

PART 2: HELPING WRITERS

PROBLEM - NO ONE IS BUYING MY BOOK...

People, for some reason, seem to think that all they have to do to get sales of their books is write them and put them up on Amazon, for sale either as eBooks, Paperbacks or Hardbacks. They write the book, go through the needed 'hoops' to get it up onto Amazon, and then sit back and wait for the royalties to come in.

Indeed, many people have been complaining in the Facebook forums that they've 'done everything right' but no one is buying their book...

WHAT TO BEAR IN MIND

Someone told me years ago that the best way of trying to sell something is to try to buy it first. This does seem to apply well to Amazon and eBay, and other services of that nature, whether selling eBooks or print-on-demand ones, and it gives an idea of the demand for the book, as well as market pricing at the time.

You need to make sure that there's an interest in your subject, and this is one of the easiest ways of finding out.

Just because you have 'published' a book on Amazon doesn't mean that people are guaranteed to buy it. I know that's not what you want to hear, but it's the truth.

It never ceases to amaze me that people expect there to be a queue of people waiting to buy their book when they have made it available for sale. Just because friends, family or colleagues have said "You should write a book about that" or similar, doesn't mean that people are lining up and waiting to buy the book the moment you publish it.

So; what is the better way of going about this (not necessarily the right one, still, but a more realistic plan than expecting to publish a bestseller straight away)?

I would like to suggest that you try something like this...

Say, for example, you have written a manuscript about using a computer. You started writing it in the first place because your partner was job hunting, and he wanted to know how to get himself noticed by the agencies. You sat down and wrote him a short guide on preparing a CV using, say, Google Docs, and then showed him how to produce a PDF and send it to the job-hunting websites.

Your partner found the guide very helpful and said so. The suggestion then came up about making a booklet from the guide and selling it. Surely other people would like this guide and be interested in buying it?

This is the point where the brakes should be put on.

Instead of putting your collection of notes together as a finished booklet and then uploading it straight onto Amazon, try various keywords into the Amazon Search engine instead.

At the time of writing, searching “Getting a Job” in the Kindle Store gave me 236 pages of results. “Job Hunting” gave me 400 pages. Each of those pages has about 10 books on it. Also, CVs are called Resumes in the USA, and also in many UK guides as well...

You get my point, I hope. You need to make your ‘Guide’ stand out from the other 4000 or so titles on Amazon.

What you can also do is investigate the various groups and posts on Facebook, to see whether there is demand for your book there. You can then post into these forums, mentioning your book (where Facebook forum rules allow; some groups do not allow advertising your books).

Before you just decide to throw in the towel, THINK!

Something about the instructions that you wrote helped the person using them. What was it? One thing that I have been told on more than one occasion was that I was very good at putting things into ‘plain English’, i.e. making things easy to understand. (If you have this as a gift, hang on to it, it can come in very handy for teaching/tutoring people.)

Also, the searches above were made on Amazon using a thing called KEYWORDS. You type these into the search box at the top of the Amazon website when you begin shopping. A good start with working out what keywords to use (and also what title to give your booklet) is to ask the person that you helped out what words would they have used to find out what they wanted to know online if you weren’t around. This can result in some surprising ideas that would possibly never have occurred to you.

Hopefully, that pushes you in the right direction with this problem.