to narrow your audience. As you type specific words in the box (Italy, Tuscany, reader, women’s fiction...), it auto-populates

RESOURCES

Amazon Advertising:
advertising.amazon.com

Adam Croft Indie Author Mindset Mini Course:
indieauthormindset.com

Adam Croft, author:
adamcroft.net

Aspen Grove Marketing:
aspengrovemarketing.com

Publisher Rocket:
publishrocket.com

Free Amazon AMS Advertising Course for Authors:
kindlepreneur.com/ams-book-advertising-course

Kindlepreneur:
kindlepreneur.com

Canva:
canva.com

Mark Dawson’s The Self Publishing Formula:
selfpublishingformula.com

Creative Penn Podcast:
thecreativepenn.com/podcasts

different choices, and you pick the ones that work best for your purposes.

If you wrote an outdoorsy guidebook for women in the West, start broad, say, with women who live in Colorado and Wyoming. Then click “Narrow Audience” and refine that down even more. The next Detailed Targeting box could be women in these areas who like hiking, camping, rafting, fishing, and backpacking. Keep narrowing it down until you feel you have a solid target. As you add more words, Facebook will show you the audience size and potential reach and engagement.

The next important component is the budget. One big difference between Facebook and Amazon Ads is with PPC ads on Amazon, you can set a small daily budget of \$5 or \$10, but it spends your entire budget. With Facebook, the amount you put in for your budget is always used. You don’t have to put in a large amount for it to be effective, but understand it absolutely will be spent.

The final steps include deciding which page you want the ad to come from (if you have more than one Facebook business page, that is) and uploading the image or video.

One interesting feature with Facebook is the Split Test, which is found at the beginning of setup, right after the objective. With this option, you can create two or more versions of an ad shown to a similar audience, and you can see which one performs better. Note the things that do work and the things that don’t, and you will get better each time. “It’s a process of natural selection,” says Croft. “Clone the

winner, and change another small thing.” It could be the headline or the text, but try another variation until you end up with an ad that does well.

As with Amazon, you should take the time to look at the Facebook Ad analytics and insights to see what works and what doesn’t. “So many people won’t take that last step,” says Alcorn. “They just put money out there and say, ‘I think it worked,’ when it didn’t.” The insights appear as soon as the ad goes live, and you can see from day to day, and even hour to hour, how the ad is performing (number of people reached, number of clicks, demographics of people who clicked, amount spent...). If it isn’t doing well, you can shut it off.

“Start with five, 10 dollars, and scale up if it works,” Croft says. “If it doesn’t work, tweak it, change it, spend another five or 10 dollars, and see if that works. It would be daft spending much more than that without testing and playing around with it.”

For self-published authors, marketing can be a challenge, but using ads can help get books in front of readers effectively and efficiently *if* you take the time to understand your audience and how to best reach them. 📌

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