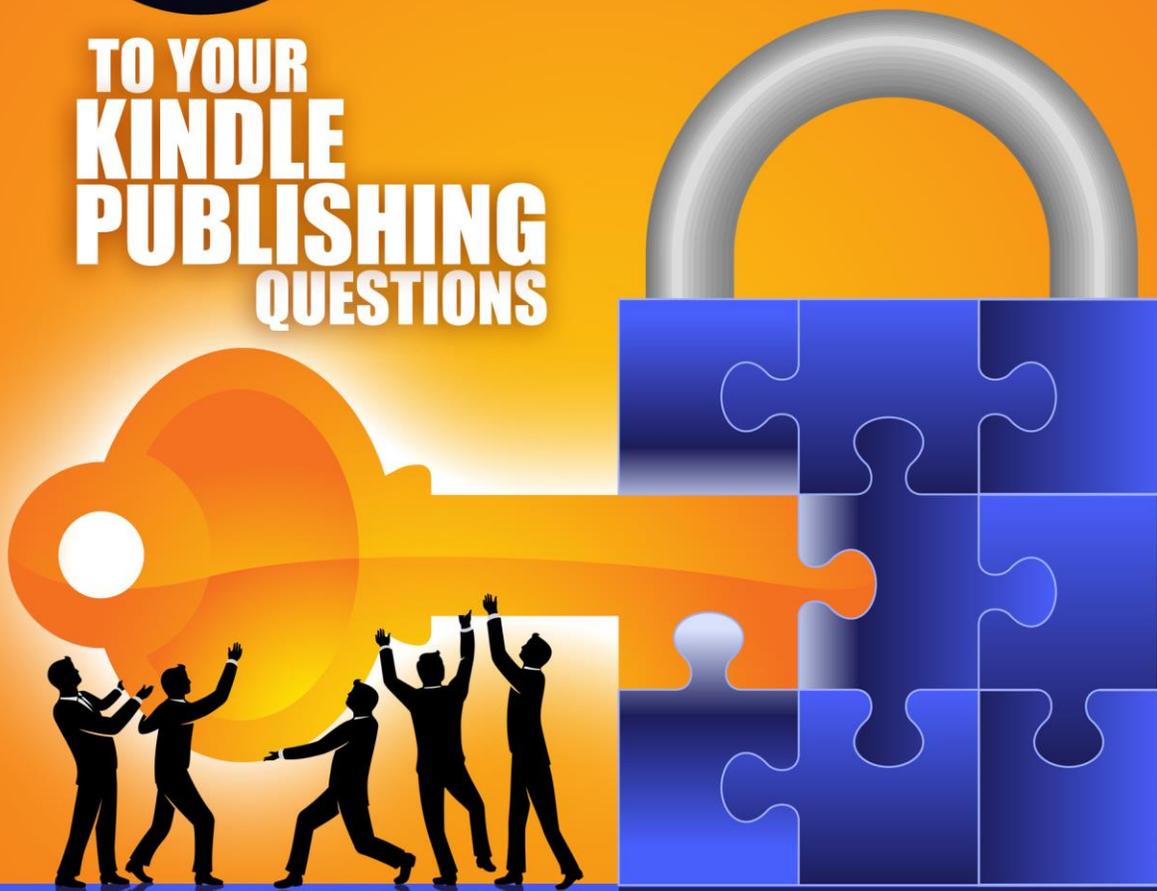


44

ANSWERS

**TO YOUR
KINDLE
PUBLISHING
QUESTIONS**



STEVE SCOTT

44 Answers to Your Kindle Publishing Questions

By Steve Scott

<http://www.stevescottsite.com>

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Introduction

In the last few years, the Kindle publishing platform has been generating a lot of buzz. With this program, Amazon provides an amazing opportunity for writers to earn money for their words. In fact, self-publishing has become so powerful that it's shaking up the way traditional publishers do business. The best thing about Kindle publishing is that you do not have to be a professional writer to generate sales.

When anything generates buzz, there are bound to be a lot of myths and misconceptions. Many of the self-proclaimed “Kindle gurus” would like you to believe Kindle is a get-rich-quick platform where all you have to do is outsource content creation and watch the money roll into your bank account.

Running a Kindle business is like anything else in life—the more effort you give, the more you'll succeed. You can make a legitimate income with this platform (I'll show proof in a bit), but you need to write and market your books in a strategic way to grow your entire brand. In *44 Answers to Your Kindle Publishing Questions*, I'll pull back the curtain and show you what it's like to actually run a successful Kindle business.

What Is This Book?

This book started out with a simple email to my list.

One day, I sent a short email that said:

“Please hit ‘Reply’ to this email and tell me about any problem/question you might have about the Kindle publishing process.”

The response I received was phenomenal.

Almost two hundred people sent me their questions and comments about the Kindle publishing process. At first, I was tempted to “cherry pick” the most common questions and answer those. Instead, I've spent the last month responding to each one...and I still have hundreds to review.

Sidebar: *You're probably reading this book because you've subscribed to my email list. If that's the case, I urge you to remain a subscriber because you'll be one of the first to know when I've answered more questions and updated this book.*

The goal of this book is simple—to cover every question you might have about the Kindle publishing process. While we'll cover the fundamentals at first, we'll also

go over the specific strategies I've used to consistently generate a high volume of book sales on the Kindle platform.

Who Am I?

With any piece of "how to" content, I feel it's important to know who the author is and why they're an authority on that particular topic.

So who am I?

My name is Steve Scott. I've run the blog [Steve Scott Site](#) for the last four years. Like many bloggers, I'm always looking for ways to increase Web traffic. In February 2012, I decided to repurpose a few old blog posts, put them into a Kindle book and see if the book drove traffic back to my site. The result? A few downloads and a trickle of traffic. I immediately gave up on this idea and moved on to other things.

Then in June 2012, I remembered the first book and decided to put together a second book to see if it would drive traffic to my site. At the same time, I decided to do a five-day free promo of the first book (we'll cover this strategy in a bit). A week later, I noticed that the first book was consistently generating five to ten sales per day. When I did the math, I realized this was around \$10 to \$20 per day in *passive* income. Then I thought, "I wonder what would happen if I just focused on writing Kindle books?" Naturally, I procrastinated on this idea and instead went on a seven-week road trip through the United States with my girlfriend.

Finally, in September 2012, I sat down and wrote the third book. That started selling well, so I wrote a fourth. Then came the fifth, sixth and seventh books. When I finally looked up at the end of 2013, I realized that I've cranked out a total of 38 books. What's interesting is these books are actually selling well. **In December 2013 alone, my books generated a total of 10,164 sales in the United States.**

Here's a screen shot with proof:

Month-to-date unit sales covering period 01/01/2014 to 01/03/2014

Unit sales covering period 12/01/2013 to 01/01/2014

#	Title	ASIN	Units Sold	Units Refunded	Net Units Sold	Units Borrowed*
1			407	1	406	31
2			3416	39	3377	410
3			12	1	11	2
4			39	0	39	10
5			26	1	25	4
6			8	0	8	2
7			445	4	441	16
8			223	5	218	29
9			14	1	13	0
10			27	1	26	1
11			2	0	2	0
12			180	2	178	6
13			4	0	4	2
14			295	8	287	20
15			285	4	281	2
16			1	0	1	0
17			2	0	2	0
18			436	3	433	10
19			336	2	334	22
20			77	2	75	0
21			395	3	392	9
22			46	0	46	5
23			0	0	0	0
24			1	0	1	0
25			59	1	58	0
26			150	3	147	11
27			1	0	1	0
28			331	3	328	9
29			15	0	15	2
30			670	7	663	18
31			368	8	360	15
32			6	0	6	0
33			712	9	703	59
34			48	2	46	5
35			752	10	742	58
36			374	11	363	27
37			1	0	1	1

**10,164 Sales / 31 Days =
328 Daily Sales**



[\(Click to enlarge.\)](#)

I'm a pretty modest person, so I don't really like talking about income and sales numbers, but I've included this screenshot to demonstrate that I *actually* know what I'm talking about (as opposed to those "Kindle experts" who think that a few weeks of positive sales on a single book make them an authority on this subject).

Most of *my* time is spent writing Kindle books—not mapping out the perfect sales funnel to sell aspiring authors on the idea that you can be lazy and still succeed with Amazon.

Honestly, who would you rather listen to: a slick salesperson who promises a lot and delivers very little *or* someone who actually generates a consistent income using the strategies they teach? Hopefully you picked the second answer. 😊

What you'll get with this free report is a variety of in-depth answers to questions I've been asked by writers who are currently growing their Kindle businesses. Although all the answers come from my personal framework, you'll find that they all tie together to help you build a Kindle **business**, not a flash-in-the-pan temporary success.

There is a lot to cover. First, we'll cover what I call the 3 Golden Rules of Kindle Publishing.

