

SELF PUBLISHING THROUGH AMAZON  
AND OTHER RETAILERS

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# HOW I SOLD 80,000 BOOKS

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BOOK MARKETING FOR AUTHORS

Multi-Award Winning, #1 International Best-Selling Author  
Alinka Rutkowska

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# **COPYRIGHT**

## **HOW I SOLD 80,000 BOOKS: Book Marketing for Authors (Self Publishing through Amazon and Other Retailers)**

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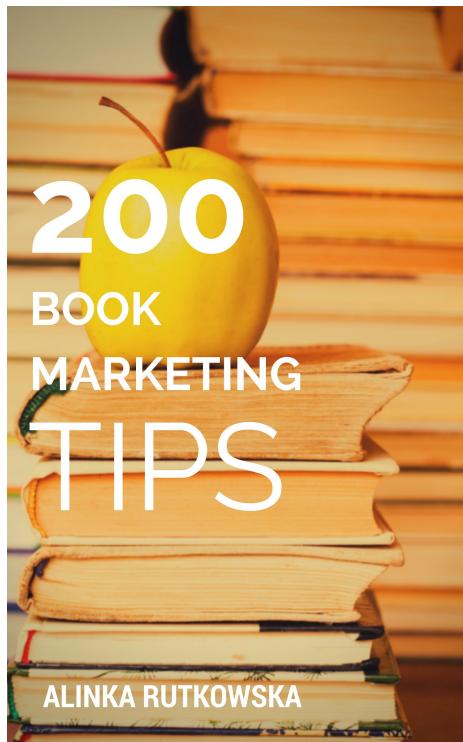
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# **DISCLAIMER**

While every effort has been made to accurately represent how to maximize your book sales, there is no guarantee that you will earn any money. Any product that tells you otherwise is lying. Even though this industry is one of the few where one can experience incredible earnings potential, there is never any guarantee.

Examples and income projections in this book are not to be interpreted as a promise or guarantee of earnings. Earnings potential is entirely dependent on the person utilizing the training programs, strategies, tools and resources.

Get "200 BOOK MARKETING TIPS" ebook for FREE!



Go to <http://alinkarutkowska.com/authors-home-gift/>

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Alinka Rutkowska is a multi-award winning and #1 Amazon bestselling author and coach. She has published over twenty titles, both fiction and nonfiction, specializing in children's picture books.

She's been featured on Fox Business Network, Examiner, She Knows, She Writes, The Writer's Life, Blog Talk Radio, and many more.

She is the founder and moderator of the Readers' Favorite forum for authors.

# INTRODUCTION

Writing is my passion, marketing is my vocation. Blending the two together is what I believe allowed me to sell 80,000+ copies of my books.

Let me answer two burning questions I often get from fellow authors. Yes, I really did sell over 80,000 copies of my titles and no, it did not happen overnight and it did not all happen via Amazon. This number includes online sales, special bulk sales and sales of foreign rights. There are different avenues to achieving what you want.

I have tried and failed many times but I've never given up. I keep learning and testing and after 5 years in the publishing business I've figured out what works, at least what works for me, but I believe that it will work for you too.

Everyone's path to success is different. Even everyone's definition of success is different. But marketing your book and optimizing it for success starts even before you start writing your book. It's difficult to look at it this way at the beginning but after having published 20+ titles I am now able to see clearly that there are four elements (four P's) that determine your book's success.

If you've studied marketing you will already know what these P's stand for. In this book I go through each of them in great detail to show you how I optimize my books for success and how you can do it too.

## THE 4 PS NECESSARY TO SELL THOUSANDS OF BOOKS

So you've published a book and now you're ready to market it? I have good news and bad news. Which do you want to hear first? Ok, I'll decide. The bad news is that it's already too late to start marketing your title. The good news is that we'll make the most of what we have and get you geared for success.

What does it even mean to market a book? If you attend a Marketing 101 lecture at any university, you'll see that the professor's first PowerPoint slide will prominently display the "Marketing Mix," which consists of four P's (and I don't mean the green stuff you're sometimes served on your plate).

The professor will announce that the four P's stand for Product, Place, Price and Promotion. The students will yawn, text, doodle or maybe even take notes.

# PRODUCT

Your book is your product, thus the most important part of your marketing mix. For teaching purposes, let's dissect your product (not because it's dead, because we will resurrect it) to its core, its add-ons and its metadata.

## YOUR PRODUCT'S CORE

You know that your book is amazing, that it's the best it can ever be and that it's award-winning material, right? "How am I supposed to know?" you'll say. "I'll know that when I put it on the market and submit it for some awards." Not exactly.

As Ernest Hemingway elegantly put it, "The first draft of anything is shit."

### —EDITING

Of course YOU'VE revised your manuscript countless times, and you've had it professionally edited and proofread. I take it for granted.

When I say "professionally edited," I don't mean that your high school classmate who was good at English did it for you. Go online and look for editors, contact your high school teachers and find out if they also do this for a living or, for goodness sake, ask your hairdresser if he knows of a proofreader. Hairdressers usually know everyone!

Remember that there are three types of editors:

- 1) developmental editor who can tell you that your story will make great wrapping paper unless you get it significantly revised,
- 2) copyeditor who will make you feel like you didn't do your homework as he points out all your grammar errors,
- 3) proofreader who will read your masterpiece countless times and make sure it's at its purest state possible.

If you're producing a great product, you need all three.

[You can find more about editors, where to find the best ones and how much you should expect to pay at <http://alinkarutkowska.com/psp/>]

## —CRITIQUE GROUPS

But how do you know that what you are submitting to your editor is quality material? The answer is: a critique group. A critique group is a very peculiar animal. It's not a circle of mutual adoration as you will find in many first-time author groups swapping reviews. It's not a place for the author to be worshipped by loving kin. A critique group consists of a group of writers who regularly critique their manuscripts. They write in the same genre, they know their craft and they both provide and receive critiques.

I belong to a group like this. We are five writers, most of whom are not yet published but really know their writing. Every month we swap manuscripts. I critique four different stories, and I receive four different critiques of my manuscript. There are some guidelines to critiquing that we use. For example, I usually don't say, "This is crap, flush it down the toilet." Instead I comment, "Have you considered eliminating this character/part as I think it doesn't move the story forward?" I know they do the same for me.

## —WRITING COURSES

How do you find a critique group? I think that the best way is to take an offline or online course on writing as critique groups are pretty much a natural thing happening there, somewhat like green grass growing after a bountiful rain.

"I'm an author! Why should I take a course in writing?" you might say. Well, even if you have a PhD in bestseller writing, things change all the time. Readers want different things, publishers take notice and agents then solicit that type of stuff. Even if you don't care about traditional publishing you still want your books to compete with the best, don't you?

I aim at taking one new writing course each year. This is very helpful, particularly if you want to change genres.

One thing I want to say to children's authors, and those considering writing a children's book, please take a course. It only seems easy. And for those attempting to write in rhyme, if you don't know what rhythm and meter are, please don't torture your readers with:

“This book is the best you will ever read,  
and I know it for sure,  
I know it indeed.  
How do I know it?  
Some readers may ask,  
You’ll soon find out,  
it will be an easy task...”

I know it rhymes, but it sucks.

## **YOUR PRODUCT’S ADD-ONS**

Let’s now assume that the core of your product is flawless. You’ve had it critiqued and you’ve reviewed it countless times, you’ve had it proofread several times, you’ve read it over 20 times yourself and you can’t even look at it any longer. Let’s move on to your product’s add-ons.

### **—COVER**

This is so obvious that I don’t even want to spend time discussing it. Your cover must be created by a professional. Forget those pre-made templates, they won’t make you stand out anywhere: not with the readers, not with reviewers, and not with boards of judges deciding who the next award will go to.

Resize it to a thumbnail and see what it looks like. If you can’t read the title or understand what’s on the cover, neither will your readers who will view your books online as thumbnails.

### **—FORMATTING**

This is another super obvious thing, but I must mention it: make sure your text has been professionally formatted so that it looks great. This is especially important for picture books.

### **—EMAIL MARKETING**

I know we’re only at the first P, but it’s not a part of the marketing mix for nothing. Your book is the primary place where you will insert a link to your website, telling

readers that they can get some awesome free goodies if they go to your url. When they go there, they will need to provide their email in exchange for a free digital download and you will start building your list of loyal fans. We'll get back to this in "Promotion."

### **REQUEST FOR REVIEW**

We know that reviews can make or break a book, but even more important than the quality of reviews is its quantity (no, no typo here). At the end of your book insert a request to leave a review online. Don't beg, simply tell the reader how happy it would make you. I do this in the form of a funny limerick (not as crappy as my poem in the "writing courses" section).

### **FEATURE OF OTHER BOOKS**

If you've published other books or you will have new books coming out shortly, make sure to prominently list them inside your book or on the back cover.

### **BIO**

People want to know who their new favorite author is, so insert an interesting bio. Nobody cares when you graduated or what your favorite pizza topping is. Make it short and meaningful but funny. Here's one of the bios I use:

*Alinka Rutkowska lives in a castle with her family and dragon just like Cinderella and writes picture books for children like you.*

*She has written over 20 books, and she has received many awards for her work. She is the winner of the prestigious International Readers' Favorite Book Award Contest, and her book series received the acclaimed Mom's Choice Award.*

Short and memorable.

