

# BOOK MARKETING MENTORS

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## BOOK MARKETING: How to Make Use of the Best Amazon and Kindle Tools Interview with Dave Chesson

- Susan Friedmann: Welcome to Book Marketing Mentors, the weekly podcast where you learn proven strategies, tools, ideas, and tips from the masters. Every week, I introduce you to a marketing master who will share their expertise to help you market and sell more books. Today, my special guest is a Kindle marketing Jedi. When he's not lightsaber dueling with little Jedi or sipping tea with princesses, Dave Chesson is testing new book marketing tactics and helping authors improve their book sales on his website, *Kindlepreneur*. He's worked with multiple New York Times bestselling authors like Ted Decker and L. Ron Hubbard's marketing company as a consultant, as well as helping top writers like Pat Flynn and Jeff Goins. To help all writers learn the art of book marketing, he created *Kindlepreneur* as a free source for authors with the sole goal of giving you everything you need to take action and see results. He's a man of action. Dave, welcome to the show, and thank you for being this week's guest expert and mentor.
- Dave Chesson: No problem. It's a real honor. Thank you.
- Susan Friedmann: Dave, I don't want to assume that everybody knows and understands exactly what Kindle is, so could you give us the quick and dirty version of what it is and why it's important for authors to use Kindle to help build their author platform?
- Dave Chesson: Sure. Years ago, Amazon shook the foundation of book sales when they created Kindle Direct Publishing, which is the ability for us authors to just go straight into the market and put a book out there. Before KDP, we would have to convince someone that it is worth selling our book, and that someone would be a publishing editor. It was just a terrible process. People who had great books were not able to get it onto the market. When Amazon said, "Hey, just come to us. We'll put it out there, boom, give you a chance to get your book in front of readers and make sales," that just changed everything. When we talk about Kindle, Kindle was Amazon's push to be able to create ebooks where they could digitally sell it to their millions and millions of shoppers. Once they did that, right now the publishing world is trying to catch up. It's a very

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important market, but more importantly, it gives us the ability to get our work out there, to get our name seen, and to make some sales.

Susan Friedmann: There are other outlets for ebooks, aren't there?

Dave Chesson: There are, but Amazon usually accounts for about 70% of all sales. That's all book sales. That's over bookstores and everything. Right now, I even put my books on all these other markets to include Barnes & Noble, Kobo, iTunes, some that I can't even remember the name of, but the truth is 90% of my sales come from Amazon.

Susan Friedmann: I'd heard that 70%, so thank you for verifying that number. You mentioned Amazon. Amazon is this 800-pound gorilla, and so many authors really just don't even know how to tackle using Amazon. Help us with that.

Dave Chesson: Let me start by painting the picture of a shopper in traditional book sales. Here we are, we get out of our car because we've decided that we want to go to a bookstore. We walk up to the door, we get inside the bookstore, and there's two things we do. We either look at the books sitting right there prominently on those tables for us to say, "Oh, hey, look at that. That looks cool," or we beeline straight to the genre that we like. Say we're in dire need of our next sci-fi military book. We go the science fiction military section, and we go just peruse through all the books that are laid out there and we choose one. That's generally about how people do it traditionally.

Keep that in mind because I'm going to now paint the picture of what it's like for a shopper on Amazon. I'm sure a lot of people out there are being like, "Yeah, I've shopped on Amazon, Dave. I get this," but bear with me because I think that this story will help us to understand how we can work better with Amazon. Amazon is a great place because people are there for shopping for lots of things. It's like a giant mall of everything. They go onto Amazon, and they have one of two things. They're either trying to figure out what they want to buy, or they know exactly what they want to buy.

They will go into that little search bar at the top, and they will type in what it is they're looking for. We're going to stay inside of the realm of books. In this case, the person probably knows the title of the book that they want to see because a buddy, or a friend, or a book club said this is the book. They type it in, they click search, and voila, Amazon presents them with a list of books that they think is what the person is looking for

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based off of what they typed in. Sure enough, right there at the top is that famous book that they're looking for. They click, and they buy.