3 Golden Rules of Kindle Publishing

Before I jump into the questions, I wanted to start with the **3 Golden Rules of Kindle Publishing**.

You'll probably notice that my viewpoint differs from what's commonly taught by many Kindle "gurus." My intention isn't to be contradictory. Instead, I've developed three simple guidelines that help me make decisions whenever I'm faced with what to do about a specific promotion, obstacle or problem:

Golden Rule 1: Focus on 80/20 Activities

It's easy to get caught up in the minutiae of Kindle publishing: *How can I go from position #7 for my keyword to position #1? Someone just left a 2-star review, should I respond? How do I format my book for a website that gets 20 monthly visitors?*

My **most important** piece of advice for Kindle publishing is to focus on 80/20 tasks. There are only a handful of activities (like writing, research, book design and building an audience) that truly matter for selling books. Everything else should be ignored or given minimal attention.

So when you see me reply, "I don't really do that," to some questions, it's my way of saying that I feel a specific strategy doesn't bring a significant ROI. Or, in the parlance of the 80/20 rule—the strategy is too time-consuming to be part of the core tactics that *really* help sell books.

Golden Rule 2: Build a Catalog Business

Right now, the best thing you can do is to ignore those stories of people who publish one or two books that suddenly become overnight sensations. Sure, it happens. And sure, you can engineer the success of one book through effort and hustle. But, it's been my experience that the Kindle authors who achieve long-term success typically focus on building a catalog business.

Focusing on a catalog business means you don't agonize over the successes or failures of one particular title. Your goal is to write a great book, market the heck out of it during the launch phase and then get started on the next one.

This also means never taking shortcuts. You don't swap reviews, you don't "flame" people who leave one-star reviews and you don't trick people into buying your books. In other words, your reputation as an author is more important than the sales record of a single title.

Golden Rule 3: Help Amazon Sell Your Books

What I like best about Kindle publishing is that Amazon will do a lot to sell your book—if it feels like readers want it. When a book gains momentum it'll get exposure on pages like *New Releases*, *Top 100* and *Customers Also Bought*, as well as in targeted email campaigns. To be put it succinctly, if you can give a book that initial boost in sales, Amazon will do its best to sell the heck out of it.

I feel it's important to remember this golden rule whenever you're making a marketing decision. Ask yourself: "*Will this decision increase or decrease my Kindle book sales?*" While other book platforms are gaining momentum, I still feel it's best to focus all of your marketing efforts around supporting Amazon books.

These three rules guide almost every decision in my business. So I recommend that you carefully review each one and see how it fits your current self-publishing efforts.

Okay, let's get to those questions...

The Fundamentals of Kindle Publishing

I know that some readers might not be familiar with what it's like to publish on Amazon's platform, so I think it's important to start with the fundamentals and cover a few rudimentary questions. If you *already* know how Kindle works, then feel free to skip ahead to the higher-level stuff.

Question #1: What is Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP)?

Put simply, Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) is the platform that Amazon uses to put your written works on their website. Within 24 hours, you can upload a Word, Mobi or ePub file to Amazon's site and have it ready for the world to download to their e-readers or mobile phones. This is a powerful platform that gives you access to the hundreds of millions of Amazon customers throughout the world.

The reason authors love KDP is because it has the lion's share of the e-book market—some say as many as 80 percent of readers buy their e-books from Amazon ([check out this article for more information](#)). If you effectively use the tools Amazon provides, you will be able to build your brand and generate sales.

Some people avoid publishing on the KDP platform because the profit margins don't seem very high. Amazon's royalty structure is as follows:

- There is a 35 percent royalty for books priced between \$0.99 and \$2.98.
- There is a 70 percent royalty for books priced between \$2.99 and \$9.99.
- The royalty reverts back to 35 percent for books priced above \$9.99.

I usually price my books at \$2.99, so that gives me a profit of \$2.10 per book. This might not seem like a lot of money when compared to information products priced at \$50 or more, but KDP gives you access to the world's largest shopping portal. Even though you're only generating a few dollars per sale, a high volume of sales and repeat buyers will turn your catalog of mini books into a very profitable business.

This royalty structure is also better than what most publishing houses offer their authors. If you sell a book to a traditional publisher, you might earn a royalty of 10 to 20 percent of the retail price of the book. For a \$10 book, this amounts to one or two dollars. If the publishing company pays you an advance, you will not receive any royalty checks until the company recoups the money you were paid up front. If you agreed to a \$1,000 advance and 10 percent royalty on a book that retails for \$10, you would have to sell 1,000 books before you would receive any royalty checks.

There's a lot more to Kindle Direct Publishing. If you're not familiar with KDP, then I urge you to [read the extensive tutorial section](#) that tells you everything you need to know about the platform.

Question #2: How is KDP Select different from Kindle Direct Publishing?

It's easy to confuse KDP Select with the standard KDP program. Every time you publish a title, you are given the opportunity to enroll it in KDP Select. If you enroll, you will be able to take advantage of the following benefits:

- Earning a 70 percent royalty rate in countries such as Brazil, Japan and India
- Allowing readers to “borrow” your book, which generates a small sales commission (at times as much as \$2 per book)
- Giving away your book for five days during every 90-day period
- Running Countdown Deals for one week, which can increase your overall sales volume

If you decide to enroll your book in KDP Select, then it must be exclusive to the platform. This means it can't be published in any other e-book store or even sold separately on your blog or as part of an information product. If you don't enjoy these benefits, then you can take your book out of KDP Select after three months.

As you'll see throughout this book, KDP Select is a great program for gaining visibility and increasing sales. My advice? If you're not sure if the program is right for you, try it for 90 days to see if it helps you reach your sales goals.

Question #3: What are the benefits of giving away a book?

It might seem counterintuitive, but some authors increase their sales by enrolling in KDP Select and making their books free for five days. While the effectiveness of this strategy has diminished since early 2013 (more on this later), a free promotion can help you in a number of ways:

- I. **You Get More Reviews.** Reviews are gold because they're what potential buyers use to decide if your book is worth reading. You want to get as many positive reviews as possible. In fact, they're more important than sales. Use KDP Select to give away a lot of books, and you'll increase the likelihood that readers will leave reviews.
- II. **You Get Lots of Downloads.** Amazon does a lot of internal marketing for Kindle books. They have lists like *Hot New Releases*,

Customers Also Bought and *Top 100 Lists*. An intelligent KDP Select promo can help your book get on these lists. When people download and review your book, it will start to build momentum. From there, it becomes a lot easier to get *paid* sales when the promotion ends.

- III. **You Rank on Category Lists.** Amazon *wants* customers to buy the best books, so the site depends heavily on certain factors such as downloads, reviews, likes, shares and purchases to judge the overall quality of a title. Get enough of these and your book will rise up the rankings of a category page. More people will see your book and, ultimately, you will make more money.

Again, the “free model” has changed somewhat over the last year, but it still gives you an effective way to gain extra visibility on Amazon’s platform. We’ll come back to this topic later on.

Question #4: What are Countdown Deals?

As I’ve already mentioned, the success of free promotions has diminished over the past year. This has caused many authors to “jump ship” and publish their books on other platforms. To counteract this trend, Amazon has rolled out a feature in KDP Select called Countdown Deals. ([You can read more about it here.](#))

You get a number of benefits with this program.

1. A book gets more sales because it’s deeply discounted—down to \$0.99.
2. Customers see the normal price with a countdown clock, which incentivizes them to make an immediate purchase.
3. You get a 70 percent royalty rate—even if a book is less than \$2.99.
4. There is a dedicated section on Amazon where users can shop for countdown books. This means more visibility and more sales.

Despite the benefits, there are a few drawbacks to Countdown Deals. First, they only last for a week. Second, you can’t do a free promotion and a Countdown Deal in the same 90-day period. Finally, you can’t end a promotion early. If it’s not going well, you have to wait until it comes to an end.

Overall, I absolutely love Countdown Deals. When you have a large catalog of books, you can run one of these promotions to increase visibility and generate sales for your entire line of books. I feel it’s the best feature of KDP Select, and I think it will be a valuable sales tool for many smart authors—like you.

Question #5: How do I format my book on Kindle?

To be completely honest, I still struggle with formatting my Kindle books. Although I've figured out a few workarounds, I spend more time focusing on high-quality content than perfect formatting. If you need information about Kindle formatting, I suggest you read a few guides on the best way to format your book.

The first is the "official" formatting book provided by Amazon, [*Building Your Book for Kindle*](#).

The next one is titled [*From Word to Kindle*](#), which is a guidebook I've used to do simple formatting for my books.

My overall advice for Kindle authors is to keep things simple. When you try to add too many tables, bullet points and images, you increase the likelihood that the content will look unprofessional to the end reader. Use these two guides to create a decent-looking book and focus on creating the very best content.

