

Daniel Hall Presents



Episode 119

Build Social Proof with More Amazon Reviews for Your Books

with Jason Ladd

Welcome to this episode of the Real Fast Results podcast! Jason Ladd is today's special guest. Jason is currently collaborating with about 20 other authors in an anthology called [Write and Grow Rich](#). If one of your dreams is to use your writing ability to achieve this sort of success, then you'll definitely want to pick up a copy of that book. You can find out more by visiting RealFastResults.com/wagr. You'll also find out how to get some great bonuses when you visit the site.

Jason is also an expert at getting book reviews, which is one of the most important aspects of writing and publishing. This is particularly true when it comes to getting Amazon reviews and reviews that continue to help your book sell now and in the future. Jason is here to discuss this topic today. Please welcome him to the show...

Big Promise: How to Get Great Book Reviews

First, it's a pleasure to be here. Thank you for having me. The big, fat promise for today is if you're an author, you're going to learn how to solve one of the biggest pieces of the promotional/marketing puzzle that you need to solve in order to get social proof for your book, which is, ultimately, one of the main things that you need to get sales. And, that is how to get great book reviews.

There are many reasons why this is very important, but the first reason I have is the most personal and, maybe, psychological. If you think about someone that just happens to stumble on your book that's on Amazon. What are they going to see first? The first thing they are going to notice will probably be the cover. Their eyes are going to be drawn to it, so you've got to have a great cover. The next thing they are going to look at is the title, or the main title. They are going to read that and think, "Is it good? Is it interesting?"

The next thing might be the subtitle, but the second or third thing that they are going to look at is that little star and that little number, or maybe the big number that's next to that star, that tells a person what's going on with the book. They are going to look to see, "Does this book have 5,000 reviews?" Then, they are going to know that this is an offer that has been around a long time, or this is a celebrity... There's a lot of, uh, promotion going on with this. Or, maybe they're going to see a couple of hundred and think, "Wow. This book is legit. This is someone that has a fanbase, and it's a 4 ½ star."

I think the average rating is about 4.3 right now. **So, if it's 4.3 or better, you're doing pretty good.** Or, maybe, they are going to see 3. I think the worst they could possibly see would be the little blue text that says, "Be the First to Review This Item". If they see that, anyone that's been around Amazon's website a little bit knows how many thousands and thousands and thousands of books that people have published. The good news is that there's no barrier to entry. Anybody can do it. The bad news is you can get a lot of crummy things that end up added.

3 Reasons Why Reviews are Important

1. **The first thing a customer does is read a review - So, what is a consumer to do? The first thing that they're going to do is go read a review. That's the first piece of social proof that they're going to see, and it's one of the most powerful pieces.** Every author that has published books knows how important it is to get reviews for your book. It's the social proof. Number 1, that's why it's important.
2. **Reviews are part of Amazon's algorithm.** - I think Adam Houge is one of the masters of knowing exactly the ends and outs of this. So, he could explain better, but I know it's one of the top three, or so, factors that will determine whether or not your book is going to be put in the pages that are going to be seen on Amazon. So, it's part of that.
3. **Reviews mean that people have read your book and have developed an opinion about it.** - And, it's one of those ways that you're actually going to get word of mouth. I mean, if you ask people how they've heard about a book, it's probably not going to be because they stumbled upon it on Amazon. **It's going to be because someone told them about it or they heard about it somewhere.** So, especially if you are an unknown author, just starting out, which is what I was when I published my first book, not too long ago... That was back in 2015... Then, you need to get that word of mouth going.

Otherwise, it's just going to be collecting digital dust up on Amazon's digital shelves, with all of the other eBooks corpses that are out there. We don't want that. It's so much work, and it's just a shame to see it go unnoticed. So, those are a few of the reasons why it's so important.