### **PICTURE**

You need a professional picture so go get it done and make sure it's your best shot because you will use it on your book covers, website, brochures, business cards and all social media networks.

Keep it consistent. People will recognize you by your avatar so make sure you have the same picture **EVERYWHERE**.

[You can find more about your products add-ons at <http://alinkarutkowska.com/psp/>, this includes:

- covers, what they need to include and where to get them done,
- most effective way to start building your author platform right inside your book,
- examples of how to request reviews,
- best way to feature other books,
- funny bios,
- memorable pictures]

## **YOUR PRODUCT'S METADATA**

Metadata is all the stuff that makes your book easy to find for those hungry, hungry readers. Let's talk about the title, subtitle, keywords and description.

### **---TITLE**

Your title is key. It has to grab your readers' attention just like the cover. It has to be short, sweet and powerful. That's not an easy task. Luckily if you look around, you'll find software that helps identify the words used in bestselling titles!

Do you need a hint? The software I use to understand which words the best-selling books have in their titles is called *Kindle Spy* and you can get it at <http://alinkarutkowska.com/kindlespy>

### **---SUBTITLE**

This is where you want to use keywords to make your book easy to search for. But what keywords should you use? Amazon itself provides you with a great tool! Just go to the Amazon search box on the top of the page and start typing anything. Amazon will give you suggestions, which is what your readers are looking for! This is also the stuff you need to put in your subtitle!

### **---KEYWORDS**

Why bother with keywords? Because Amazon and other online retailers may look like bookstores but in reality, they are search engines and it is through keywords that readers find your books!

Of course the Amazon search box can help you identify those that might work. The problem with this approach is that it can take hours or days and you will still end up guessing what the best keywords are.

But have no fear. I have you covered. There's a tool that is so much better and it's called Kindle Samurai. As soon as I optimized one of my books using this software the sales multiplied by a factor of 50 (I kid you not).

Here's a video tutorial on how I use Kindle Samurai to select keywords: <http://alinkarutkowska.com/kindle-samurai-tutorial/> and here's a direct link to the store if you want to adopt a ninja approach to selecting keywords: <http://alinkarutkowska.com/kinlessamurai>

#### ----DESCRIPTION

This is one of the most important components that your readers will look at when making the decision as to whether to buy your book. I love to start my description with an editorial review from *Readers' Favorite* at <https://readersfavorite.com/book-reviews.htm>. The great thing about this organization is that you can submit your book for review before it's published, and you can have an editorial review to display on launch day!

This is how you incorporate it in your Amazon description:

Go to your Author Central account.

Click on Books.

Click on the title of the book.

The first tab you'll see is Editorial Reviews.

Go to Review or Product Description and paste your review(s) there!

Now they will appear on your book's Amazon page!

Ninja tip: make sure to include some of your keywords into your description!

#### PAPER BOOK OR EBOOK?

I really don't understand this question. Why would one have to choose or limit themselves to just one if it's so easy to create both.

[You can find more about creating paper books and ebooks at <http://alinkarutkowska.com/psp/>]

## **SERIES**

Once you've found initial success with your first release consider making it a series. Series tend to sell well, we will talk more about this in "Promotion."

If you know that your product is of top-notch quality we can now move forward to the next P.

## PLACE

Now that we've got your product covered, let's move to WHERE you're going to sell it. "EVERYWHERE!" I hear you say, "Yeah, me too. Even 'Harry Potter' isn't everywhere."

First of all, let's divide this 'place' thing into two separate worlds: online and offline. If you're reading this book, you know what "online" means—this alone makes you a pretty technologically advanced human being. I'm only comparing to my Italian mother-in-law who still doesn't know the difference between the computer and the Internet. She does, however, love books and they are one of her favorite impulse purchases at the gas station, supermarket or airport and right after spaghetti. We'll get to that.

### ONLINE

If you are publishing your book independently this will be your first, and initially, main point of sale. However, saying, "I sell my book online," is somewhat similar to saying, "I like food." It's not very precise.

While offline you will obviously sell your paper books, online you can sell both and often on the same platform.

#### — — — AMAZON

An article in the *Wire* dating back to May 2014 stated that "Amazon has basically no competition among online booksellers." So this is really where you need to start and what you need to care about most.

There are different ways of getting on Amazon. There is the print-on-demand (POD) way, which is easiest with CreateSpace, a company that belongs to Amazon. If you publish with CreateSpace, one of its prime features is easy access to Amazon. And since it's print-on-demand, you don't have to worry about inventory, shipping or anything. All you need to do is market your book and when somebody buys on Amazon, CreateSpace will print it and ship it. Your book will never be out of stock, and it's completely hassle free.

The downside to print-on-demand is that the production cost per unit is higher than if you went with a printer and printed 3,000 books. But then, where would you keep them? And would you be packaging each book and running to the post office to send them? If this is the path for you then you would want to use something called “Amazon Advantage” (<https://www.amazon.com/gp/seller-account/mm-product-page.html?topic=200329780>).

There are instances when going with a printer is the better choice, the most obvious is if you want a certain quality that you can't get with POD and if you have a big offline order to fulfill.

[You can find more about print-on-demand and offset printers at <http://alinkarutkowska.com/psp/>]

#### — — — **KINDLE DIRECT PUBLISHING (KDP)**

According to a late 2013 *Forbes* article, Kindle is the most popular device for e-books, beating out even the Apple iPad. So right after you get your paper book on Amazon, run to KDP at <https://kdp.amazon.com> and get yourself an e-book version. Here are some tools and resources you can use to convert your book into an electronic version: <https://kdp.amazon.com/help?topicId=A3IWA2TQYMZ5J6>.

For my children's books I use the first on the list, *Kindle Kids' Book Creator* which is very easy to navigate.

The great thing about KDP is that now you can schedule your launch day and sell copies prior to release date, which will boost your ranking on day one! (Unfortunately not all of these pre-orders will contribute to your launch-day ranking but it's still a great way to attract attention to your book).

#### — — — **BARNES & NOBLE**

Barnes & Noble is the next place to be. I didn't do anything particular to have all of my books there, except for switching on one of the channels in my CreateSpace dashboard, but here's a great page that will answer all your questions on how to get your book into Barnes & Noble: <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/help/cds2.asp?pid=8153>

## ---NOOK

Just like Amazon has its Kindle, Barnes & Noble has its NOOK. Go to NOOK Press to publish your e-book directly to Barnes & Noble's e-book platform: <https://www.nookpress.com/ebooks>

According to the site itself, *NOOK Press gives you everything you need to create, edit, and sell your digital books through the NOOK Bookstore all in one place. It's easy to sign up and try out the features, such as writing, editing, formatting and collaborating. Then when you're ready to publish, simply fill out the vendor information and Submit. Once you're approved as a NOOK Press Vendor, your NOOK Books are ready to be sold at NOOK, and you'll be able to track your sales and payment information on your Sales page.*

## ---APPLE

Apple's iBooks is the second largest e-book market player right after Amazon's Kindle. To create a book for iBooks go to iBooks Author at <https://www.apple.com/ibooks-author/> and drag and drop your text into a beautiful publication. The downside with this is that the book you create with this software is completely stand-alone, and you can't convert it for use on any other platform.

You can publish your book to the Apple store directly from iBooks Author and then you can manage your sales in iTunes Connect at <https://itunesconnect.apple.com>

Or, download iTunes Producer (under "Book Delivery" at [https://itunesconnect.apple.com/WebObjects/TunesConnect.woa/ra/ng/resources\\_page](https://itunesconnect.apple.com/WebObjects/TunesConnect.woa/ra/ng/resources_page)) and use it to upload a ready ePub file.

## ---KOBO

The next stop in publishing your book is Kobo at <http://www.kobo.com/writinglife>. In August 2013, Kobo was the second largest e-book retailer in Japan, and *Forbes* estimated it at three percent of the market share in the United States. The interesting thing about Kobo is that its readers will see Goodreads reviews displayed on their platform. We will talk about Goodreads in "Promotion."

## ---AGGREGATORS

You can upload your e-book to all the various platforms independently and retain all your royalties (except for the platform fees/percentages each company takes) or you can use Smashwords (<http://www.smashwords.com>), which is the world's largest distributor of indie e-books. They don't seem to publish to NOOK though, so if you decide to use Smashwords you would still have to upload your book to NOOK separately.

An alternative to Smashwords is draft2Digital (<https://www.draft2digital.com>), which, according to the site itself, is a *single, easy-to-use portal where you can convert your manuscript into an expertly-formatted ebook and publish it through some of the industry's most powerful retailers.*

### ---YOUR WEBSITE

All these different platforms are great and the more presence you have, the more potential readers you can reach. However, once you've established a fan base of your own (and a mailing list, which we will talk about in "Promotion") the best way for both you and your fans is to sell your e-book directly from your website. I do this by creating special super-savings packs and selling them for much less than the online retailers. I retain the same royalty, but you can structure this any way you want.