With that in mind, let's jump into the meat and potatoes of the book.

The Mindset of a Successful Kindle Publisher

Question #6: “How long does it take to make the ‘big bucks’ from Kindle publishing?”

Honestly, it’s impossible to answer this question. Unlike the gurus who promise “instant Kindle gold,” I believe that self-publishing requires dedication and hard work. It isn’t a magic, push-button system where you hire a low-quality writer for \$200, purchase a \$5 Fiverr cover and then watch the “fat stacks” grow. So, it’s simply not possible to give an accurate timeline of when you’ll make decent money.

Really, your success depends on a number of key factors:

1. How many words per day you can produce (more is better).
2. The profitability of the niche you select (see question #12).
3. The size and level of engagement you have with an email list.
4. How you are building your brand outside of Amazon.
5. The overall presentation of your Kindle books.

The truth is:

“Your Kindle growth is directly related to how much you’re willing to bust your ass and hustle.”

If you take three months between each book and then “market” it with a \$5 Fiverr cover, then you probably can’t compete with the publishers who work hard and invest time/money in the quality of their presentations.

I do apologize for the harshness of the above paragraph, but it seems like many people think that there is some “secret” that successful Kindle authors keep to themselves. All they really do is: publish consistently, use each book as a learning experience and adjust their marketing strategies along the way. That’s how you make the “big bucks.”

Question #7: “How do you balance blogging with writing Kindle books?”

On my blog, I talk a lot about blogging and how it can help you build an authority business. I feel that blogging can help support your books, but it’s not the easiest

thing to do if you have limited time. So the best way to find that perfect balance is to:

1. Publish (only) one or two blog posts each week.
2. Make sure each article thoroughly covers one specific topic or strategy.
3. Write the occasional post (for instance, every two weeks) that defines an important concept in your niche.
4. Link to this article (and others like it) in your Kindle book to increase value to the reader.
5. Repurpose the best blog content for your Kindle book—even if you have to re-write the whole thing.
6. Test book ideas by writing a basic post on it and see how readers respond.
7. Create a series of posts that can act as a catalyst for readers to check out your blog. (I do this with a “30-Day Habit Challenge” series on my website DevelopGoodHabits.com).

Having a blog and catalog of Kindle books requires a *lot* of writing—I won’t lie to you about that. But, you can save a little bit of time by being strategic with your content. When writing anything, think of how it can be re-used to grow your overall brand.

Question #8: “On your blog, why do you talk about building an authority business instead of Kindle publishing?”

Many people have asked why I talk about building an authority business instead of Kindle publishing. My response comes from a LOT of thinking since late 2012. I have been an online marketer for a decade and have seen many “can’t fail” platforms go the way of the dinosaurs. If I’m correct, people will talk about Kindle publishing in three distinct phases:

Kindle Publishing 1.0: This is the *early adopter* phase. If you were smart enough to get on the platform from 2007 to 2010, it was easy to sell books because there wasn’t much competition.

Kindle Publishing 2.0: This is the *hard worker* phase. I’d say we’re currently in this period where hustle, quality content and decent marketing is enough to generate book sales.

Kindle Publishing 3.0: This will be the *authority business* phase. Eventually the Kindle market will become so bloated with low-quality books that the *only*

way to stand out is to build a brand outside of Amazon, which supports your written work.

My answer to the above question? I feel that the **only** way to protect your book business against a random change is to build your own platform. While I absolutely love Amazon right now, that might change in a few years when a better platform comes along. Get people to follow YOU and they'll read your content, no matter where you publish.

So, the reason I started the [Authority Internet Business case study](#) is to show how to build a business from scratch. Sure, at first I'm only focusing on Kindle books. However, over the next year, you'll see how to use a book-based audience to grow *other* platforms.

Question #9: “How do you write books that people like?”

As you'll see later, my huge “secret” to getting lots of reviews is to write books that people actually like. I'll admit it's a frustrating answer because there are many authors who work really hard on their books, yet they don't receive a high number of reviews in return. So another possible solution to the “review problem” is to think about the type of books that you write. Basically you have two options:

Option 1. Write a Massive Resource Book

This is when the author attempts to write the ultimate book on a broad topic. He tries to cover every possible situation, answer every question and include tons of links. For instance, there are many books that claim to be the ultimate resource on Kindle publishing.

Option 2. Write a Specialized Book

A specialized book doesn't try to answer every question. Instead, it identifies a single problem and provides a very detailed solution. The goal here is to start with one problem that the reader faces, then go into step-by-step detail on what to do.

Which option do I recommend?

Without a doubt, I feel that publishing specialized books generates more sales and reviews than publishing a massive resource book. At the \$2.99 price (Golden Rule #3), you provide an insane amount of value by answering every possible question about a single problem.

Remember, when it comes to nonfiction, readers like *detailed* information. Most would much rather get a 15,000-word book that tackles a specific issue, instead of a 20,000-word book that gives the basics, but leaves them with many unanswered questions.

Keep this advice in mind as you build your catalog business. When you find that a book is getting really long (like over 20,000 words), it's tempting to "skimp" on certain important points. My recommendation is to split it in two and spend time providing a detailed solution for each problem. Readers will like the detailed content, which ultimately means more reviews and more sales.

Question #10: "What's the best long-term strategy for increasing sales?"

I consider myself to be very fortunate because I started listening to the [Self Publishing Podcast](#) when I first began my Kindle business.

The one long-term strategy they discuss (over and over) is to simply **write more books**. (By the way, I highly recommend checking out their latest book: [Write. Publish. Repeat.](#))

I'll admit that "write more books" is frustrating advice. It requires hard work and a commitment to publishing on a regular basis. However, I've discovered that my net income always increases whenever I launch a new book. And that's why I feel this strategy is far superior to the latest-greatest-super-ninja-Kindle-generating-sales-machine product that's being pitched on the Warrior Forum.

Question #11: "So, why is 'write more books' the best strategy?"

There is a logic progression on why consistent publishing is your best long-term strategy. It works like this:

1. **Each book has its own KDP Select contract.** That means it can be given away for free (5 out of every 90 days) or it can be deeply discounted through the Countdown Deal program. Both strategies provide extra visibility to your overall book catalog.

2. **Within each book is an offer (or two) for a related book.** When a book gets that extra visibility, it will also generate additional sales for your other titles. (This could even have a snowball effect if you're promoting different titles throughout your catalog.)

3. **You can grow your email list by offering a free piece of content inside each book.** When it's offered for free or as part of a Countdown Deal,

you'll get even more subscribers. This can also have a snowball effect because you'll use the email list to promote each future book, which builds on the overall results of each one.

4. Even when a book isn't on sale or for free, it still acts as an entry point into your catalog business. When your books are spread out all over the place (in different categories, "customer also bought" recommendations and keywords) you'll increase the chance that new readers will discover your brand.

5. You are not depending on the success or failure of a single title. If one book tanks during a launch or gets a few negative reviews, your overall sales numbers won't plummet.

I've focused on Kindle publishing for 16 months now and I can honestly say that the best long-term sales strategy is to continuously produce more content.

How to Identify Profitable Book Topics

Question #12: “How do you find a ‘niche’ for your Kindle books?”

I know there are lots of Kindle systems that give advice like this: “Find what’s hot right now and write books about these subjects.”

Frankly, I think this is a shortsighted strategy because it doesn’t build an audience. Instead, your “business” is focused on hopping from trend to trend without building a database of repeat customers.

The better, long-term strategy is to pick a single niche and publish multiple books that are marketed to the same group of people. (Golden Rule #2: Build a Catalog Business.)

That means, before you worry about “how to find book ideas,” you’ll need to first pick a market that fulfills three major requirements:

- 1. Interest:** Do you enjoy writing about the topic? Do you have enough ideas for *at least* five books? Is it something you think about throughout the day?
- 2. Expertise:** While you don’t need a college degree in this subject, you should know enough to help most readers.
- 3. Profitability:** There should be a market on Amazon for your specific niche. Look up your topics, find related books and then check out their bestseller’s ranking ([click here to see an example](#)). If you see at least three books with a ranking of under #20,000, then you know it’s a market that has profit potential.

It’s important to have a merging of all three elements. When a niche is something you enjoy, can teach others how to do *and* makes money, you’ll find that it’s not hard to consistently publish great books.

Question #13: “How do you think of good book ideas?”

Once you’ve found the right niche, identifying great book ideas isn’t that hard. The best piece of advice I can give is to picture your ideal customer and ask: “What type of information would really help this person?”

You can do this with a few simple questions:

1. What does the reader go through on a day-to-day basis?
2. What problems does he or she regularly face?

3. What solution can you provide?

I'd recommend you write down three questions in a prominent place. Refer to these questions on a daily basis and let your subconscious mind work on possible solutions. You'd be surprised at how many excellent ideas will pop into your head throughout the day. (The trick is to write down each one and follow up on it.)