Jason's 5 Step Process to Getting Book Reviews

When I had to learn how to do this for myself, I put my first book out there, and I was able to generate around 20 or so reviews. But, it was a lot of work, and it wasn't efficient. It was just, kind of, disappointing. It didn't get me much traction. So, I had decided that I was going to figure out the impetus behind this. I wanted to get that book in the slot that all the authors were trying to get, and I convinced myself that I didn't have enough reviews and that I probably needed to go wide with my format.

I proved that theory. I sat down and used all of my knowledge from all of the people who helped write the *Write and Grow Rich* book and other people in the publishing community. I learned about the best way to do this, and what I came up with is a strategic blend of personalization and automation. This uses a technique that essentially helps you to run a book review campaign. This is a concerted effort to find people, and reach out to them, and ask them if they'd be willing to consider leaving a book review, if you'll send them your free book. I whittled it down into five steps.

Step #1 - Identify Your Perfect Reader

The first step is to identify your perfect book review candidate, essentially, and there are many kinds. Probably the best kind... And, by the way, I just want to say, this concept is not new. This is the time-tested concept of finding people in large numbers, and sending them your free book, and asking if they would consider leaving a review. But, the nice thing about the technique that I'm using, and that I'm teaching is the amount of personalization that's involved and a few of the automation tools that help you to actually scale this and make it manageable at the same time.

But, the first step is to identify the perfect reader for your book. Now, a lot of times that's book review bloggers. Those are great, but it's not the only kind of person. It could also be other people with websites. It might not be book review bloggers, but it might be people who are interested in your genre or people that sometimes review books. If you can identify the perfect person for your book, whether it's a fiction reader or non-fiction reader, and the more specific you can get, the better. So, if you can get into your subgenre, like people who love paranormal romance or young author sci-fi, that's great.

Step #2 - Find Large Groups of Them Online

The second step, Step 2, is to find large groups of them, generally online, and the way that you do that is not necessarily by finding lots of people's websites, but really, the key is to find a website that has a list of a lot of people's websites. You've got to find out where to learn about these people. So, the second step is to find large groups of them online.

Step #3 - Find Their Personal Websites

The third step is, from that webpage, to find their personal websites. Ultimately, you want to go take some time and learn about these people. Now, the technique that I teach is not a quick solution. You can't just make it happen fast. It actually takes some elbow grease. **It takes some time and some work, like most things do that are actually going to be effective.** So, it's not an easy, quick fix, but it's the technique for the author that has said, "I'm so frustrated that I have spent three years writing this book, it has sat on the shelf for two years, and I have no reviews (or I have five reviews). I'm willing to do the work, if I just knew what to do." Well, this is what to do, if you are willing to do the work."

Step #4 - Prepare a Spreadsheet

Once you find a large group of people, and you can find their personal websites, then you can use some automation. There's some extraction tools out there that can easily help you. Instead of having to go to that website every single time, you can just get that list of URLs onto a spreadsheet. So, now you can just work off a spreadsheet, and it's much easier to click. But, ultimately, you're trying to get a large list of people, of their personal websites, so you can visit them and find out a little bit about them, and so you can make a personal outreach to them.

So, you just prepare a spreadsheet... **And, I'm not talking I'm not talking about a spreadsheet full of 30 people. I'm talking about 300 people, or you have a list of 2,000 people to choose from.** For this technique, it's for a person that has, maybe, an hour, and spends an hour or so every night for a week or two learning about people and generating some personal pieces of correspondence, which you can then combine in a way to connect with them. It may be email. Depending on where you live, you may have to make sure that you comply with your own country's email regulations. With the technique I use, I'm in the US, so it's specifically designed to be compliant with CAN-SPAM. The US is a little more liberal when it comes to what it allows.

You'll need to check on these laws before you reach out, and change the way you reach out accordingly, but ultimately, you want to connect directly with those reviewers.

Step #5 - Connect Directly with the Reviewers

Step 5 is to connect directly with the reviewers. Maybe you've seen some of the authors that are a little more experienced. When they have a book launch, they'll have kind of a book launch manager, or they'll create a Facebook group, or they'll create a launch team. It's called a street team.