Technologically speaking, all you need is a PayPal button and once your reader pays you, you can email them their copy. And if you're a little more technologically advanced you can create a membership site, so once your reader makes the purchase, they will be redirected to a secure area from where they can download your book(s), and you can be having spaghetti Bolognese with a nice glass of Barolo wine, not having to worry about a thing!

I created my website and membership site with OptimizePress (<http://alinkarutkowska.com/optimizepress>) which I love and recommend.

### OFFLINE

So how can my mother-in-law access my book if she doesn't know the difference between the computer and the Internet? Offline.

### ---MAJOR BOOK STORES, SCHOOLS & LIBRARIES

In order to get your book into major book stores and libraries, it needs to be available via INGRAM (<http://www.ingramcontent.com>) or Baker & Taylor (<http://www.baker-taylor.com>). CreateSpace does open this door for you, but there are so many middlemen that book stores don't want to purchase self-published books because it's too expensive for them. Plus there's the issue of them not being able to return the books.

INGRAM works with independently published authors via Ingram Spark (<https://www1.ingramspark.com>). As they state on their website, *world literary domination may not have been your goal but with access to over 39,000 booksellers, online retailers, and libraries around the world, IngramSpark is the missing link*. Also *IngramSpark connects your book to every single major e-book retailer in the world; the big boys like Amazon Kindle, iBooks, and Kobo as well as 70 emerging e-book retailers*.

For a comparison between CreateSpace and IngramSpark go here: <http://www.selfpublishingadvice.org/watchdog-ingram-spark-vs-createspace-for-self-publishing-print-books/>

BAKER & TAYLOR is the second-largest U.S. book wholesaler. According to Aaron Shepard at <http://www.newselfpublishing.com/CreateSpaceEDC.html> *the truth is, B&T sells to bookstores as well as to schools and libraries, just as Ingram sells to schools and libraries as well as to bookstores. But each wholesaler has its area of primary strength.*

Baker & Taylor has its own POD service called textstream ([http://www.btol.com/supplier\\_textstream\\_about.cfm?CFID=220725221&CFTOKEN=90331476](http://www.btol.com/supplier_textstream_about.cfm?CFID=220725221&CFTOKEN=90331476))

According to its site *leveraging TextStream alongside Baker & Taylor's unsurpassed network of more than 40,000 customers worldwide is a winning formula. As a TextStream client, your titles and all supporting data are sent to thousands of Internet retailers, bookstores, mass marketers, schools, libraries and universities.*

Some authors choose to publish both with CreateSpace (to have easy access to Amazon) and with Ingram Spark (to reach offline retailers). The best way to do this is to buy your own ISBN via Bowker at <https://www.myidentifiers.com> and use the same one with both platforms.

[If you need more guidance on this topic be sure to check out <http://alinkarutkowska.com/psp/>]

### ---SUPERMARKETS

Supermarkets stock mostly paperback fiction, and children's books sell well as do cook-books and titles by regional authors. According to Brian Jud at <http://www.bookmarketingworks.com/SelltoAirports.htm> *if you can demonstrate that your promotional activities will help bring in new customers and profits, you will get their attention. You may submit your book and marketing package directly to the major supermarket chains, but they normally direct you to their wholesalers.*

### ---AIRPORTS

*"The sky is the limit."*

According to Brian Jud at <http://www.bookmarketingworks.com/SelltoAirports.htm> *bookstores in most small airports have space constraints limiting the titles they stock to only the top fiction and nonfiction titles as well as the popular classics. But a title does not have to be a bestseller to find its way into the stores in large airports. These shops will carry titles by local and regional authors, as well as books pertaining to its specific locale and destination points. For example, the title Fenway: A Biography in Words and Pictures by Dan Shaughnessy and Stan Grossfeld, can be found in bookstores in Boston's Logan Airport.*

*Titles for children tend to do well in these outlets, as do titles for business travelers who spend a good amount of time in airports. Also titles on management, investment, economics, business biography, personal finance and health work well in the airport setting.*

You need to submit your book directly to the airport bookstore chains.

### ---CRUISE LINES

They say the sky is the limit, but what about the sea? I am selling my children's book series on numerous cruise ships and when they order we are no longer talking about a couple of copies. Their trial order was 800 copies and the subsequent ones run by the thousands. It's a little tricky to get in though. Your book needs to be somewhat linked to the sea. You need to get in touch with the retail department and try to attract their attention. I find LinkedIn is a great

platform to look for professionals in the retail department who you'd like to contact to negotiate your book sales with.

### **---INDEPENDENT BOOK STORES / GIFT SHOPS**

These are great since they make decisions by themselves, and you can often talk to the decision maker as soon as you enter the store. Here's what I suggest you do:

- 1) Get in a book store/gift shop that is thematically linked with your book.
- 2) Browse around, make sure to take a look at the books section (or your genre).
- 3) When you see a shop assistant that's not busy, approach her with your book in your hand and say: "Hi, I'm an author and I wrote a book about xxx, I was wondering if you'd be interested in carrying it in your store (next season)?"
- 4) They will most likely reply: "It's my manager who takes care of this and she'll be back tomorrow."
- 5) Say: "OK, can I leave you a brochure? This is the book I'm talking about. It just received a [name award or honor or best-selling status - or something else that makes it special] and I'm also selling it in [name where - amazon is also good to name.]"
- 6) Get a subscriber on your list! I say: "Do you have small children in your family? Nephews? Nieces? Friends with children?" I give them my card and say: "Go to my website, enter your email and I'll send you one of my books for free." They are then super happy and will certainly pass your info to the manager.
- 7) Then say: "Oh, can you please give me an email that I can follow up with?" They give you the manager's email and a couple of days later you send an email pitching your book.

If you get to talk to the manager (always negotiate with the decision maker), they will ask you about your retail price, the price you give her (industry standard is 55% to 60% discount off the retail price - negotiate that), she will ask you where you ship from because she will be paying for freight.

And here you are - the start of a long-term business relationship and increased visibility for your books!

#### **----GAS STATIONS, THERAPIST OFFICES, ETC...**

You can get your book basically anywhere, the key is to THINK THEMES. Is your book about curing an illness? Talk to hospitals about getting it in their gift shops! Is your book about fish? Talk to aquariums and get your book in their gift shops! Is your book about cruise ships? You know where I'm going with this...

Make sure you find the decision maker—be professional and polite and get your book in those gift stores around the world!

#### **----YOUR WEBSITE**

Last but not least you can sell your paper book directly from your website. All you need is a PayPal button, and you'll get your buyer's payment and shipping address. You'll wrap the book, go to the post office and you're done! Or you can send your book directly through your POD dashboard without the need to handle the inventory, packaging and shipping. Easy!

Direct sales are always your most lucrative ones because you get rid of the middleman.

# PRICE

In other words: *How much?!* Again we need to divide this into two categories: physical books and e-books.

## PHYSICAL BOOKS

The first thing you need to do is research your competition, see what they charge and be competitive. You also need to make sure that you will be making money.

Another thing you need to consider, if you will be selling to any of the physical entities we covered in the “Place” section, is that you need to be able to give them a standard industry discount which is 55 to 60 percent off the list price and still be profitable.

If you’ve secured a big order (see the cruise ship example) your best choice here would be to go with a printer instead of POD, that’s because you can be both more competitive against other similar titles and your margin will be higher, which means more spaghetti and wine for everyone!

[If you need a list of printers for bulk orders you get, go to <http://alinkarutkowska.com/psp/>]

## EBOOKS

E-books are different because there is no printing cost, no inventory, no shipping, no fees, maybe except for download fees.

Readers expect an e-book to cost \$9.99 or below, or they won’t consider buying it. The standard tends to be between \$0.99 and \$4.99—I know what you’re thinking but that’s just the way it is.

Again you need to research your competition and test your price point to get it right.

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## SERIES

The great thing about a series is that you can make the first book permanently free and hook the reader to get them to buy the subsequent books for a regular price.

You can't publish a permanently free book via KDP but you can be sneaky and do the following: publish your book on Kindle for \$0.99 and everywhere else (iTunes, Kobo, Nook) for free. Then contact KDP support and ask them to price-match.

As soon as they do it, you will have a perma-free book which will be your business card.

Free books get 50 times more downloads than \$0.99 books and with one free book you can give incredible exposure to all your other titles.

It's sort of like the free cheese samples you get in supermarkets. You would never have found that particular cheese if they hadn't offered it to you for free but once you've tasted it you go back to buy it again and again and again!