Honestly, there isn't a "magical formula" for generating book ideas. I get inspiration at the most random times—often when I'm not working and doing something else instead (like going on a run). That said, you can use a few web tools to spark your creative juices:

1. [Amazon](#): Look at the books in your market to see what topics sell well (using the "#20,000 rule").
2. [Clickbank](#): Check out the sales letters of information products and look at their bullet points. See what problems and questions people encounter in this niche.
3. [AllTop](#): Enter related keywords and search for blog posts that answer specific questions.
4. [Google Keyword Planner](#) (now part of the Adwords program): Enter your keywords and look for phrases that relate to specific problems.

Also, don't underestimate what's rolling around inside your brain. Most of my recent book ideas started out as a realization or "ah-ha" moment that randomly popped into my head.

Specifically, there are two ways to do this:

1. **Think of obstacles you've overcome:** Did you overcome a major obstacle related to your niche? Odds are other people have had a similar experience. Simply write down a step-by-step process of how you overcame this problem and you'll have a book that people love.
2. **Use your subconscious mind:** Often, inspiration come from the most random places. One idea connects to another and then you'll suddenly have a profitable book idea. Make sure to write down every thought you have—even if it sounds lame. Perhaps this thought will lead to something great.

At this point, I've published 38 books and these are the *only* tools I've used to generate ideas. This is good news for you...it means you don't have to invest in any sort of expensive keyword software. Just think of problems in your niche and

provide helpful solutions. That's all you need to form the foundation of a successful book business.

Question #14: “How important is the ‘#20,000 rule?’”

As I mentioned before, I often use what I call the “#20,000 rule” for determining the profitability of a book.

You can use Amazon's bestseller ranking to guesstimate a book's average daily sales. When you break down the numbers, a #20,000 ranking means a book averages five sales a day, which is a \$10 daily profit (at the \$2.99 price point), or about \$300 in monthly profits.

For me, \$300 per book, each month, is a decent starting point for an idea. It's not a *lot* of money, but it's good enough to be part of my catalog business (Golden Rule #2).

Now, the problem with the “#20,000 rule” is many people think it's written in stone. The truth is, I often throw this rule out the window and write books that don't look initially profitable. What truly matters is writing books that best serves your audience. So even if a book doesn't look like a potential winner, sometimes it makes sense to go ahead and write it anyway.

EXAMPLE:

I made this choice when publishing *Email Marketing Blueprint* and *Outsourcing Mastery*. I did the “#20,000 test” for both books and realized that neither was *potentially* profitable. Yet I went ahead and wrote them anyway because I felt both topics were important for readers to learn.

The funny thing? Both turned out to be important parts of my book catalog. While they're not selling thousands of copies of each month, they're both well received by readers and generate a decent amount of profit each month.

The point here is to treat the #20,000 rule like a *guideline*, not like a mandatory requirement. In fact, a better rule is to know your audience and write the kind of books that make them happy.

What's the Deal with KDP Select?

Question #15: “Is KDP Select Still Effective?”

Many things have happened in the last year with the KDP Select program. Primarily, the power of the “free promo” has greatly diminished, but that doesn't mean it's time to *jump ship* on KDP Select just yet.

First off, KDP Select lets people borrow your book, which generates additional reviews (at the \$2.99 price point, a borrow makes more money than a sale.) The best part? Amazon regards each borrow as a sale. This means more visibility and ultimately more sales.

Next, Amazon just rolled out a new program called Countdown Deals ([check out their FAQ page for more details](#)). Instead of giving away your book every 90 days, now you can run a discount for a week. Basically your book gets more visibility, which has a spillover effect when it goes back to its normal price.

I'm still testing this new feature, so I can't say for certain if it's worth giving Amazon exclusivity on your books. However, I think it's worth a three-month commitment to see if this tool can help you sell more books.

Overall, I still think KDP Select is effective. It goes back to Golden Rule #3. Since Amazon has a huge chunk of the marketplace, it makes sense to use every tool in your arsenal to push books on their platform. The more you work for Amazon, the more visibility (and sales) you'll get back.

Question #16: “Isn't it dangerous to rely solely on Amazon's platform?”

Absolutely!

I know that “Golden Rule #3” emphasizes the importance of helping Amazon sell your books. So this means you have to put all of your eggs into Amazon's basket. When you think about it—this is a pretty scary long-term plan.

For anyone who has dealt with Google and their animal-themed updates, you know that it's pretty stupid to build your entire business on somebody else's platform.

So what I'm saying here is to think carefully about the ramifications of what it means to stay in Amazon's KDP Select program.

Why am *I* sticking with this program? Because their sales tools give me a competitive advantage that is far superior to anything I'd get from publishing on other platforms. I know it's a risk to rely solely on Amazon, but it's also a **very calculated risk**.

That said, if I wake up tomorrow and discover that all of my books have been removed, then I'll still have the following:

- 6+ months of living expenses saved in a bank.
- 3 email lists that continue to grow—outside of Amazon.
- 2 blogs that continue to grow—outside of Amazon.
- Other revenue streams—including apps, affiliate marketing and information products.

I have two points here:

First, for me it makes sense to rely solely on Amazon. I know the risks and I'm willing to accept the consequences. Plus, I make sure that I'm always 100% compliant with every rule and regulation.

Second, you should ALWAYS take my advice (and the advice of others) with a grain of salt. Think first about your specific situation before making any sort of business decision. If you have other income coming in (from a job, for instance) and want to maximize sales, then you should stick with the exclusivity of Amazon's KDP Select program. On the other hand, if you want to play it safe because you depend on your book income (to put food on the table, for instance), then the smart move is to diversify on other platforms like Kobo, B&N, Apple and everywhere else that books are sold.

Question #17: “Do free days still work?”

Over the last year, Kindle authors have seen a diminishing return on their free KDP Select promotions. Some free promos have even *hurt* their sales due to a few negative reviews.

I won't mince words here—**free is no longer an effective long-term strategy**. It's still great for building an audience if you don't have a blog or established platform, but it's no longer the sales-generating machine it was in 2008 to 2012.

What I think is *very* effective is launching a book for \$0.99. If you have a great book and an existing audience, you can generate lots of sales on Amazon with this

type of promotional strategy. Then, once Amazon sees that people like your book, they'll provide more visibility, which leads to additional sales down the road—even when your book goes up to \$2.99 or above (Golden Rule #3).

Question #18: “If you publish on Kindle, can you also publish the same e-book through other platforms?”

There is a lot of confusion about what's allowed on Amazon. If your book is *not* in their KDP Select program, you can freely publish it on other platforms like Barnes & Noble, Apple, Kobo and SmashWords. This is a great strategy if you want to diversify your audience and not put all your eggs into “Amazon's basket.”

However, if you'd like to get the benefits of KDP Select—five free promo days, Countdown Deals and borrows—then the book has to be exclusive with Amazon. That means it can't be published *anywhere* else.

I feel it's important to understand the benefits and drawbacks of each decision. While you'll diversify income by publishing on multiple platforms, you'll lose out on Amazon's marketing tools that can help you sell more books. On the other hand, when you give too much power to Amazon, you could set yourself up for a disaster if they change the rules.

How to Create Killer Kindle Book Content

Question #19: “How long are your Kindle books?”

For a \$2.99 book, I typically aim for 17,000 words. This is a rough estimate, because some books are a few thousand words longer and others are a few thousand shorter. Really, the final word count depends on how much I have to say about a specific topic.

Now, when I say 17,000 words, I mean 17,000 *edited* words. By the end of the 1st draft, a book will be over 20,000 words. Then, during the 2nd and 3rd drafts, I'll whittle down the word count by ruthlessly eliminating unimportant content.

In my opinion, I'd say the bare minimum for a \$2.99 nonfiction book is 12,000 words. And if you asked me the same question at the end of 2014, I'd probably say 15,000 words. It's becoming increasingly competitive to promote a book on Amazon, so one way to stand out is to publish lengthy books full of quality content.

Question #20: “What’s your timeline for publishing a Kindle book?”

I've moved away (slightly) from the “write a book in 21 days” strategy I followed in late 2012. I now strive for a higher level of quality and longer word count (see above), so my new timeline for getting from an idea to a published book is around four to five weeks. Let's go over the numbers:

- 10 to 15 hours each week dedicated to writing a Kindle book.
- 2 to 3 hours to outline an idea, doing a complete brain dump on the topic.
- 1 hour to research good resources to include in the book.
- 1 week to write a very rough draft.
- 2 weeks to write a painstakingly slow, 2nd draft.
- 2 to 3 days to do a careful re-write/edited 3rd draft.
- 1 week to commission the eCover design (happens during the 2nd draft).
- 1 day to go over and do a 4th draft.
- 1 to 3 days to send the book to an editor and get corrections.
- 1 day to fix all the mistakes, add the front/back matter, write a “sales letter” product description and publish on Amazon for \$0.99.