They might have 300 people on their launch team. That's essentially what you are doing, but instead of just a book launch campaign, this is specifically a book review campaign. They might ask, "How did they get a list of 300 people and do this?" Well, this is the technique that shows them how to get the people and the numbers that matter, on their team, and that say, "Hey, if you'll send me your book, I'll *consider* leaving an Amazon review." I highlight the word

“consider” because we want to make sure we are in compliance with all of Amazon’s rules. Where there were some changes in the last three years, you cannot provide anything in exchange for a review, and you cannot provide any form of compensation.

That’s really the other challenge. There are a lot of techniques that people used for a lot of years to build their lists and get reviews that might have been okay, or might have been in the gray area... You know, raffles, and Kindle giveaways, and a free book in exchange for... Well, now that’s all gone, so it is really an art... There’s an art to... Well, you have to say, “I have to find the people that might want to read the book. I have to, somehow, persuade them to want to receive it. I have to hope that they read it, and then I have to make them, somehow, be willing or want to leave a review, but I can’t make it mandatory. It can’t be in exchange for, and I can’t give them the book as contingent upon them saying they’ll leave a review.”

The best way to word that, I’ve found, is to ask the reader, “Would you be willing to receive a free copy of my eBook and consider leaving me a review?” I love the word “consider” because there are no strings or obligations. As a matter of fact, anytime I communicate with someone, I highlight that I am really hoping they will leave a review, but I tell them to keep in mind that they are under no obligation to leave a review. So, those are the five steps:

1. Identify your perfect reader
2. Find large groups of them online
3. Find their personal websites
4. Prepare a spreadsheet
5. Connect directly with the reviewers

How to Find Reviewers

It can all start with a Google search. If you are talking about promotional opportunities, some book promotions say that you need to have at least five, four-star reviews, or 10 reviews with a four-star rating before you can even submit. So, getting reviews is the key to unlocking some promotional opportunities. I’ll tell you, some of the big promotions are really...

The biggest one in town is BookBub... They don’t put out a formal number. However, I’ve done my own research on the books... At one point, I took a sample of 100 random books that were on BookBub’s featured promotions, and I looked to see how many reviews they had. Out of 100 books, 0% of those books had under 50 Amazon reviews. In fact, I think 98% had over 75 Amazon reviews.

That was, kind of, my theory. I wanted somewhere around, over 50 or over 70 reviews, and that’s actually when I got my BookBub. It was my fourth attempt, and I think that I had 68 Amazon reviews, and I had gone wide with my format, and I finally booked a BookBub slot. So, there’s anecdotal evidence, but there’s no formal evidence. As far as how many bloggers you need to reach the number of reviews that you want, I’m finding a 30% rule in most of the things that you do. So, take the number of people that you have on your list, and 30% of those people

might eventually receive your book, and out of the 30% of people that received your book, 30% will actually follow up and leave an Amazon review.

If you just keep chopping things down by 30%, you can do the math and see how many people you need. I'll give you a good example. My goal for my latest book, which is *Book Review Banzai*, was 100 Amazon reviews during the launch. I think I ended up contacting about 1,000 people. Yeah, I ended up having about 1,000 people on my list, and I directly contacted all of them. I had 100 Amazon reviews on the sixth day of the launch, so I reached my goal. That was the second time that I used the process and it worked.

Can You Give Us More Tips About How to Ask?

The biggest tip, I'd say, is to go to Amazon's customer guidelines and learn the rules so that you can be in compliance with them. You'll learn the ones that I've already covered, like that you can't provide anything in compensation, including your free eBook because that is a form of compensation. And, you can't provide anything that's in exchange for that review. So, you have to send them the book regardless... You can't say, "Tell me that you'll leave a review, and then I'll send you the book." You have to be willing to send them the book for free, and say, "Hey, even if you don't, I'd like to send it to you. Even if you just consider it, that's all I can ask."