Another way that a shopper does it in Amazon is that they don't really know what they want to get. They don't have one in mind, but they kind of are thinking about a book. In my case, I might type in space marines because I love space marines, and I would then look at the list of books that Amazon shows me based off of that term. In terms of non-fiction, it would be me describing a pain point. Maybe I have a lower back issue, and I think it's a sciatica or something. I would type in lower back pain, or sciatica, or something, and then Amazon will quickly present to me a list of books based off of what it thinks I'm most likely to buy from what I search for.

The third way that this happens is that, again, I know what the genre is, and I go to that genre, and I click and I looked at the top books that are selling in that very niche genre. For me, I'm a giant sci-fi military fan, as I said in the traditional example. I will go click on that category, and I'll look at the top 20 books, and I'll try to say, "Hey, is there a book listed here that I haven't read or that looks interesting?" and I'll pick it up, and I'll buy it.

Those three ways generally show about 95% of the shoppers out there and how they work with it. For us, that leaves us three ways to get our book in front of someone who's ready to buy on Amazon. That first one we said was the person knows the title of what they're looking for. They just type it in. That's some guru marketing where you've already made your book name popular or famous, or you've got an email list, and all that other jazz. You've already got the name out there, so they know what the name of your book is and they're just searching for it. I don't think that really pertains to a lot of us because most of us are new authors, we're not famous for our writing yet, but we're trying to get discovered.

Let's look at number two. The second way is that they think about what it is that I'm really searching for. Say it's how to stop smoking, or perhaps it's how to get accepted into college, or how to live a stress-free life. We sit down and we describe what we think we're looking for. Amazon will say, "Okay, well you know, based off of that, let's show these books." In a second, I'll tell you how we can convince Amazon that our book should show up. Let's move on to the third one, just wrap this up. The third one is that there's a category in mind. You have to be one

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of the top 20 selling books in that very niche category in order for you to make a sale, but that comes from making sales and other areas.

To recap, we have you made your book popular and people are searching for it actively on Amazon, or you have your book show up for when somebody types in generally what your book is about, or you're a big seller and you're in a good category. With the three of those, what do you think is the best one for new authors?

Susan Friedmann: I'm going to go with number two.

Dave Chesson: Absolutely. Being discovered on Amazon by Amazon shoppers is a very quick way for authors who are really good at what they're doing to get their work out there and make sales.

Susan Friedmann: You talked about how to convince Amazon to list your book. That's a nice little trick. Can you share that one with us?

Dave Chesson: Amazon is a search engine. It's just like Google. We go to Google, we type in what we're looking for, and Google presents us with a list of articles it thinks best fit what we're looking for. Amazon does the same thing, but the difference between the two, the major difference we'll say, is that in Amazon, somebody's ready to buy something. In Google, somebody's just looking for more information. With that in mind, we need to convince the Amazon search engine, or algorithm, that our book is the best fit for this particular term. To do this, we can do a couple of things.

Number one is that when you go to publish your book on Kindle Direct Publishing, Amazon is going to ask you for seven keywords. These keywords are the words or phrases that you think your target market would type into Amazon and would find your book to be what they're looking for. This is one of the most important parts to it because it directly tells Amazon this is what you think should show up for, but more importantly is making sure that you select the right one. Something that a lot of authors do when they select this is they just guess. They're like, "Oh, it's a romance book. Just put romance. It's about freedom in life," and they just start throwing all these terms together. That's not exactly a great idea because the truth is that if nobody is typing that term into Amazon, then that keyword's not going to help you be discovered.

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At the same time, you don't want to go after something like romance where a billion people type it in and there's no way you're going to beat, insert famous romance novelist here. You're not going to beat that person. You want to find this balance of keywords that people type into Amazon but aren't super competitive. In a second, I'll get to how we can do that better. First, let's just understand that we need to know what it is we want our book to show up for, and we select one of our seven Kindle keywords to be that term.