- 1 day to download the final version, read it on my iPhone and correct any small mistakes.
- 5 to 10 days to schedule the start of a free/\$0.99 promotion.
- During this lead up, I've already started on the next book.

Now, a lot of these milestones will overlap, but if you put them together, the timeline works out to around 4 to 5 weeks. While I'd *like* to do it faster, I feel this is a decent pace for publishing quality Kindle books.

Question #21: “I have a blog, can I turn my content into a book?”

Again, the answer depends on whether you'd like to take advantage of KDP Select. If you're using the multi-platform approach, you can freely use existing content (as long as you're the original author) and publish it “as-is.”

On the other hand, if you want the book to be published through KDP Select, the content can't be found anywhere else (though Amazon *does* give you a 10% cap for previously published content). So if you want to include content from a blog or information product, you must remove it from the public domain before putting it up for sale through KDP Select.

Also, another thing you can do is to rewrite the content, which we'll cover in the next question.

Question #22: “Is there a simple way to rewrite content for a Kindle book?”

If you're a prolific blogger, then you probably have a website full of useful content that can be added to a Kindle book. So how do you include this information while complying with Amazon's rules? The answer is to rewrite the content.

I follow a simple strategy for including pre-existing content:

1. While outlining, I add a note to include information from related posts.
2. During the rough draft, I'll cut-and-paste the relevant parts of my blog.
3. Then, I'll use a **red font on this text** to act as a reminder that it needs to be re-written.
4. Finally, in the 2nd draft, I'll do a quick rewrite, swapping out sentences, deleting unrelated sections and changing a lot of the language.

With a little bit of effort, you can quickly change quality content and turn it into information that can be helpful for your reader. While I don't use this strategy all the time, I do like to include previously published content that's most helpful to readers.

Question #23: “Do you ever include affiliate links inside of your books, or is that against Amazon’s TOS?”

There is no 100% accurate answer to this question. Some people say it's okay to include affiliate links and others say that Amazon strictly forbids it. Thus, the answer comes from *my* interpretation of Amazon's rules.

Basically there are **two types of affiliate links**, so I feel there are two different rules for how you handle affiliate marketing.

The first deals with their “Associates Program.” According to the rules of the Associates program, you can't include links in Kindle books. Yes, this makes no sense because affiliate links help Amazon sell more of **their** products. But, in my opinion, you should never include an Associate links to any product on Amazon.com within your books. You can *still* link to your books (and other products), but you can't use an Associates affiliate link while doing so.

The second rule deals with *other* affiliate offers. From my experience, Amazon does let you link to affiliate products—with the caveat that you're not turning a book into a long sales pitch. If you balance the occasional affiliate offer with a dozen links to free offers, then you *should* be within Amazon's guidelines.

Question #24: “What are your thoughts about Private Label Rights (PLR)? I'm having a hard time kicking off my website with content, and I was considering PLR. What are your thoughts? If you're for it, what sources do you recommend?”

Honestly, I think that using PLR is a complete waste of you and your reader's time.

First off, Amazon has a fancy algorithm that can detect duplicate content. Plus, PLR is usually “thin” content that doesn't provide value to the end reader. So this means you'd have to re-write the whole thing in order to turn it into something worthwhile.

Second, it's been my experience that you get the best long-term results by focusing on a niche and providing in-depth content for that market. This works exponentially, where one book buyer turns into a multiple book buyer. So, even if you convince somebody to buy one of your PLR books, it's not likely that he or

she will buy anything else because you didn't provide a great introductory reading experience.

I know it's *not* an easy process, but you'd be better off targeting a specific topic and sharing books that come from your personal experiences.

How to Create a Dynamic Sales Presentation

Question #25: “How important is eCover design?”

Honestly, I feel that many authors are making a big mistake with their eCover design. Buyers *do* judge books by their cover. If your book has an amateur look done by somebody on Fiverr, people will skip over it and buy one that’s more professional/interesting looking.

Sure, you can find hidden talent on Fiverr, but that’s the exception, not the rule. In my opinion, your best bet is to invest a bit of money on a cover that stands out.

Here’s my process for outsourcing a good eCover design.

Step #1: Use a Vector Graphic

A cartoonish cover works really well on the digital platform. Match these up against the “*do it yourself*” images on Amazon and you’ll see that they quickly catch readers’ eyes.

The key is to find an image that fits the hook and overall benefit of your book. I prefer vector graphics because designers can easily manipulate them. The best place to find these images is on [iStockPhoto.com](https://www.iStock.com).

Go to their search bar and enter this phrase: *Vector* + [Main Keyword]

So if your book is about weight loss, you’d enter: *Vector Weight Loss*

This search result will generate a wide variety of vector graphics. Simply scroll through these results and find the image that best matches the content of your book.

Expect to pay between \$15–\$20 for a vector graphic. This is a bit on the pricey side, but well worth it because they help designers create excellent cover images.

Step #2: Create a Project Spec

Amazon presents a unique challenge with their image manipulation. Often they’ll reduce the size of an eCover to 90 pixels wide and show them on the “*Customers Also Bought...*” tab of related books.

The trick to an awesome Amazon eCover is to make sure the text is visible when it’s shrunk to this size!

Your goal when outsourcing an eCover is to work with a designer who **gets** the limitations of the digital platform.

To give you an idea of what I mean, here's a project I recently posted for a designer:

Hello,

I need a stylish, eye-catching eCover image for an Amazon Kindle book. Here are a few things I'm looking for:

#1. The final graphic package should include a flat image that fits Amazon's platform. So I'm looking for an 1880 x 2500 width/length sized image.

#2. I will supply a cartoon vector image. I need you to incorporate this image with the final product.

#3. The main title is the most important element of this eCover. It needs to catch the eye. Plus, this is for the Amazon platform, so a user needs to be able to see the title on a thumbnail 90 to 125 pixels wide. This is SUPER important!

#4. The image will also include a lengthy sub-title and my author name.

#5. I will also supply URLs of sample eCover images that I like and think work on the Amazon platform. Please use these as inspiration, but don't plagiarize or rip off any existing designs.

When replying, please include the words "pink water buffalo." That way I know you've read this entire description and understand what's required for this project.

Finally, I'm on the hunt for a long-term working relationship with an eCover designer, so let me know if you're interested in future work.

Feel free to use the private message board if you have any questions or need further clarification.

Thanks,

Steve

There are many key elements to making a great outsourcing listing. The important thing is to notice how I'm very specific about what I want. I don't just say it's for an Amazon platform—I provide the specific measurements that I need.

You need to be this exact when hiring someone!

Step #3: Hire a Quality Designer

There are many websites where you can find an eCover designer—my favorite is Elance.com.

The price quotes you'll get on Elance vary from person to person. They can be anywhere from \$30 to over \$200.

My suggestion?

Pick someone based on the quality of their work. What I like to do is check out the middle bidders (around \$100) and see what they have to offer. Generally these people provide that right combination of excellent graphics with affordability.

Step #4: Double-Check the Work

The first version of an eCover will almost always need tweaking. You want to play around with this image and make sure it's something that catches the eye.

What I like to do is shrink it down to the 90-pixel width and see how it looks. If I can't clearly identify the words, then I ask for a revision.

You don't have to be a jerk when asking for an edit. Simply state what you like about the image and what needs to be fixed. Not only does this lead to a perfect design, it also establishes a level of expectation if you decide to rehire this designer for a future book.

Question #26: "I'm making sales with a basic three-sentence product description. Do you think these are important for improving sales and could someone tweak theirs to get a decent return?"

I'm am a firm believer in using copywriting to help sell books (with the help of basic HTML to create bolding and "Amazon Orange" headlines). Honestly, I don't think a three-sentence description works that well. Even if you're making sales, you'll vastly improve this number if you take the time to write a proper sales description. Here's a simple process for doing this:

Everything starts with your **customer avatar**. Write down a short description of the *type* of people who would buy your book. Include information about what they like, hate, fear, want, etc. Spend *at least* 20 minutes creating this profile. This will help you understand *why* someone would want your information.

From there, write a compelling description that *sells* your eBook. It should include these elements:

*1. **Headline.** The goal of a headline is to hook the reader into your copy. This sentence should identify a core obstacle or a target audience. Then, it should promise a simple benefit that the reader will receive by applying what you teach. The headline has one goal: Attract the interest of readers and make them want to read more.

***2. Sub-headlines.** These are additional headlines that break apart the text in a book listing. You should include a sub-headline at the beginning of each section, so there will be a total of two or three. Like the headline, the goal of a sub-headline is to attract a person's attention and make them read your copy.