## —KDP SELECT

Once your book is on KDP (see "Place"), you can decide whether you want to enroll your book to KDP Select. According to the website ([https://kdp.amazon.com/select?language=en\\_US](https://kdp.amazon.com/select?language=en_US)) joining the program allows you to:

- 1) *Earn higher royalties (Earn your share of the KDP Select Global Fund amount when readers choose and read more than 10 percent of your book from Kindle Unlimited, or borrow your book from the Kindle Owners' Lending Library. Plus, earn 70 percent royalty for sales to customers in Japan, India, Brazil and Mexico.)*
- 2) *Maximize your book's sales potential (Choose between two great promotional tools: Kindle Countdown Deals, time-bound promotional discounting for your book while earning royalties; or Free Book Promotion where readers worldwide can get your book free for a limited time.)*
- 3) *Reach a new audience (Help readers discover your books by making them available through Kindle Unlimited in the U.S, U.K., Germany, Italy, Spain, France and Brazil and the Kindle Owners' Lending Library (KOLL) in the U.S, U.K., Germany, France, and Japan).*

Sounds too good to be true? That's probably because it is! As the good people at KDP warn: *When you choose to enroll your book in KDP Select, you're committing to make the digital format of that book available exclusively through KDP. During the period of exclusivity, you cannot distribute your book digitally anywhere else, including on your website, blogs, etc.*

So, as you see, it's a tradeoff. If you go for KDP select, forget about distributing your book via Nook, Apple, Kobo, Smashwords, your website, and basically anywhere else... at least during the 90 day period you're subscribing for.

However, if you do go for it, you can use promotional tools such as Free Kindle Days and Kindle Countdown which can significantly boost your Amazon sales.

I've recently noticed that the books I haven't enrolled into KDP Select are doing very well on other platforms and I will now be gradually pulling more of my titles out of "Select". But it's a decision every author has to make for themselves. Both approaches can be lucrative if you know what you're doing.

And that's why you are reading this in the "Price" section — the Free Kindle Days, the Kindle Countdown Deal, and the permanently free book allow you to play with this important "P."

# PROMOTION

“Is she done yet?” If this is what you’re thinking, I have bad news. Not even close! Not only do you need to produce an amazing book, make important decisions about its distribution and price, you now have to promote it big time or it will just drown in the ever expanding ocean of books.

Instead of providing you with 100 random ideas for promoting your book, I will go through those promotional activities that have been working well for me followed by a couple of things which I will be adding to my mix shortly.

Again, we will divide this section into an online and offline part, but as I’ve hinted in the “Product” section, there are a few promotional tweaks you need to include inside your book first!

## WITHIN BOOK

### — — — THAT AWARD STICKER

If you’ve won any book awards you absolutely MUST advertise it on your book cover! My foreign rights agent told me that the books publishers are most interested in are those with award stickers on their covers!

Here’s a list of book award contests for the remainder of 2015:

**May 1st 2015, Purple Dragonfly Book Awards** ([www.fivestarpublications.com/bookcontest/pd\\_book\\_contest.html](http://www.fivestarpublications.com/bookcontest/pd_book_contest.html)), fee \$65. The Purple Dragonfly Book Awards are geared toward stories that appeal to children of all ages. We are looking for stories that inspire, inform, teach or entertain. A Purple Dragonfly Book Awards seal on your book's cover tells parents, grandparents, educators and caregivers they are giving children the very best in reading excellence.

**May 25th 2015, New York Book Festival** ([www.newyorkbookfestival.com/](http://www.newyorkbookfestival.com/)), fee \$50. The grand prize for the 2015 New York Book Festival Author of the Year is a \$1,500 appearance fee and a flight to New York for the June awards.

**June 1st 2015, Readers’ Favorite Book Award Contest** ([http://alinkarutkowska.com/rf\\_contest](http://alinkarutkowska.com/rf_contest)). You can win one of \$20,000 in prizes just for

entering and you get a chance to have your book made into a movie or TV show by Wind Dancer Films. All winners get free certificates, medals, sticker seals and digital seals. They also get displayed at the International Miami Book Fair free of charge and there are many more perks! Fee: \$89.

I participated last year and I won! I went to the Miami Awards Ceremony, had a blast and made invaluable connections.

**June 25th 2015, Hollywood Book Festival** ([www.hollywoodbookfestival.com/next.htm](http://www.hollywoodbookfestival.com/next.htm)), fee \$75. The grand prize for the 2015 Hollywood Book Festival Author of the Year is a \$1,500 appearance fee and a flight to Los Angeles for the gala awards ceremony, to be held in July, 2015 at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, home of the first Academy Awards.

**July 1st 2015, SCBWI Book Launch Award** ([www.scbwi.org/awards/book-launch-grant/](http://www.scbwi.org/awards/book-launch-grant/)), must be a member of the SCBWI (annual fee \$85).

**Sep 2015, Nautilus Book Awards** ([www.nautilusbookawards.com/](http://www.nautilusbookawards.com/)), fee \$175.

**Oct 1st 2015, Royal Dragonfly Book Awards** ([www.fivestarpublications.com/bookcontest/rd\\_book\\_contest.html](http://www.fivestarpublications.com/bookcontest/rd_book_contest.html)), fee \$60. The Royal Dragonfly Book Awards were conceived to honor published authors of all types of literature - fiction and nonfiction - in 60 categories, appealing to a wide range of ages and comprehensive list of genres.

**Oct 15th 2015, Cybils Awards** ([www.cybils.com/about-the-cybils-awards](http://www.cybils.com/about-the-cybils-awards)), (Children's and Young Adult's Literary Awards).

**Ongoing, Mom's Choice Awards** (<https://www.momschoiceawards.com/about-us/>), fee \$300. The Mom's Choice Awards® (MCA) evaluates products and services created for children and families. The program is globally recognized for establishing the benchmark of excellence in family-friendly media, products and services.

**Ongoing, Story Monsters** ([storymonsters.com/](http://storymonsters.com/)), fee \$85. (Children's Literature)

**Ongoing, Creative Child Awards** ([www.creativechild.com/awards-program](http://www.creativechild.com/awards-program)), fee \$75. (Children's Literature)

But what if you haven't received any awards yet? No problem, submit your book for a review at <https://readersfavorite.com/book-reviews.htm> and if you get a five star review you can use that on your cover! What I do is get the Five Review speedy pack because I like things to happen fast, and I maximize my chances of getting the sticker because only one review needs to be a five star for you to be able to use that badge!

Even better—submit your manuscript for review so that you can publish your first edition with a five star sticker on its cover! Readers love books that have been recognized by professional institutions, because they have proof that they are reading a high-quality product.

#### **—LINK TO MAILING LIST**

Your number one objective here is to get your current readers on your mailing list, so that you can sell them your subsequent books! The people who've bought from you once, are the most likely to buy from you again!

So inside your book, you have to tell your readers to go subscribe to your mailing list. But, of course, nobody will... unless you give them a good reason to do so. Offer them an irresistible product that will be waiting for them right after they subscribe.

#### **—OTHER BOOKS**

If you've published, or will soon publish, other titles you MUST list those inside your book. Unless you have dozens of them, use thumbnails. This list will be most effective if you have a series or if your other books are in the same genre. But even if they're not, you should still mention them. Your reader might be a fan of multiple genres!

#### **—PICTURE AND BIO**

See "Product."

#### **TARGET AUDIENCE**

Before we go into the various promotional techniques (and I know you can't wait!), we have to identify our target audience and where our readers "hang." I use a very sneaky tool to do it.

First of all, I identify competing titles and authors and then I go to "Facebook Audience Insights" to find out who my audience is. If this sounds like black magic to you, check out my "Getting Subscribers from Facebook" tutorial here: <http://alinkarutkowska.com/opt-ins-from-fb-training-overview2/>

## ONLINE

### —WEBSITE

Your online home, your hub, your kingdom is your website. A professional author's website has the author's name in its domain. If you're rolling your eyes because your website's domain is your book's title, please consider this: you're an author, right? So you will write another book and another, and another, and another. Are you going to create a new website each time? No. I learned this the hard way... but I'm here to help you save some time: buy your NameSurname.com domain or, if it's taken, buy it from the owner for \$10,000. Just kidding. If your name-surname domain is taken, get the AuthorNameSurname.com domain or a variation.

Now that you have your domain, build a professional website.

- 1) The first thing you need is a sign-up form. You want those readers on your list and you have to give them something exciting in exchange.
- 2) About your books page: obvious.
- 3) About you: with a funny, memorable bio and a professional author picture.
- 4) Testimonials: copy paste all the editorial reviews you've received or even your best Amazon reviews.
- 5) Links to social media, but not too many (this is a fine art).

Feel free to check out my website for readers at <http://alinkarutkowska.com> if you're looking for inspiration. I used OptimizePress (<http://alinkarutkowska.com/optimizepress>) to create it.

I'm not the only one with these views on effective author website. Jane Friedman (notice the domain name!) agrees: <http://janefriedman.com/2012/02/27/effective-author-website/>

## —EMAIL MARKETING

This is where the fun begins! I am providing you here with a mile-long laundry list of what works, but if I was forced to pick only one marketing tool this would be it.

Social media is great, and we will go through it in a bit, but you don't own any of those networks. Cracking Amazon's algorithm sounds enticing, but they can change it whenever they want. Guest blogging is cool, but your host can take that post down at their whim. Bottom line is you don't own social media, other blogs, or retail sites but you do own your email list.

Additionally, when you send out an email each of your respondents will see it (unless it ends up in their spam, but this is unlikely). On the contrary, if you update your Facebook page, less than five percent of your followers will ever see it. But that's obvious. Facebook's objective is to have people spend more time on their site and what people want to see is what their friends are up to, not what you want to promote, so Facebook can and is limiting the reach of those posts drastically.