Another way to help convince Amazon that you should be there is to also have that keyword phrase or word in your book title or subtitle because, again, if say lots of people are typing into Amazon how to learn a language fast, then it's a better chance that your book should show up for it if your title is How to Learn a Language Fast. More importantly, if you know that there are hundreds of people typing in that exact phrase, that usually makes for a good title. If I'm thinking to myself, "I want to learn this language really, really fast," and this book is titled that, then wow, that's probably the book I'm looking for.

Then finally too, another thing is that the Amazon search engine also looks at the description, looks at the words in the description. From there, it decides, "Okay, let's see, this book said that this term is one of its seven Kindle keywords, and this term or a version of this term is in the title, and somewhat in the subtitle, and in the book description." That search engine then says, "Well, wow, this is a good fit. If somebody types in this phrase, we should at least show this," and that's how you get discovered.

Susan Friedmann: It sounds so easy. You talked about it being less competitive. Let's go down that route in terms of those keywords because I know that's so important but yet people don't really know how to find the right keywords to use. Can you address that?

Dave Chesson: There's two parts to it. There's keywords that people actually type into Amazon, and not so competitive you can't beat the competition when you do show up. Let's start with knowing what people type into Amazon. A quick and easy way is to go into Amazon's search engine, or right at the search bar at the top of Amazon, start typing in a phrase. As you start typing, you'll notice that Amazon will start to try to fill in the blank.

Say you put in star. They're going to say, "Star Wars, Star Wars toys, Star Wars book." They're going to try to guess at what you're looking at. The

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reason why they're doing that is because they're using their data, their history of searches, and saying, "Usually when people type in the word star, they usually type in the word wars and novel." They start to try to tell you what other people have typed. You can now start to use that as an indication of whether or not people are searching on Amazon for that type of word. If you start typing it in and Amazon doesn't suggest it, there's a good chance nobody's typing that in, and now you know.

One advanced tip that I recommend everybody do though is that if you do that, I'd highly recommend that you use Chrome incognito mode. If you're using the Chrome browser, right click on it, and then you'll see an option that says incognito mode. Click that. The reason why is that if you're logged into Amazon, they're going to use your previous history and shopping habits to influence what they recommend to you. Or if you're not even logged in, they still have these magical things called cookies on your computer, and they track what you do. They'll be able to know what your search habit is, what websites you've gone to, what you're interested in, and again, they'll alter what they suggest based off of that. When you go into incognito mode, you're like a blank slate. Amazon has no idea who you are, what you do, so they're just giving you the raw, pure data of what most people type in, and that's the best kind of data for you. That right there will give you an indication of what people are typing into Amazon when they're looking for a book on lower back pain, what words come to their mind.

Now let's talk about competition. Once you've identified a couple of terms that you think would be good fits for your book, go ahead, type them into Amazon, hit search, and then start looking at the books that show up. One thing that's important for you to do is click on the book that shows up at the top, scroll down on that sales page, and you'll notice this number called the Amazon Best Seller Rank, ABSR. The Amazon Best Seller Rank is a number from 1 to 4.7 million, with number 1 being the number one bestselling book in all of Amazon and 4.7 million being the worst selling book in all of Amazon. There will be a number that you can see as to how well this book sells.

That number might not mean anything to you. Okay, is 247,000 a good thing or is that a bad thing? On Kindlepreneur.com, we created a calculator that will actually convert that number into books sold per day. Just go into Google and type in Kindle calculator, and it will show right up for you. You can take that number, and you can now know what your competitors are doing, how many books they're selling, and ultimately how much money they're making. For us, that's really important because if you typed in a keyword and you looked at the

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books, and none of those books are selling, none of them are making money, then that means that's not a very good keyword to go after. Maybe some people are typing it into Amazon, but they're not buying books on it, so don't target that. If you notice that over and over every book that shows up is selling 100 plus a day, then understand those are some pretty competitive books. Those are some powerhouses. That can go into whether or not it's too competitive.