Number 2 is that you have to be willing to accept both positive and negative feedback, and you can't do anything to try and influence how they review the book as well. So, you want to ask them for honest reviews. Those are really the biggest parts of it. There are a few others, like you can't have your friends and family leave a review. That's against the terms of service, and I'm not sure, but I've heard others say that they might use shipping addresses to correlate that. Maybe they have other ways. Who knows? But, yeah, friends and family are not supposed to leave reviews.

There are no review swaps with authors. So, if you leave a review for another author, you can't say, "I'll leave a review for your book, if you'll leave a review for mine." That's against the terms of service. So, those are the big ones that I remember. If you steer clear of those, you're going to be doing okay.

Are Video Reviews More Weighted?

I'll be honest. I haven't looked into the video reviews very much, but I think that it's a good idea to be giving video reviews. As far as asking reviewers to give video reviews, I would say two things: Number 1, I think it would be great if you could get them, but Number 2, we are always trying to minimize the amount of hoops that we're asking them to go through. If you were going to, I'd definitely mention it as an option, but I wouldn't ask to hardly for it. I would really just ask for any kind of a review and say, "Hey, and if you are willing to leave a video review, then it's going to be a little more powerful."

I think this is a powerful tool. Just remember that we are trying to minimize any amount of pain and friction that our book review candidate is going to go through. This can include little things. There's a great little trick, or shortcut... When you ask them to leave a review, you can send them a link to your review page. The way to do this is to open up an incognito window in Chrome, or a browser window that doesn't have any of your cookies, and then search for your book on Amazon. Then, find a place that says, "Write a review," and click that link.

It's going to take you to an Amazon sign in page. Copy that link and send that link to your readers because when they click that link, all they have to do is sign into Amazon, and it's going to take them right to a place to review your book. That's an amazing little tool to give them. "Hey, you only have to click once, sign in, and you are going to be right where you need to be to leave a review." So, again, you are going to make it as easy as possible for those readers.

The book that I wrote to teach authors how to do this, *Book Review Banzai*, specifically teaches how to launch a book review campaign. The big secret to this whole technique is that it's not just for authors; this changes the way that you find and connect with people forever. For any kind of promotion, or outreach marketing, it's all the same concepts.

Final Tips

When should a person start thinking about getting Amazon reviews and other types of reviews? The answer is now. If you haven't published your book yet, I would start this process about three months before publication. When you start this process, you want to have your final book file. That means no more editors or anything else. Backup all of your dates. If you say, "I want to publish on Amazon on this day," then back up three months and say, "My final e-files will be ready now." That's because you're going to send out your final product, and then you'll start.

Realize that you can do this after your book is published. The first time I did this with one of my books, it was a year after it had been published. It was during a relaunch, one year after, and it still works. But, the best time, obviously, is when you first publish. You try to get all the momentum in the first few weeks. So, yeah, the time is now. If you can start early, give yourself a few months. It gives your readers flexibility, and you can say, "I'm flexible if you need a couple of months." This will increase the chances of you getting a "yes," and you can send them your book.

In What Format Should I Send the Book?

An eBook is fine, and it's what I'd recommend. You can send physical copies. I did that with my first book, but for me, using UPS or Post Office Priority Shipping, it came out to about \$10 per soft cover. You know, it was \$4 to print the book on CreateSpace and \$6 to ship it. So, that's \$10, out of your pocket, for every soft cover that you send. You'd increase it more if it's a hard cover, which I had. I've had hard covers as well.

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Connecting with Jason

I have a very extensive webinar on this subject. You can check it out at RealFastResults.com/bonzai. And, if you haven't picked up a copy of [Write and Grow Rich](#), which is an anthology that I recently contributed to, you should buy one for \$0.99 soon. They are selling for that right now, since we are in pre-publication. If you get it now, you will also receive a big package of really great bonuses. For example, there's one that will help you learn to emulate New York Times bestselling covers for your Kindle books, for free, using Canva. There are other great bonuses, contributed by other authors of the book as well. As previously stated, you can check out this offer at RealFastResults.com/wagr.

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