But your mailing list is truly yours. You decide when and what to send, and there are so many ways you can play with this tool. This is where your creative brain can shine!

I know that this all sounds scary. Which email provider should you choose? How do you create a list? How do you create a sign up form? How do you create an autoresponder? Where do you get your readers from? How do you entice them to sign up to your list? I've got you covered. All these questions are answered in my *Goodreads Cracked* training at <http://alinkarutkowska.com/goodreads-cracked/>

## —EMAIL SIGNATURE

It's show time! As an author actively marketing your books you will send out massive amounts of email, so make the most of your email signature! While

signing off as *Galactic President Superstar McAwesomeville* might be a slight exaggeration, do use any honors you've received.

But that's not all. Once you've got that email list live and kicking, your email signature is the perfect place to entice your readers to sign up for it!

You know the theory, now go put into practice. You can take my signature and modify it so that it works best for you.

### **Alinka Rutkowska**

Multi-Award Winning, #1 International Best-Selling [Children's Author](#)

\*PARENTS\* - Get your FREE children's book [here](#).

\*AUTHORS\* - Get 200 Book-Marketing Tips FREE! Go [here](#).

### **—AMAZON**

Before you start promoting your book with full force and speed make sure that your number one retailer author page is working for you and not against you.

Go to author central at <https://authorcentral.amazon.com>, go to the “Author Page” tab and update your biography. Make it short and memorable and you MUST add a link to your website and give your readers a reason to click through! I say “COME OVER, I sometimes give books away for FREE!”

Add a professional author photo, your blog feed and Twitter feed. Then go to the “Books” tab and add all your books.

We'll talk about Amazon reviews in the reviews section.

### **—PICK YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA**

According to *Digital Marketing Ramblings* at <http://expandedramblings.com/index.php/resource-how-many-people-use-the-top-social-media/> there are over 700 top social media, apps and digital services you could be using to promote your book. Which ones will you use? How will you choose?

Of course we need to go after the most popular ones that gather *readers*. Even this shortlist, however, might be too overwhelming. Whenever I find myself

wondering which marketing task I should perform next I think to myself, “What would Vilfredo do?”

Vildredo Pareto was an Italian economist who observed in 1906 that 80 percent of the land in Italy was owned by 20 percent of the population. He also noticed that 20 percent of the pea pods in his garden contained 80 percent of the peas. Thus, the Pareto principle also known as the 80-20 rule. So whenever I find myself overwhelmed I make sure that I do the 20 percent of the tasks on my list that will yield 80 percent of results.

In other words, I picked my social media focusing on Facebook, Twitter and Goodreads; the 20 percent that brings me 80 percent of my results.

## —FACEBOOK

As we mentioned in the “Email Marketing” section, Facebook has its reasons to limit the reach of your fan page posts to around five percent, and I’ve observed that one percent is a more accurate number. The main reason is that Facebook wants to stay cool to its users. But don’t worry, not all is lost. There is a way to get your message in front of your target audience. It’s called *Facebook Ads*.

Facebook is an absolutely amazing database. Each time I create an ad and select my target audience I marvel at all the information gathered about the users (which folks put up voluntarily). This Facebook feature allows me to precisely identify my audience and get to know them down to their household income (I am not kidding you!).

I’ve had a lot of success gaining readers with Facebook ads, so much so that my fellow authors asked me to create a tutorial about how I’m doing it. So here it is: <http://alinkarutkowska.com/opt-ins-from-fb-training-overview2/>

## —TWITTER

I’ve had a love/hate type of relationship with Twitter but since some of my posts had a huge boost from my Twitter activity and some libraries contacted me via this network wanting to stock my books, it’s more of a love relationship now.

The main thing about Twitter is to use relevant hashtags in your posts. Once you've learned to do that people will start to follow you. Also provide funny or meaningful content, limiting your "buy my book" posts to a minimum.

Now here are some of those magical hashtags:

Reading Hashtags

#Books #BookWorm #GreatReads #IndieThursday #MustRead #Novel  
#Paperbacks #Storytelling #WhatToRead

ePublishing Hashtags

#Amazon #eBook #BookBuzzr #eReaders #ePubChat #iPad #kidlitchat #Kindle  
#KindleBargain #Kobo #KPD #Nook #Pubit #SmashWords #Sony #Webfic  
#YALitChat #Zinechat

Marketing Hashtags

#99c #AuthorRT #BookGiveaway #BookMarketing #FollowFriday  
#FreebieFriday  
#FreeReads

## —GOODREADS

Facebook and Twitter might be huge but Goodreads is where the real book worms "hang." That's where you can get readers for your email list, reviewers for your current and upcoming books, lifetime fans and repeat buyers.

The thing about Goodreads is that it's not very user friendly. It's hard to navigate so many authors just don't bother. Huge mistake! Just as Email Marketing is my number one marketing tool, Goodreads is my number one social network! I've spent countless hours on it, and I can finally say that I cracked the code to getting subscribers, readers, reviewers and hardcore fans on Goodreads. It's all here (and my fellow authors love it): <http://alinkarutkowska.com/goodreads-cracked/>.

## —OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS:

I know that the social media world doesn't end with Facebook, Twitter and Goodreads but it's my 20 percent (see the Pareto Principle in the "Pick Your

Social Media” section). I am present on other networks in a rather sneaky way: I “feed” my profiles with my blog feed. So all I need to do is write one blog post and automatically that will show up on ALL my social media sites. There are plugins for this.

One other platform that is worth mentioning is LinkedIn. I don’t use it to connect with readers (although some do want to connect there as well). LinkedIn is what I use to connect with other industry professionals. That’s how I find retail departments of companies I want to place my books in.

I think that every professional author should have a LinkedIn profile for these purposes.

### **—BLOG (AND FEED)**

As mentioned several times above I like to post news updates on my blog simply because I own my blog and then I “feed” my social media networks with these updates. My website is owned by me, whereas third party networks are not. Plus, I only need to create one post to have it appear on Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Amazon, Goodreads, LinkedIn and more.

The thing about blogging is that you need to find your rhythm and your voice. Are you going to do a long article once a week? Or are you going to do a short news update daily? It’s all up to you. You can experiment as much as you like, just make sure you find your style and you stick to it because once you start gaining readers they will expect you to stay consistent!

### **—GUEST BLOGGING**

A great way to expand your reach and gain a new audience is to guest blog. Find an influential blogger with a big following, go through their stuff, like and comment on their posts and develop a relationship. After a while contact them telling them how you would love to provide them with a unique and meaningful article about a subject that is within their scope. Tell them how you will promote the s\*\*t out of it and how they will be ever grateful to you (maybe skip that last part).

Make sure to add a link to your sign-up form within your article and give people a reason to subscribe.

This is a time consuming task, and it may or may not be within your 20 percent that brings you the most results. You need to set some time to research the right bloggers, read their websites, comment and approach them. You need to wait for their reply and then provide them with extraordinary material. Depending on the influence of your blogger, your post may bring you a substantial number of quality subscribers or the whole thing may become a total waste of time.

## —BLOG TOURS

I've done several when I was still inexperienced, and I thought they actually worked. I paid hundreds of green American money to these blog tour companies who prepared a month-long schedule for me which brought me maybe one additional purchase.

I was the one promoting the bloggers' sites. This didn't make sense. Not all was wasted though. This experience allowed me to say that I was featured here and there, so I used it as a springboard to bigger opportunities.

What does work and works exceptionally is a blog tour that you organize yourself. But you need to develop relationships with other influential authors and bloggers. If you can schedule a blog tour with influencers that you handpick, you can get yourself an amazing outcome. But this is extremely time consuming, and you might need to hire a Virtual Assistant to help you.

## —KDP SELECT

When you subscribe to KDP Select (see "Price") you get access to a few promotional tools you can use.

Free Book Promotions and Kindle Countdown Deals:

1) Free Book Promotions:

According to KDP at <https://kdp.amazon.com/help?topicId=A34IQ0W14ZKXM9> you can offer any book enrolled in KDP Select free to readers for up to five days at your discretion during each 90-day enrollment period in KDP Select.

2) Kindle Countdown Deals:

According to the website at <https://kdp.amazon.com/help?topicId=A3288N75MH14B8>

*Kindle Countdown Deals is a new KDP Select benefit that lets authors provide readers with limited-time discount promotions on their books available on Amazon.com and Amazon.co.uk. It's a great opportunity to earn more royalties and increase discoverability of your book. Customers will see the regular price and the promotional price on the book's detail page, as well as a countdown clock showing how much time is left at the promotional price. You'll also continue to earn your selected royalty rate on each sale during the promotion.*

Authors' experience with these tools vary. Setting up a deal is not enough. You need to promote it big time. While there are many sites that you can promote your free or discounted book on (<http://www.trainingauthors.com/47-places-to-submit-your-free-kdp-promotion-for-your-kindle-ebook/>), BookBub is the real deal.

## BOOKBUB

What is BookBub? you ask. It's THE place to be if you're doing a free or discounted promotion (see "KDP Select" above).

It's great if you schedule a promotion, but who's going to know about it? BookBub has a mailing list (I know, here we go again!) of MILLIONS of avid readers who love free and discounted books. The offer arrives straight to their inboxes and with a click of a button they can download or buy your masterpiece.