Another thing to look at is how's the cover? How's the title? Can you do better? If your cover for your book can't beat that book, then understand that people are shopping for that particular keyword phrase, they're not going to choose your book. They're going to choose the other book because let's face it, we all judge a book by its cover when we're shopping for a book. You have to say to yourself, "Can I beat that cover? Can I create a better title? Can I create a better description?" These should go in your calculus.

The next thing too to look at is the number of reviews. We as shoppers, we love to see books that have lots of great reviews. If the books have really bad reviews, we're probably not going to buy it even if it's a really cool cover or it seems to answer our pain point of what we're looking for. Look at that, and try to say to yourself, "Is this an amazing book and I can't beat that, or not?" We talked about how to figure out if people are typing into Amazon, and we've given a general idea of how we can figure out if it's too competitive or we have room to enter in the market. Those two things right there, I think, are very important for authors who want to be discovered and make sales.

Susan Friedmann: You mentioned one thing, and that is the number of reviews. You're absolutely right because when I go and search for a book, I look at the book within that genre that has the most reviews and obviously the highest reviews, and that's the one I might pick. Is there an optimum number of reviews? Is there a magic number?

Dave Chesson: That number depends on your competition. If the books that you're trying to compete against have 10 or 20 reviews, then 21 is your target to go after. If the books you're trying to compete against have thousands, well then you need to step it up and hit that as well. It really depends on your competition. If you think that 1,000 is too many reviews for you to ever hope to get on your first book, then that's probably a good indication that that's a little too competitive to get into.

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Let me paint the perfect picture. Way I type in a term and I find that there's lots of people searching for this. I go to Amazon and it shows me the list of books, and I see that those books are selling. I was like, "Oh, sweet. Okay, so people type it in Amazon, and they're buying books." Then I look at the cover and the title, I'm like, "Oh, man, those covers suck. Wow, these guys are selling and they have an ugly cover? Sweet, I got this." Then more importantly, it's like, "Hey, they got three star average, and people are still buying them." To me, that paints the picture that there is a hungry buyer's market on Amazon that is suffering through the current books, and I know I can do a better job. That right there lets you know before you even write your book that you've got something. Again, that starts with making sure that you can beat them either in the cover, title, reviews, etc.

Susan Friedmann: This is a great segue, Dave, into mistakes. I love talking about mistakes people make in this environment. What are some of the frequent mistakes that you see people are making on this platform?

Dave Chesson: Using the process we just talked about, another way to look at this is how to validate your book idea. Say you're an author out there and you're saying to yourself, "I got this really incredible story." If you describe what your book is about and you put it into Amazon search engine, and you look at all the books that show up and none of them are selling, it doesn't mean you can't write that book. What it does mean is you can't depend on Amazon to sell the book for you.

Before you even write the book, now you know, "Okay, Amazon's not going to automatically sell this book for me. I better develop a book marketing plan that's going to go out into the internet, find the right market, and drag them to my sales page, and get them to buy right then and there." That's a lot harder process than knowing that there's a hungry market on Amazon and you can get your book in front of them. To sum that up, we were talking originally about selecting your seven Kindle keywords and how to get search, but I say do that before you write your first book so that you know what to expect.

Susan Friedmann: You see that as a mistake that people are not making and they're not thinking in advance of who they want to go after and what category they need to be found under.

Dave Chesson: Exactly. There are a lot of great authors out there that have this amazing book inside them, and they write it, and they hope that Amazon will sell it, and they find out it just doesn't happen. There's no

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market on Amazon right now that's looking for what they have to offer. They're just distraught because they're like, "What the heck? How did this happen? I'm a really good writer. This is an amazing story. What's going on?" I say that before you write that book, before you run into that, "Oh my goodness, what happened?" verify. Take those steps we just talked about, and make sure that there's a market on Amazon that's looking for what you have to write. That way when you know that there is one, you'll write with confidence because you'll be ready to enter that market and to make your sales.

Susan Friedmann: What other mistakes are there that people make?