***3. Supporting copy.** Elaborate on each headline by explaining how your book solves a specific problem. Use lots of detail here and talk about the problems that readers often face. From there, talk about how *your* book can help.

***4. Bullet points.** Take the most compelling features of your book and describe them in a list of bullet points. Tell readers *why* this information is useful.

***5. Include keywords.** People use specific *keywords* to find the books they want to read. That's why it's important to incorporate these phrases throughout your copy. Not only does this increase your "findability," it also tells a browser that your book covers the topic they specifically seek.

***6. Call-to-action:** End your description by telling readers what to do next. Specifically, you should tell them to "*scroll to the top of the page and select the buy button.*" This is important because some people will spend too much time on your Amazon listing. Providing a call-to-action (CTA) is a great way to turn a browser into a buyer.

I consider the description to be almost as important as the eCover image. When browsers see a book with an eye-catching image and a benefit-driven sales letter, they'll be more inclined to purchase it. So while it takes time to write a decent description, this task can have an amazing impact on your long-term sales.

Question #27: "How do you find keywords that don't have a lot of competition on Amazon? I have found it easy to find keywords that are high-traffic; but then when I publish the book, it doesn't sell because customers have too many choices in books built around those keywords."

My answer comes from "Golden Rule #1 – Focus on 80/20 Activities."

Honestly, I don't really care too much about keyword competition. While I think it's important to find the best phrases, you shouldn't agonize too much about where your book ranks. Frankly, it's more important to focus on writing good books that solve people's problems.

I only use two tools to find quality keyword phrases:

1. Keyword Planner (which is part of [Google Adwords](#))

2. Amazon's Search Suggestions (the predictive tool in Amazon's search bar)

My strategy is to target high-traffic keywords—in fact, I only pick the phrases with a good amount of competition. Basically, when you see a lot of “competition” for a phrase, it's a strong indicator that the keyword might be profitable.

So how do you “compete” with these books?

It's been my experience that a book ranks well for a phrase according to a number of factors: reviews, sales, downloads and numbers of purchases using that specific keyword phrase. You have control over most of these factors. That means that if you do a good job providing a valuable reading experience, then you don't really have to worry about keyword positioning—it'll take care of itself.

As an example, I haven't done a thing to rank my book *Outsourcing Mastery* for the keyword “outsourcing,” [yet it shows up at the #1 ranking for all of Amazon](#).

At the risk of using this answer to sermonize...as an author you shouldn't care too much about keywords. Yes, spend those 15 to 30 minutes to locate the best phrases. But after that, focus on the actions that make the quality of your book stand out from the competition.

Question #28: “Is there a trick for increasing your ranking for a specific keyword?”

Again, I recommend you don't worry so much about the keyword rankings for a particular title. This is an area I feel is unimportant because it's not an effective use of my time (“Golden Rule #1 – Focus on 80/20 Activities”). That said, there is some value in having your book rank well for a high-traffic keyword. A higher rating means more eyeballs and ultimately more sales.

So, a quick trick to boost your rankings is to use the specific keyword in the links that you use whenever you promote a book. Simply identify the top keyword you'd like to rank for and append it to the link that Amazon gives you for this book.

As an example, let's say I'm trying to rank for a keyword on my book ***Make Money with YouTube***. Normally you'd see a link like this:

http://www.amazon.com/Make-Money-YouTube-187-66-4-Minute-ebook/dp/BooA62GUXI/ref=la_Boo98NFKNM_1_12?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1389199984&sr=1-12

What you can do with this link is append it with your target keyword. So let's say I'd like to have it show up high for the phrase "make money online"—the link would look like:

[http://www.amazon.com/Make-Money-YouTube-187-66-4-Minute-ebook/dp/B00A62GUXI/ref=la_B0098NFKNM_1_12?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1389199984&sr=1-12&keywords=**make+money+online**](http://www.amazon.com/Make-Money-YouTube-187-66-4-Minute-ebook/dp/B00A62GUXI/ref=la_B0098NFKNM_1_12?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1389199984&sr=1-12&keywords=make+money+online)

Basically all you're doing is here is adding this modifier at the end:

&keywords=make+money+online

Use this link whenever you promote a book:

- Inside your Kindle book (use Pretty Link as a redirect)
- On your blog
- During promotions for free days or Countdown Deals
- Anywhere else

Ultimately I wouldn't worry too much about ranking high for a certain keyword. If you do a great job with writing and marketing a book, it will show up naturally for your target keyword phrases.

Question #29: "Why do you charge \$2.99 per book? Why not \$3.99 or \$4.99?"

The answer goes back to "Golden Rule #2 – Build a Catalog Business."

I know some gurus talk about maximizing profits for each book, but I think this is a shortsighted strategy. Having a profit-focused mentality ignores one of the best things about Kindle publishing—when a reader likes a book, he or she is likely to buy another. And some will even buy your entire book catalog simply because they like your viewpoint.

Yes, I (humbly) feel that I could charge more than \$2.99 for my books. But this is the lowest price that provides a 70% royalty rate while giving maximum value to the reader. By charging \$2.99, you increase the likelihood of turning a single reader into a multi-book reader.

How to Market Your Kindle Book(s)

Question #30: “What is your #1 marketing strategy?”

I’ll give you three:

1. Build an email list
2. Build an email list
3. Build an email list

Okay, all kidding aside, I know there are lots of marketing strategies for selling more books. But, my favorite (without a doubt) is to build an email list.

List building isn’t that hard to do. Simply create a valuable free piece of content and offer it in exchange for a reader’s email address. Beyond writing more books, I’d say the best use of your time is to build an email list. (For more on this, read my post: [“9 Steps for Building an Email List from Scratch.”](#))

Question #31: “So, what do you send to subscribers once they’re on your list?”

To be honest, I haven’t done too much with the email list for my habits site. Right now, I only have four autoresponder messages:

1. Introduction email (*Download for “77 Good Habits to Live a Better Life”*)
2. Question for readers (*What’s Your #1 Success Habit?*)
3. Link to an in-depth article (*27 Strategies to Break ANY Bad Habit*)
4. Link to a free iPhone app (*How to Track Your Habit Triggers*)

Notice how these articles don’t “sell” anything. Instead I focus on providing good content and connecting with readers. When I add more messages, they will follow the same blueprint—provide good content to build up that “know/like/trust relationship” that’s important for online marketing.

In addition to these autoresponders, I also send a weekly broadcast email. Usually it’s a brief overview of my latest blog post. While this message doesn’t add anything to my bottom line, it’s yet another way to solidify the relationship with subscribers.

Ultimately, the “no selling” approach for email marketing works really well when it’s time to promote your latest Kindle book. If you’ve done a good enough job,

subscribers will open your email, download/buy your book and (hopefully) leave a positive review. I won't make the promise that it's a quick process, but it works extremely well if you're building a catalog book business (Golden Rule #2).

Question #32: "I've been told that blogs are practically useless for selling Kindle books since Amazon is a self-contained 'ecosystem.' Is that true?"

Yes and no.

I feel there are two types of bloggers who self-publish on the Kindle platform.

The first type (which includes me) starts with an established platform. They have an email list and an audience that already likes their content. It's not hard for these people to write a few quality Kindle books and get a high number of reviews/purchases.

If you're in this first group, I believe (with 99.99% certainty) that having a blog will help you sell Kindle books. You already have an audience, so you can leverage this platform to launch a book, get downloads/purchases and receive positive reviews.

The second group will publish on Kindle *without* the benefit of a blog. This can be a disadvantage because you're competing against authors with an established brand. (This is the problem that I'm seeing as I build up the DevelopGoodHabits.com website.)

I have three suggestions for anyone who doesn't have a blog:

1. Spend most (over 80%) of your time creating good Kindle books.
2. Use a few different strategies to build up your email list ([read this post for more details.](#))
3. With your other time (20%), get on one platform and build an audience. This should include one of the big three: blogging, podcasting or YouTube.

To get back to the question, I agree that Amazon has an amazing, self-contained ecosystem. But it works best when it's supported by YOUR promotional efforts (Golden Rule #3).

With a blog, you can generate lots of short-term traffic to your books and get those downloads/purchases that are important for gaining visibility on Amazon's platform. In other words, the more sales you generate (from your platform), the harder Amazon will work to help you get those long-term book sales.

Question #33: “How do you do a free promotion?”

As I’ve said, I don’t think the free KDP Select promo is that effective anymore. But, you can still use it to build your brand and get extra exposure for your books. So, if you don’t have an established brand, you can gain readers by using this tool.

Now, your goal with a free promo is to get as many downloads as possible, so I recommend the strategy that has worked for many people:

- Schedule a promotion to start 10+ days after a book has been published.
- Talk to people who have reviewed your books in the past or currently follow you. Send them a free copy and ask for an honest review.
- Submit to free promotion websites ([here is a great list courtesy of Tom Corson-Knowles](#)).
- Purchase Fiverr gigs to promote your book. [This gig](#), [this gig](#) and [this gig](#) are the best ones I’ve found.
- Tell people about the book on social media, your blog/email list, YouTube and anywhere else you have a presence.
- Ask readers to review it.