Here's what BookBub says about itself at <https://www.bookbub.com/home/about.php>: *BookBub is a free service that helps millions of readers discover great deals on acclaimed ebooks while providing publishers and authors with a way to drive sales and find new fans. Members receive a personalized daily email alerting them to the best free and deeply discounted titles matching their interests as selected by our editorial team. BookBub works with all major ebook retailers and devices, and is the industry's leading ebook price promotion service.*

Please note that when they say that they are a "free service" they mean that they are free for the readers receiving their updates. Here's the price list for us authors: <https://www.bookbub.com/partners/pricing>. As you see, depending on

your genre and whether you go for the free or discounted promotion you will pay between \$55 and \$1,725.

How does it work? You submit your book for BookBub's consideration and then its *editorial team reviews your book and decides whether they'd like to select it for a feature* (see more at <https://www.bookbub.com/partners/how-it-works>).

While BookBub does list its requirements (<https://www.bookbub.com/partners/requirements>) and tips (<https://www.bookbub.com/partners/submission-tips>) for getting selected, so many authors have been rejected that the selection process is a bit of a mystery.

I've enrolled my books a couple of times in the past only to get a rejection letter but recently I received the following message from them: "Hi Alinka, Good news! Our editorial team selected your title for a BookBub feature."

So what has changed? Several things:

- 1 Instead of being available only on KDP Select, my book is also on iTunes and Kobo.
- 2 It's got a professional cover, which is clearly visible in thumbnail size.
- 3 I was super flexible with dates.
- 4 I had several editorial reviews.
- 5 I launched it with over 100 reviews in 3 days and many of those reviewers featured the book on their blogs and social media. You can find a detailed report on how I did that here: <http://alinkarutkowska.com/100-review-book-launch-2/>

### **The results:**

I received several emails from authors asking about my financial results of the BookBub feature and here are my answers:

- **What was your ROI?** I invested \$160 in this ad (children's category - \$3.99 book discounted to \$0.99). I sold 300 copies on Amazon on the day and the day after the promotion. If you're out of KDP Select that's a revenue of  $300 \times \$0.35 = \$105$ . If you're in KDP Select, that's a revenue of  $300 \times \$0.70 = \$210$ . I also made some sales in other market places: 10-20 bucks in total.

- **How long did you have residual sales at full price?** I treated this book as an experiment from day one and did no promotion for it whatsoever - only the BookBub ad. Before the ad, I was selling 0 copies a day, after the ad I averaged 5 copies on Amazon at a \$3.99 price point (with no promotion).
- **What is the value of hitting the best seller list, even if it's only for a short time like one day (can authors really boast that their books are best sellers when that status is so fleeting and hinged on a half price sale?)?** I have hit #1 best-seller on Amazon before but never on three Amazon sites at the same time. Thanks to this promotion I can call myself a #1 International Best-selling Author. Will I use this title? It depends where. I did put it on my new business cards, because success leads to more success, I also put it on my catalogs, which I will be distributing at the Bologna Children's Book Fair at the end of the month. I also included it in my email signature. I know this is not the same as hitting the New York Times Best-seller's list but it's still an accomplishment and I believe it's one that you can be proud of, one that gives you self-confidence and one that you can use to attract more sales.
- **What other results did you have on top of the financial ones?** I got 20 new subscribers to my mailing list, a couple of reviews and the option to call myself a #1 International Best-Selling Author. (Even though I have sold around 80,000 books I couldn't call myself this and now I can!)
- **Can you share any best practices?** Of course! Make sure that inside the book you are promoting you have hyperlinks to your other books and to your sign-up form (especially if you're doing a free promotion).
- **Would you do it again with BookBub?** Yes, I will for the books I believe in most that I will launch with my 100 Review Book Launch methodology (<http://alinkarutkowska.com/100-review-book-launch-2/>)

To sum up, BookBub promotion significantly boosts your sales rankings, gets you new readers and you will make your money back plus make some more if you go for the paid option.

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## CONTACT LOCAL NEWSPAPERS, TV CHANNELS, RADIO

TV, radio and newspapers are no longer just for the super-famous. All media is constantly looking for news and local media is looking for local news. What you need to do is start early, find a hook that you can link to and contact your local radio, TV and newspapers.

You can also sign up for HARO at <http://www.helpareporter.com>. How does it work? Sources (you're a source) *will receive three emails a day, Monday through Friday at 5:35 a.m., 12:35 p.m. and 5:35 p.m. EST, with queries from reporters and media outlets worldwide. Scan the emails, and if you're knowledgeable about any of the topics, answer the reporter directly through the anonymous @helpareporter.net email address provided at the beginning of the query.*

I've gotten some elegant exposure thanks to this service but bear in mind that scanning through the emails and responding is time consuming. It can, however, be very rewarding.

### — — — **PRESS RELEASE**

Don't want to ask others for a feature? You can do it yourself! Get yourself a professionally crafted press release. Do it yourself and have it edited or get it done by a professional and then let the world know about it!

I've used and recommend iReach by PR Newswire at <https://ireach.prnewswire.com/Home.aspx>. It has accessible price options ranging from \$129 to \$399 (see <https://ireach.prnewswire.com/orders/price-options.aspx>).

You can tell the world about your new release, your awards or anything else you can come up with. You could even partner with other authors to split the cost and do a group press release.

I've seen a significant spike in my book sales after I've issued my own press releases, but your results will vary depending on who picks up your release, when you send it and many other factors.

Again, make sure you direct your readers to your website where they will find a sign-up form ;)

### — — — **VIDEO TRAILERS**

I don't want to say that video trailers are dead but I haven't noticed any increased sales from mine.

What does work are videos that go viral, but you need to know how to create those. Or... you can go to <http://www.fiverr.com> and hire someone who will create a funny video for you for not much more than \$5! I've used fiverr countless times for different jobs and some sellers really know their craft.

## —GETTING PROFESSIONAL REVIEWS

It's great to have some professional reviews that you can include in your book description (within the book itself or as metadata—see the "Product" section). Where do you get them?

*Readers' Favorite* - FREE (also offers paid services) at <https://readersfavorite.com/book-reviews.htm>

*BookLife* by *Publishers Weekly* - FREE at <http://booklife.com/about-us/reviews-faqs.html>

*Kirkus Review* (<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/author-services/indie/>) - \$425 to \$575. Is it worth it? Joanna Penn wrote here, "I once paid for a Kirkus Review for my first nonfiction book—but it was an expensive mistake. I wouldn't do that again!" See more here: <https://selfpublishingpodcast.com/19/>

*Clarion Review* - \$499 at <https://publishers.forewordreviews.com/reviews/>

*Blue Ink Review* - \$395 to \$495 at <http://www.blueinkreview.com>

Here's a list of "Prolific Indie Reviewers": <http://www.theindiewview.com/indie-reviewers/>

Once you've received a review you're proud of, insert it into your book description directly in your Author Central (or CreateSpace) and KDP dashboard and anywhere else you are distributing your book.

## —GETTING PERSONAL REVIEWS

Reviews can make or break your book's success, and it's often not even the quality that counts but the quantity. The more you have, the more buzz your book will get and the more noteworthy it will appear in the eyes of your potential readers.

When I just started out, I noticed that I had to sell 2,000 books to get 20 unsolicited reviews, so it took a couple of months, and I was probably lucky to get so many.

Fewer than one percent of readers leave a review out of their own initiative. And since they are so important I've now developed a system of soliciting reviews from avid readers. I've perfected it to the point in which I now get 50+ reviews on launch day with minimum effort.

Before I get to my "review recipe" I'd first like to direct all of you to the Amazon's top reviewer list at <http://www.amazon.com/review/top-reviewers>. Check who reviews books in your genre and contact them. Few authors know that the top reviewers compete with one another as to the number of reviews they write and the likes they receive for them. They are hungry to review your book! You will have to send them a free copy and some will want a paperback, but it's just part of the deal. Use your best manners when approaching them.

Remember to put a request for review inside your book (see "Your Product's Add-ons").

Now, an even better way than contacting Amazon's top reviewers is contacting real avid readers, loving to read and reviewing books for pleasure as opposed to getting Amazon brownie points.

We've already talked about THE social networks for READERS. It's Goodreads. Goodreads is the world's largest site for readers and book recommendations. It has 30 million members, 900 million books added and 34 million reviews. As you can see from these numbers, it has more reviews than members, meaning that on average a Goodreads user writes multiple reviews!

The downside to the site is that it's not particularly user-friendly, and authors just don't know how to navigate it. But I've got you covered. I've devised a recipe for getting a review avalanche directly from avid Goodreads readers AND building

your email list at the same time (and if you got to this point of this book, you already know how important this is).

After walking you through the basics I show what you need to do with your Goodreads profile to turn your visitors into reviewers. I give you not one but two different strategies for getting reviews. I show you how to set up your mailing list from scratch. And then I dissect the Giveaway process so that you can make the most of it. You can get it all here: <http://alinkarutkowska.com/goodreads-cracked/>

## —100 REVIEW BOOK LAUNCH

Thanks to all I learnt about reviews, I recently launched a book with 100 Amazon reviews in 3 days.