Dave Chesson: Another thing that I find is a lot of people don't put enough emphasis on their book description. A book description, to me, is one of the most important parts. Granted, the cover is what catches their eye and makes them click when they're looking at the list of books, but it's the book description that generally decides if the person buys or not. Think of it like closing the deal. The worst part for most authors is they go to publish their book and they quickly just write something that comes to their mind because it's like, "Ah, it's the last step. Let me just throw this together." It always seems like it's the hardest thing in the world for us to describe the book that we just spent hundreds of hours writing, and yet it's the most important.

When you get to your book description, truly think about who it is that you're writing this book for and what are the words that would make them say, "Yes, thank the Lord, this is the book I've been looking for. Thank you. I'm going to buy it right now." A couple of tips to give on that is first, spend the most time on your first sentence. Think of that first sentence in your book description as a hook. Why? Because we're shoppers. We're online shoppers. We're lazy. If that first sentence doesn't stop me dead in my tracks and make me say, "This is the book I've been looking for," I'm probably not going to read on to the rest of the book description, and I'm probably just going to click back and look at another book. In truth, when I write my book descriptions, I spend 80% of my time on that first sentence. Really take time and think about something that grabs their attention and lets them know this is the right book for them.

Susan Friedmann: It's so interesting because one of the first questions I ask authors when they come to me and they ask if we'll publish their book, I say, "Well, what's your book about?" 15 minutes later they're still trying to tell me.

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It's so hard for them to synthesize that book description into just one or two paragraphs or even just a few sentences. I hear you, it's critical.

Dave Chesson:

Yeah, it's got to be an elevator pitch. We had mentioned in the intro that I've worked with L. Ron Hubbard's marketing team. One of his books called *Battlefield Earth*, which as a kid was one of my first ever sci-fi books so it was really cool to be able to work on a book that was quintessential to my sci-fi love, but we first looked at their book description. Not to be mean, but it really wasn't good. Even the big names don't get it right. In this case, the book description itself was more about intricate details. It was more of a book report than it was a book description.

What we need to do as authors, in fiction specifically, we need to build intrigue. We can't spell out every detail. We need to give weight to the story, drive a curiosity, and then close them with the last statement. With non-fiction, we need to make it evident that not only this is the right book for them, but these are the benefits that they get if they read this book. So many people just don't do that. They just give a synopsis, and they roll on. This is your moment, standing on a stage, to convince a person in 20 seconds or less that your book is the right one for them. Think about it that way as you write it.

Susan Friedmann:

I know that our listeners are itching to find out more about how they can contact you to learn more about your services.

Dave Chesson:

You could go to [kindlepreneur.com](http://kindlepreneur.com). All of my content there is free, so you can just jump right in. I've got step by step processes on how to title your book, how to write that book description that we just talked about. I even have some case studies, too. If you have any questions, just go to my contact me page, click that, fill it out, and I'll respond.

Susan Friedmann:

I highly recommend listeners go to that website because it is a fund of information, it really is. There's so much there that boggles my mind. As I was flipping through the pages, I was like, "I want this. I want to know that." Thank you. If you were leave our listeners with a golden nugget, Dave, what would that be?

Dave Chesson:

When it comes to book marketing, you're going to hear hundreds of different ways that you can sell a book, and it's true, there are lots of them. But the best book marketers are the one that chooses the particular tactic that feels right to them, and they stick to it, and they stick to it hard. You'll get more out of that one individual effort than if

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you try 100 different little efforts all at once. Mentally, you'll probably feel a lot better, too.

Susan Friedmann: It's less tiring, more effective.

Dave Chesson: I hear all the time that I'm like, "Man, I'm doing this, this, and this, and I just feel like I'm spinning my wheels and I'm not getting anywhere." It's like, "Well, that's because you're going in 50 different directions. Choose one. Stick it hard, drive it. You'll see better results."

Susan Friedmann: Very wise advice. Listeners, take it to heed. Thank you so much. Thank you all for taking time out of your previous day to listen to this interview. I sincerely hope that it sparks some ideas you can use to sell more books. Here's wishing you much book marketing success.