Right now, free promos are hit or miss. Sometimes you get thousands of downloads and other times your efforts will fall flat.

Overall, I feel the best “promotional” strategy is to publish on a consistent basis. Instead of worrying about the success or failure of a single book, it’s better to focus on the next one that can be used to build your catalog business.

Question #34: “How do you run a \$0.99 promotion?”

Basically, my strategy for a \$0.99 promotion is the same as what I do for a free eBook—tell as many people as possible.

That said, I’m currently testing a number of strategies:

- Preselling the book a few weeks before its launch by creating related blog content, talking about it in my email broadcast messages and showing an eCover screenshot through social media.
- Building a “street team” of people who have reviewed my book in the past.

- Running a free KDP Select promo for one of my books at the same time as the \$0.99 launch, which promotes the new book.
- Promoting the \$0.99 launch with a few advertisements.
- Establishing relationships with bloggers in the personal development market and then asking them to promote my book.

None of these strategies are proven. They're included here as a reminder to *always* test new things. The \$0.99 promotional technique works really well (right now), so you should do everything you can to maximize those initial sales.

Question #35: “It would be good to see a ‘Countdown’ in action. Give the timeline of your favorite promotion.”

So far, I *love* the Countdown Deals program ([you can read more about it on Amazon](#)). While I don't think it's a magic pill for all books, this tool can provide a short burst of sales, which often leads to more long-term visibility.

The biggest argument *against* Countdown Deals is that many authors feel they'll “lose” income because they discount a book for a week. At the time I'm writing this book (Jan 15th, 2014), I've run a total of 18 Countdown Deals. Sure, a few promos didn't do that well—but I haven't “lost money” on any of them. In fact, a few Countdown Deals have generated a sizable bump in income and led to an increase in my overall average daily sales.

For instance, let me break down the Countdown Deal for my book *Wake Up Successful*:

- **6.2 daily sales** leading up to the Countdown Deal (Nov 1st to Nov 27th)
- **November 28th**—start of the Countdown Deal
- **December 4th**—end of the Countdown Deal
- **235 total sales** during Countdown Deal at \$0.99
- **162 total sales** during Countdown Deal at \$1.99
- **15.8 daily sales** since Countdown Deal (Dec 5th to January 15th)

Not bad for a single promotion. And I think the long-term numbers could have been better if I had kept the book at the \$0.99 price point for the entire week (which is something I've successfully tested since with my book *10,000 Steps Blueprint*).

What I like best about Countdown Deals is that it's a sales tool that's designed to help the authors who produce a lot of content. If you have 12 or more books in KDP Select, you could literally have a Countdown Deal running at all times. This will give you an amazing advantage over the authors who don't use KDP Select.

Like a lot of things, Countdown Deals can be a valuable part of your marketing toolkit. If you combine it with the other strategies that I recommend in this report, you'll get extra sales that can have a positive spillover effect on your other books.

Question #36: “Have you heard/read of a list of sites that promote reduced books to their list (instead of free), and which we (you, me and Co) can use for Kindle Countdown Deal promos??”

Yes, there are lots of sites that can be used to promote a Kindle Countdown Deal. Some of the popular ones include:

- BookBub.com
- BookBlast.co
- BookGorilla.com
- EReadersNewsToday.com
- FKBooksandTips.com
- Fiverr.com

The problem?

Some sites are extremely picky (like BookBub.com) about what they promote, and others are too cost-prohibitive. I haven't tried any of these services myself, so I can't say if they're effective or not.

Question #37: “Can you use paid advertising for a Kindle book?”

Most of the time, paid advertising isn't an option for a Kindle book. The money you make on each sale doesn't cover what you've spent.

That said, it's been my experience that a successful Kindle Countdown Deal can lead to a surge in long-term book sales at the normal price point (\$2.99 and above). In theory, if you can find the “right” promotional sites, you can come close to getting an ROI (return on your investment) during a Countdown Deal and make up the rest when the book returns to its normal price.

For the 1st quarter of 2014, I'm testing every site (that I can find) that offers a paid promotion opportunity—and I'm starting with the Fiverr gigs that offer book promotions.

If you'd like to do the same, here is the six-part strategy I'd recommend:

I. Use the Amazon Associates program to create a unique affiliate ID for each promotional campaign. That means that if you're using 10 Fiverr gigs for one Countdown Deal, you'll need to create 10 different tracking links. (You can recycle old tracking links every month or so for new campaigns.)

Now, I know some people don't have access to the Associates program. If you're in that situation, my best advice is to either open an LLC in a state that does have access or find someone who is part of the Associates program and ask them to create affiliate links. (Some will agree to this because they basically get free affiliate commissions for doing nothing.)

II. Create simple link re-directs. Install the [Pretty Link plugin](#) on a blog and use this to create a separate link for each affiliate link. Use a number system to sync your Associates link with a Pretty Link. So if I create an Associate ID of "youtubemsg12," it should look like: www.stevescottsite.com/youtube-msg12.

III. Put all this data into an Excel spreadsheet. In column #1, add the link to the Fiverr gig or paid service you're tracking. Put the Pretty Link into column #2. Put the clicks generated on the campaign into column #3. In column #4, track the sales generated on each book. And in column #5 (optional), include the profit you've generated for that Associates ID.

IV. Tell promotional providers exactly what you need. Some paid advertising platforms try to get cute with their promotions. They'll send a message on the wrong date, not include links or basically do the bare minimum—this is especially true on Fiverr. That means you need to be upfront on exactly what you need. Here is a short script you can use:

"Thanks for your gig offer. I have a \$0.99 Countdown Deal on Amazon that runs from Jan. 6th to 12th. Please make sure this promotion goes out only on these days and that you use the link that I've included (for tracking purposes). Thanks!"

V. Identify your break-even point. Paid advertising needs to show ROI, otherwise you'll quickly lose all the money you've earned on book royalties. The simplest way to determine your ROI is to establish (beforehand) a dollar number that you'll use to separate "successful" from "unsuccessful" campaigns.

Here's how do to the math:

- Most Countdown Deals start at the \$0.99 price point.
- You get 70% on a \$0.99 sale, which is a \$0.70 royalty.
- That means you'd need at least seven sales to break even on a standard Fiverr gig ($7 * \$0.70 = \4.90).
- Also, be sure to calculate other earnings like the commission you earn on an Amazon Associates sale and any borrows the book generates.

Now, it's up to you to determine your break-even point.

For me, I'm happy losing a bit of money on each campaign, because I know that every single sale gives me that extra "push" on Amazon's discoverability charts, which ultimately leads to long-term sales. Plus, it's been my experience that many readers will go from buying one book to purchasing multiple titles. So I've determined that **four sales is my break-even point** (for a Fiverr gig). Even if only a quarter of these customers go on to buy another book, I'll still have made my money back (four sales at \$0.70 each + \$2.10 royalty for one sale = @\$5.)

VI. Test and Track. You'll find that many paid promotions and gigs are busts, but eventually you'll come across a couple of winners. I'll admit this strategy requires a lot of busy work, but once you've created this system and can identify profitable promotions, you can easily manufacture lots of instant sales whenever you run a Countdown Deal.

Question #38: "How do you create a perma-free listing on Amazon?"

Here's what I did for the book that I have permanently free:

1. Publish the book on Amazon, but **don't** sign up for KDP Select. Set the price to \$0.99.
2. Publish the same book on SmashWords. ([Use this free guide to learn how.](#))
3. Set the price to **free** on SmashWords.
4. Once the book is published on both Amazon *and* SmashWords, tell Amazon that it's free on SmashWords, Barnes & Noble or other websites. Do this through the link that Amazon provides in your book's description. ([Here's how this looks.](#))
5. Ask a few friends to use this link and inform Amazon about the price change.

6. Wait a few weeks or sometimes a few months before this price change takes hold.

Unfortunately, right now you have to “trick” Amazon in order to list a book for free, so it’s not 100% reliable all the time. All you can do is follow these steps.

Question #39: “Is there a difference in marketing nonfiction ebooks vs. fiction ebooks?”

I’ve only published nonfiction books, so I can really only speak from my experiences and what I’ve *seen* work for fiction authors.

Let me start with the strategies that benefit both nonfiction and fiction authors:

- Free promotions through KDP Select—great for getting new readers.
- Countdown Deals—great for bumping up lagging sales.
- Building an email list—everyone should do this.
- Cross-promotion—the back of your books should promote other titles.