You can follow the steps below and get your reviews spread in time, or you can plan a big launch and get them all in a couple of days. That's up to you.

First some statistics and psychology: I got 112 reviews from a team of 260 launch team members, who signed up and committed to reviewing my book on launch day. That's over 40%, which is actually very high. Usually around one third of the people who commit to review a book, do so. Why? I don't know, maybe they lose interest or have other commitments but it's important to be aware of these numbers. When you have a specific number of reviews in mind, you have to get triple that number of people to agree to review your book.

In order to have a certain number of people to agree to review your book, you need to contact several times more people. Many will ignore your request so I think you need to ask roughly 4 times more people than you want on your launch team. Does this mean I contacted 1000 people before getting 100 reviews? Probably.

So where do you get 1000 potential reviewers interested in reading and reviewing your book?

Below is an estimate of where the 1000 came from:

50% came from my activity on **Goodreads**. I have a special system I mentioned above (<http://alinkarutkowska.com/goodreads-cracked/>), which I use to find passionate reviewers but it requires time (15 min a day once you've got

everything set up). I've been doing this for several months before I got these people on my mailing list.

**10% are Amazon Top Reviewers.** I went to <http://www.amazon.com/review/top-reviewers> and I looked for people reviewing books in my genre. I also contacted reviewers who reviewed books similar to mine.

**10%** I got using the **Author Marketing Club** (<http://alinkarutkowska.com/amc>) **Reviewer Grabber** (it's a premium feature). This tool scans Amazon for reviewer emails and websites. You just insert the books you want the tool to scan and it does the work. I got over 100 people this way.

**10% are bloggers** who have featured me before or whom I approached specifically for this launch.

**5%** come from a **mini-blog tour**. Even though I'm not a huge fan of these, I got a very good offer from one of the bloggers I contacted they delivered everything they promised.

**5%** came from **LibraryThing**. I ran a "Member Giveaway" giving away 100 e-copies. 50 people requested it and when I sent out the book I mentioned that I have this launch going on. 10 people signed up.

**5%** came from a free **KDP promo** I ran for another book. I have a call to action inside, which gets people on my mailing list and some of the thousands of people who downloaded the book when it was free (I promoted that fact) subscribed.

**5% are friends and fellow authors** (these are not review swaps) - people who support me and want to see me succeed.

#### **COST:**

\$105 annually to use Author Marketing Club Reviewer Grabber ((<http://alinkarutkowska.com/amc>)

\$75 mini blog-tour (10 reviews and an interview)

\$25 to advertise the KDP promo

#### **MORE COST, PRIZES:**

To get my launch team all excited about this launch, I put them in a draw, in which they can win some cool stuff:

\$50 Amazon Gift Card

\$20 for four \$5 Amazon Gift Cards

\$35 for 5 paperback + postage

I have some more e-gifts, which don't cost me anything (okay, they are in my fixed costs).

**GRAND TOTAL: \$310**

**Important note:** I only sent out pdf copies, so that didn't cost me anything and I always contact people personally, using their first name and sometimes trying to connect with them in a way (e.g. "You're from New Zealand!? I love NZ! I met my husband on a cruise from Auckland to Sydney!")

Now in terms of time...it's time consuming but the satisfaction of launching a book with 100+ reviews... that's priceless!

And you know what the best part is? I have all these people's email addresses, so next time I launch a book, it will only take a couple of emails ;)

#### **----WHAT IF YOU GET A NEGATIVE REVIEW?**

Have you already received your first 1-star-review? If not, my guess is that your book hasn't received much exposure yet, because if it has, someone is bound to express their honestly cruel opinion.

It's not about the book, it's not about you, that review only reflects the reader and their vision of the world. I don't want to get too philosophical about this but I wouldn't sweat it - at all.

Why is a bad review a good thing?

- It only gives credibility to the positive reviews you've received. Otherwise people might think that it's just friends reviewing your work.
- Many books which have an equal number of positive and negative reviews are very controversial and as such they sell very well.
- It gives you feedback - there might be a minimum amount of truth in it and you can use it to improve your work.

How to diminish the impact of a bad review?

Even though we can grow tough skin and learn not to sweat it, we still want to diminish the impact of these reviews as much as possible.

How can we do it?

- First of all, never try to change the reviewer's mind. I once persuaded a reviewer to increase their rating from 1 star to 3 stars but if you've received a 2-star review or higher and try to negotiate it, you're probably going to annoy the reviewer and they are very likely to lower their rating.
- If you run a structured book launch which gives you over 100 reviews, like I did for my recent release, you will be able to identify that reviewer and delete them from your list. Just think of an inexpensive reward you want to give them, send an email to your list with the winners and the negative reviewers will identify themselves. Give them the prize and delete them from your lists so they don't contaminate your future launches.
- As soon as your first 5-star reviews arrive, ask your trusted colleagues and/or friends to "yes" those reviews on Amazon. This way these will be the first reviews that people see and they will be likely to "yes" them as well. Automatically the negative ones will be buried under the avalanche of positive reviews you receive.

Again, don't worry - look up your favorite book on Amazon - I'm sure it's got a couple of 1-star-reviews too!

## **OFFLINE**

### **----BUSINESS CARDS**

You shouldn't ever leave your house without your business card, not even when you're throwing out the trash.

Create two-sided cards.

On one side you will have a "headline" describing the genre or uniqueness of your books with your website and some memorable artwork.

On the other side you will have your professionally done author picture with your name, job description (this is where you can say you are an “award-winning” or “best-selling” author, if you are!), and add your website and contact information.

Make it simple and easy to read AND, of course, add a link to your subscription form, and tell your readers what goodies you have waiting for them after they’ve subscribed.

I use <http://www.vistaprint.com> to create my business cards.

### — — — **BROCHURES**

Very quickly you will realize that you need brochures. These will have your author picture on them, your bio, website and a list of your books with all the necessary details.

You will need these when you start negotiating to get your books into physical stores and when you go to book fairs.

### — — — **WORD OF MOUTH**

If you’re an introvert, that’s fine, but as soon as someone asks you about your book, you have to know what to say. Prepare your “elevator pitch” in case an important decision- maker wants to know more about your titles. Make sure you can present yourself in excellent light in less than a minute.

It also helps to ALWAYS carry your book with you (for display purposes, not necessarily to sell).

Give out your business cards to everybody who asks about your book and tell them that you have some great goodies waiting for them if they subscribe to your mailing list (you can spare the top executives from this last line but nobody else).

### — — — **BOOK FAIRS**

Book fairs are a great way to gain exposure, however, getting a booth at a fair is very expensive, and it’s very unlikely that you will sell enough books to cover the expense (especially at the big world-wide known events).

What I like to do is get my book displayed by a third party and go to the fair to mingle and make connections, not to sell. I hand out my business cards and brochures to readers, and I develop strategic connections with people from the industry.

Each book fair is different, but you will usually be able to either share a stand with other authors (and split the cost) or get your books to be featured by someone else. The latter might be a service you can purchase or something completely complimentary like representation at the International Miami Book Fair by Readers' Favorite for all the winners of the contest.

Do research the local book fairs well in advance, and make sure you attend equipped with your cards and brochures, and that your books are featured.

What I like most about the big book fairs is that it's a great opportunity to sell foreign rights.

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## FOREIGN RIGHTS

*You want your book to travel the world and find new audiences who love to discover a new story.*

I love the above sentence. It comes from <https://publishers.forewordreviews.com/trade-shows/>, a service I use to get my books displayed at the big fairs.

Here's what I do:

**1. First of all you should have your books displayed at the fair.** If you are traditionally published, negotiate with your publisher. If you are independently published you have two options:

- You can get a stand and sit there hoping that someone will come over and express interest in your books. You can throw a couple thousand dollars at it and sit there yourself or you can find other authors (collective stand) and share the cost. The pro is that you can potentially sell your books there but that's not what those fairs are for, and you'd probably sell just a few copies anyway. The con is that you can't move from your stand and it will most probably be located off the main halls where the serious business happens.

I don't recommend this approach (I've done it in the past and I learnt the hard way).

- You can get your books displayed by a third party like Foreword Reviews or The American Collective Stand. This is the approach I recommend.

**2. Go to the fair.** Go check out your book displayed at the fair and start talking to the people representing it. That's how I scored a Foreign Rights Agent. Come equipped. You need catalogues, business cards and possibly a poster. At the Bologna Book Fair there's a huge wall where you can stick your poster to. Then interested parties photograph this wall and someone might fall in love with your work this way!