Now, there are strategies that work best if you’re a nonfiction author:

- Providing valuable content through a blog, podcast or YouTube channel.
- Lightly recommending one or two books within the content of your Kindle books.
- Building case studies and examples from specific tactics that you explain in your books.

On the other hand, there’s a great tactic that can benefit fiction authors...

If you have a series of books, then providing a perma-free “entry point” into your funnel can generate long-term sales. The idea here is to provide a fun (self-contained) reading experience that whets the reader’s appetite for the rest of the series.

As I said before, I only have experience with the nonfiction market, so (as always) take my advice with a grain of salt. Also, try to be patient as you wait for Amazon to drop the price to \$0.00.

Question #40: “It would be cool if you wrote a post about other sources of potential income that authors can generate, such as from affiliate marketing, etc.”

There are a lot of ways you could expand income beyond Kindle publishing—unfortunately, I haven't done a heck of a lot beyond promoting my books (“Golden Rule #1 – Focus on 80/20 Activities”). But as I set goals for 2014, I'm going to try a few different things with both of my book brands (habits & Internet marketing):

- Create small courses through Udemy.
- Create a massive course and mastermind group on a single topic.
- Use CreateSpace and ACX.com to maximize profits from existing Amazon customers.
- Promote information products as an affiliate that solves specific problems.
- Promote Amazon products through a blog and email list. ([Read this post for how I'm doing this.](#))

Now, that's just what I plan on doing. Some other ways you could maximize revenue is to offer coaching, consulting or speaking services. I know a number of authors who use their books to launch their professional services, so you might want to consider these sources of income as well.

The secret to maximizing your book revenue is to observe other Kindle authors. Download their books. Join their email list. Read their blog posts. Do everything you can to see how they build an audience and engage with it.

Reviews: The Good, Bad and the Ugly

Question #41: “Do you buy or swap reviews?”

Hell no.

Let me say that again: HELL. NO.

I feel buying or swapping reviews is a dangerous practice for a few reasons:

1. Most smart customers can tell when a book has fake reviews. (Bad)
2. You're lying to potential customers and basically *gaming* the system. (Worse)
3. Amazon will eventually find a way to track people who swap reviews and could penalize—or even shut down your author account. (Definitely not good)

I'll admit that it's a painful, slow process to get legitimate reviews—often it's like pulling teeth to get people to submit even a two-sentence blurb. But, that fact should never cause you to take a shortcut.

Even if you're not bothered by the ethics of swapping/buying reviews, you should be concerned that Amazon is run by very intelligent people. They know that authors are *gaming* the system and I guarantee that right now, somewhere in Amazon HQ, there's a person who is working on a solution to this problem. My advice is to be on the right side when the hammer falls.

Now, does that mean you should never leave a review for another author? Not at all. I leave reviews all the time for books that I enjoy and authors I respect. Oddly enough, these are usually books that directly compete against my own. The difference here is I that leave reviews because the content is good, not because I'm forced to do so as part of a review swap.

Question #42: “So, how do you get lots of reviews on a book?”

There is a simple answer, but most people don't want to hear it.

Really, the “magic formula” to getting reviews is this:

1. Write a good book that *actually* helps people solve their problems.
2. Include a request inside the book to leave a review.

3. Build an email list.
4. Publish quality content on a blog/podcast/YouTube channel every week or so.
5. Strengthen relationships with subscribers by engaging them in a conversation and referring them to additional content.
6. Launch your books to an email list and ask for reviews.
7. Help your readers whenever they send you an email.
8. Add other marketing techniques *if* you have the time.

I know this doesn't sound like much, but those are the exact steps I've followed over the last year and so far it has worked out pretty well.

Question #43: "Should you respond to negative reviews?"

I would say one of my biggest mistakes with Kindle publishing has been responding to negative reviews. Like many people, I used to feel the need to defend myself, but usually my response turned into a snippy flame-war that damaged my reputation.

Over time, I've come to the conclusion that it's best to ignore negative reviews. Even if you're right, potential readers might be turned off by your response and *not* buy your books because of it.

Really, there are two times when a response *might* be appropriate:

I. Customer service opportunities: If someone has a specific problem that you can solve, leave a response that asks them to contact you directly. From there, do your best to fix their problem. If you can, politely ask them to change the review. I've done this on two occasions and it worked out both times.

II. Potential damage to your reputation: There is a fine line with this one. Generally speaking, most negative reviews are damaging to your reputation. But, once in awhile you'll get a response that is a remark on you as a human being or your character. For instance, "Don't buy this book because he is a thief and likes to punch nuns in the face."

Sometimes you need to step in and respond to this type of review. The key here is to stick to the facts and calmly support your case. Really, you shouldn't care about this person's opinion, but it's important to show potential readers that this someone is not basing their review on the facts.

Ultimately, I try not to worry about negative reviews. Everybody gets them. Instead of agonizing over one person's opinion, focus on 80% activities, like writing that next book.

Question #44: “What’s better for getting reviews: free or \$.99 launches?”

You’ll always get more reviews with a free launch (if you have an audience), so that alone is a great reason to stick with KDP Select.

With that said, you’ll also increase your chances of getting the dreaded one-star review. Don’t ask me why, but freebie seekers are the most critical when it comes to Kindle publishing. Usually their reviews sound like this: *“I never read this type of book, but let me tell you why this one particularly sucks...”* (Want proof? [Check out the reviews for my one “permanently-free” book on Amazon.](#))

With a \$.99 launch, you’ll get fewer reviews, but they’ll generally be more positive (as long as your book is good).

Even when a book is \$.99, the only people downloading it will be readers who have a genuine interest in the subject. By selling it, you’ll eliminate the freebie seekers who download a book and then leave a one-star review just because they’re not interested in the subject matter.

Final Thoughts...

You've just read 44 answers to your most pressing Kindle publishing questions. To be honest, there's a lot more I have yet to cover. In the months to come, I'll update my blog (and this book) with more information, so I encourage you to send me an email and ask any questions you have about publishing through KDP.

Simply send an email here: [stevescottsite\[at\]gmail\[dot\]com](mailto:stevescottsite[at]gmail[dot]com)

I can't promise that I'll immediately answer every question due to the volume of emails I receive, but I promise I will cover your question in a future blog post or video.

Until then, I encourage you to take action on the material we've just covered. I think Kindle publishing provides a rare opportunity to generate a significant side income with your content. If you're willing to work hard, you'll find that it's an amazing platform with an almost unlimited income potential.

Take Action. Get Results.

Steve Scott

<http://www.stevescottsite.com>

Get Advanced Kindle Publishing Training

Want to learn more about the Kindle publishing process?

If so, I've written six books that will help you become a successful author on Amazon's platform.

[*Writing Habit Mastery: How to Write 2,000 Words a Day and Forever Cure Writer's Block*](#). This book talks about how to turn writing into a daily habit where you're able to consistently crank out quality content. I don't consider myself to be a "natural" writer, but I still manage to write on a consistent basis. In *Writing Habit Mastery*, I show you how to create a writing routine that prevents resistance and mental obstacles from getting in the way of producing a high volume of words every month.

[*How to Discover Best Selling Amazon Kindle Nonfiction Book Ideas*](#). Building a successful Kindle business starts with identifying topics readers *want* to learn about. In other words, you can't write about any just topic and expect it to sell. In this book, I detail my process for generating book ideas and using a simple metric for determining if they'll be profitable.

[*How to Write a Nonfiction eBook in 21 Days – That Readers LOVE!*](#) It's easy to get overwhelmed by the thought of having to write a book. Fortunately, there is a simple process you can use to create content that readers find enjoyable. Just as the title indicates, you'll learn my simple step-by-step plan for writing a quality book every 21 days.

Full disclosure: *In the last six months, I've slowed down the pace of my publishing schedule to focus on creating content at a higher level, but the principles I use today are exactly the same as when I wrote this book more than a year ago.*

[*61 Ways to Sell More Nonfiction Kindle Books*](#). How do you generate a consistent volume of sales? In this book, I go over dozens of strategies I've used in the past year and a half to build a reliable income from Amazon. Specifically, if you *only* follow the first 10 strategies in this book, you'll see an almost-immediate increase in your daily sales.

[*Is \\$.99 the New Free? The Truth About Launching and Pricing Your Kindle Books*](#). As we've discussed in this book, the "free promo" strategy has lost some of its effectiveness. What works better (for many authors) is the "\$0.99 price pulse." In my book, *Is \$.99 the New Free?*, I detail a variety of techniques you can use to launch and price your books, including specific case studies of how I've personally used each of these strategies.

Email Marketing Blueprint – The Ultimate Guide to Building an Email List

Asset. One of the biggest discoveries I've made about Kindle publishing is that the people with the most engaged email lists generally do better over the long term than authors who rely solely on Amazon's discoverability tools. In my book, *Email Marketing Blueprint*, I cover my method for building large email lists and engaging subscribers with quality content.