**3. Go scout.** It's show time. Now that you have your poster on the wall, the people displaying your book equipped with your catalogues, the hard work starts. You want to get foreign publishers to buy your book rights. You have hundreds of publishers right there, so it can get a little overwhelming. Here's what you do:

- Approach a stand and check out their books, see if your titles would be a good fit for that publisher. I usually start right off the bat, asking if they are potentially interested in acquiring foreign rights. Some will say that they only want to sell, not buy. No problem, move on.
- If they say yes, tell them that you checked out their books (on the shelves) and that you think your work might be a good fit for them. Ask them if you can show them your books.
- They will usually say yes. Now it's time to brag. Whip out your books and catalogues and start your pitch. I always mention 3 things:
  - 1 **The awards the books received.** Publishers are very excited if your books are award winning. They loved the Readers' Favorite Book Awards I received.
  - 2 **That my books are #1 Amazon best-sellers** in their categories and that I managed to get 100 reviews in 3 days for my latest releases. Publishers were VERY impressed by this. And it's not so difficult to achieve if you know what to do. I detail it here: 100 Review Book Launch: <http://alinkarutkowska.com/100-review-book-launch-2/>

**3 My sales in absolute numbers.** This is optional and it gets better over time. If you have substantial sales or if you have already sold rights to other countries - do tell!

- If you see that the publisher is interested, leave them your catalogue. If you see that they are VERY interested, leave them a copy of your book. Always ask for their contacts (acquisition editor) and then follow up after the fair. If you have a Foreign Rights Agent, give the contacts to them and they will follow up.

The scouting is very tiring and requires a completely different set of skills than writing a book does. But you get better with every pitch.

**A few tips:**

- If possible bring an assistant (or friend) who will scout for you as well - you will get much more done much faster.
- Series sell. Publishers like series and they might want to buy your whole catalogue (yes, it happens!).
- Don't get discouraged. If one publisher says your book is not for them, move on. The next one might be over the moon about your ideas.
- Ask for advice. If publishers don't like your books, ask them why and how you could improve. Ask them what they are looking for and you might be able to provide them exactly that the following year.
- Dress smart. First impressions count - be professional.
- Wear comfortable shoes - there's a lot of walking involved.
- Have fun! You're supposed to be enjoying this, you're getting your work out there, it's exciting!

**The trade shows in 2015 are as follows:**

*American Library Association Midwinter Conference*, January 30 - February 3, 2015. Chicago, IL.

*Bologna Children's Book Fair*, March 30 - April 2, 2015. Bologna, Italy.

*BookExpo America*, May 27 - 29, 2015. New York City, NY.

*American Library Association Conference & Exhibition*, June 25 - 30, 2015. Las Vegas, NV.

*Beijing International Book Fair, August 26 - 30, 2015. Beijing, China.*

*Frankfurt Book Fair, October 14 - 18, 2015. Frankfurt, Germany.*

*China Children's Book Fair, November 13 - 15, 2015. Shanghai, China.*

You might also simply be approached by a foreign publisher with a request to buy the rights to your books (that's how I got one of my books translated into Turkish!). Remember to read the contract or, better yet, get a lawyer to read through it. If you have a foreign rights agent, have them handle it. They will take a percentage, but they know what they're doing.

You might also want to approach foreign publishing houses independently. Of course, you can do that, but I don't recommend it. It's way too time consuming, and you'll be much better off by sending your book over to relevant trade fairs where hungry foreign publishers gather to find new books for their collections.

As mentioned above, I had my book featured by Foreword Reviews at the Bologna Children's Book Fair in early 2014, which I attended. I networked a little and met my future foreign rights agent. I then featured a book from the series at the China Children's Book Fair the same year and a few months later I got an offer from a Chinese publisher wanting to buy rights, not to one book, but to all 15 books from the series! The joy of my expanding world domination was the biggest reward (the Chinese market is a big one and when they print your titles, it's on a big scale). The handsome advance was the icing on the cake!

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## **BOOK SIGNING**

Opinions about book signings vary. Some authors think they work wonders and claim to sell books by the truckload, others don't get any results. It all depends on where and when your book signing is but most of all it depends on how approachable you are. If you just sit there and play with your phone, nobody will come over but if you stand and smile and welcome people to your stand, of course readers will start arriving.

It always helps to wear a funny costume or something that will make you stand out. It's a great icebreaker and will help you network with your readers and sell your books.

You can have a book signing pretty much anywhere and the hosts will happily have you if you can prove that you will drive traffic to their outlets.

Don't just limit yourself to the big book stores. Think of independent stores, libraries, schools, coffee shops, bars, restaurants—anything that is somehow thematically linked to your book. I know authors who sell thousands of books this way (but they do a lot of events!).

Start local (local entrepreneurs will happily host a local author) and then expand your reach.

What I love most about book signings is that you get to know your target audience in person. You can talk to them, answer their questions, see what they're looking for and maybe you'll even get inspired to create a brand new title or even series based on their feedback!

### **—PUBLIC SPEAKING**

Last but not least, public speaking works. If you can first show your crowd that you really know what you're talking about you can then easily sell your books at the back of the room.

The thing with public speaking is that you have to get over yourself, so start small. Do a little speech somewhere local and then expand.

It might not be for everybody, but it can become an important source of revenue (as you grow you will be able to charge handsome amounts just for the speaking itself!).

### **—WARNING - CON ARTISTS**

The author marketing world is full of wonderful opportunities, some of which you have never even imagined possible. And here's the place where I need to warn you. If you get an out-of-the blue proposal for a TV appearance, book contract, anything—stay alert. If it turns out that you need to pay some production fee, alarm bells should go off in your head.

Basically, if you get any proposal that you haven't actively solicited, it could be a scam. So search the Internet with the title of the company + scam, get a lawyer

to look at the contract you're supposed to sign and stay safe. These are rare instances, but they do occur.

## FURTHER READING

*20 Tips to Marketing Success* by Rhonda Fischer <https://readersfavorite.com/marketing-tips.htm>

*50 Ways To Promote Your Book* <http://www.thebigbookproject.com/50-ways-to-promote-your-book/>

*50 Things Under \$50 Bucks To Promote Your Book* [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/penny-c-sansevieri/fifty-things-under-50-buc\\_b\\_3916768.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/penny-c-sansevieri/fifty-things-under-50-buc_b_3916768.html)

*71 Ways to Promote and Market Your Book* <http://www.yourwriterplatform.com/promote-and-market-your-book/>

# FINAL POINTS

## CROWDFUNDING

I know that producing and marketing your book is expensive, and you will need a significant budget even if you're doing it the "low cost" way. But I don't think that authors should be penalized just because they're not doing it the get-100-rejections-first-traditional-way.

There is a quite new and very underutilized tool that authors can use and get something akin to a massive advance! It's called crowdfunding. You need to be very cautious though. You can't just launch a campaign and leave it. Many of them fail, and the reason is lack of preparation. But if you do learn how it's done you can amass a significant amount that will allow you to produce a high quality book and market it effectively. It will allow you to successfully produce and market a whole series!

[For more on how I crowdfunded my way to almost \$10,000 go here: <http://www.warriorforum.com/showthread.php?p=9614801>]

## SERIES

Now that you've found some success with your first book, it's time to write another, and another, and another, possibly turning them into a series. The more books you have, the bigger your reach, the more you can play with promotions for your readers and the sooner you will be able to become a full time author—one who can make a comfortable living out of their books alone!

## YOU'RE NOT ALONE

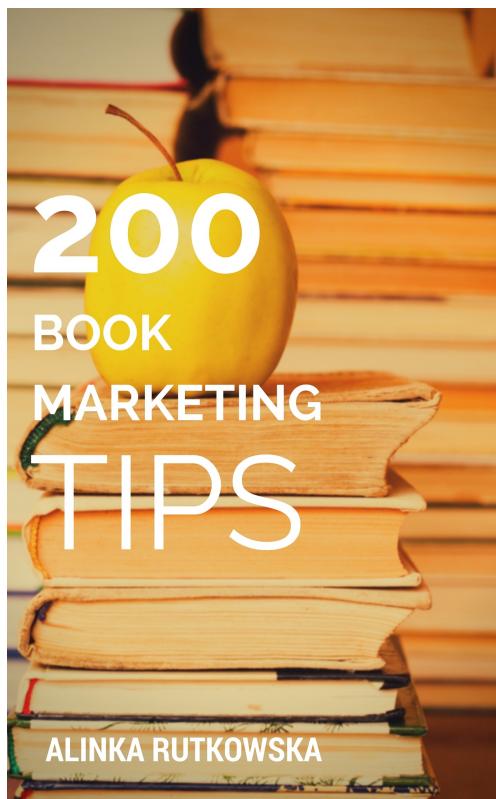
I know this was A LOT to process, and you're a hero if you got to the end of this book! But it's really just the basics. There's much more to know and many of the topics we've covered have a significant depth to them, which is impossible to explain in detail in a book.

What I want you to remember is that you're not alone. I'm right by your side assisting you with my best strategies and digital courses at <http://alinkarutkowska.com/authors-home/>. Come over!

Alinka

P.S. Scroll down - I have something very special for you!

Get "200 BOOK MARKETING TIPS" ebook  
for **FREE!**



Go to <http://alinkarutkowska.com/authors-home-gift/>

## REVIEW REQUEST

Do as I say, not as I do. Just kidding. In this book I recommend that you ask your readers to post a review of your book.

So, in order to be completely compliant with what I preach, here's my request:

*If you enjoyed this book,  
And learnt from it too,  
Why not then go online  
to write a sweet review!*

And if you've taken any of my courses (<http://alinkarutkowska.com/author-courses/>) feel free to mention those in your review as well!

**Thank you!**