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Using Amazon KDP Ads to Sell Your Ebook on Amazon

Posted on January 3, 2017 by Rob Kroese | 7 Comments

Today's guest post is by author [Robert Kroese](#) ([@robkroese](#)).

Amazon offers several ways to help authors promote and advertise their Kindle ebooks on Amazon itself. In this post, I'll cover two types of ads Amazon offers through its Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) site for self-publishing authors. Note that you no longer have to be exclusive to Amazon in order to advertise on Amazon.

To get to the advertising interface, go to your Bookshelf in KDP and then click on the **Promote and Advertise** button next to the book you want to advertise. Next, click on the Create an ad campaign button.
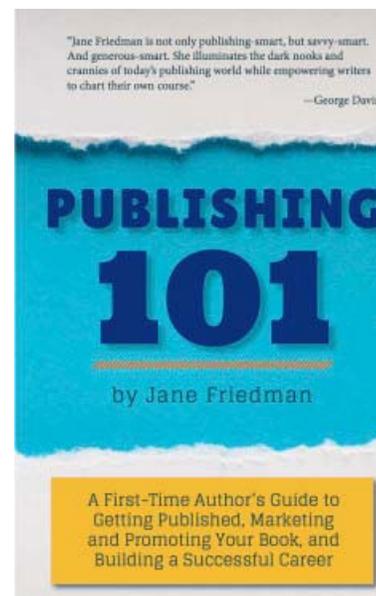

You'll see a screen asking you if you want to create a Sponsored Product ad or a Product Display ad.

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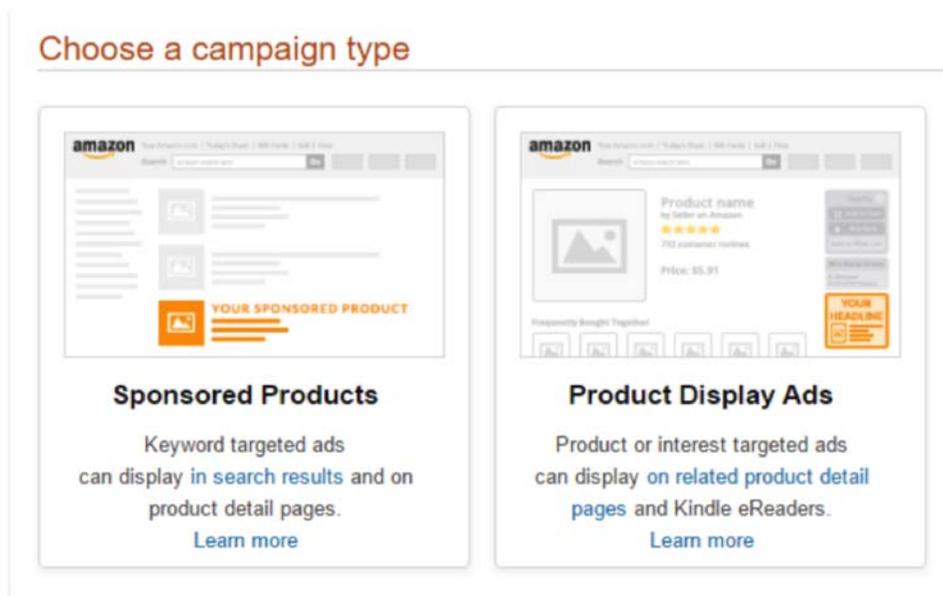
Product Display ads have been around for a while, whereas Sponsored Product ads were introduced in 2015.

- **Sponsored Product ads** appear below Amazon search results and below the fold on product (book) pages. Sponsored Product ads can be targeted by keyword or can use auto-targeting.
- **Product Display ads** appear on related product detail pages and can appear on the Kindle reader screensaver and home screen. Product Display ads can be targeted by book genre or relevant products.

[Visit Amazon to learn more about the differences between the two types of ads.](#)

Product Display campaigns have a minimum budget of $100, are more difficult to set up, and have less granular reporting than Sponsored Product ads. **Because of these drawbacks, I don't believe Product Display ads are worthwhile for most self-published authors.** The key to successful book advertising is to fail often—that is, you need to find out what doesn't work quickly and move on to a more profitable strategy. With the way Product Display ads are set up, that's difficult to do.

That said, some authors have reported having success with Product Display ads, so I'll discuss how to set up both.

Product Display ads

For a Product Display ad, you have to decide whether you want to target your audience by product or by interest. I'll go through both, starting with targeting by product.

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The search feature for finding products to target is hilariously awful. No matter how specific you are with your keywords, it seems to return a randomly ordered lists of vaguely related products (including non-book items) that may or may not contain the product you're actually looking for. For example, look what happens when I type "aurora kim stanley robinson kindle":

Somehow their search feature thinks "KONGYII Babe Aurora All My Demons Casual T-Shirt" is worthy of displaying above the fold, whereas Kim Stanley Robinson's novel *Aurora* is not.

I suggest opening another Amazon tab in your browser, searching for the product you are looking for, and copying the Amazon Standard Identification Number to your clipboard. The ASIN is the string of characters between */dp/* and the next slash in the Amazon product page URL.

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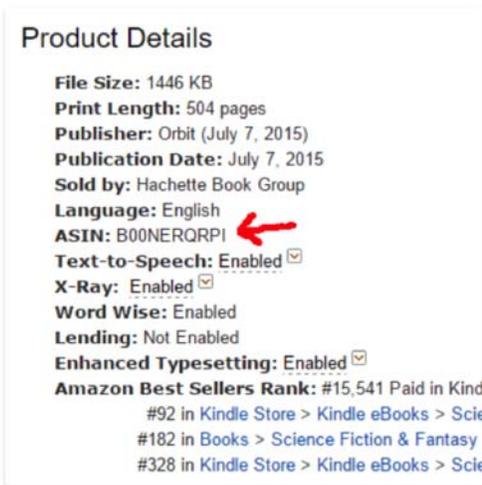Posted Jan 04, 2017

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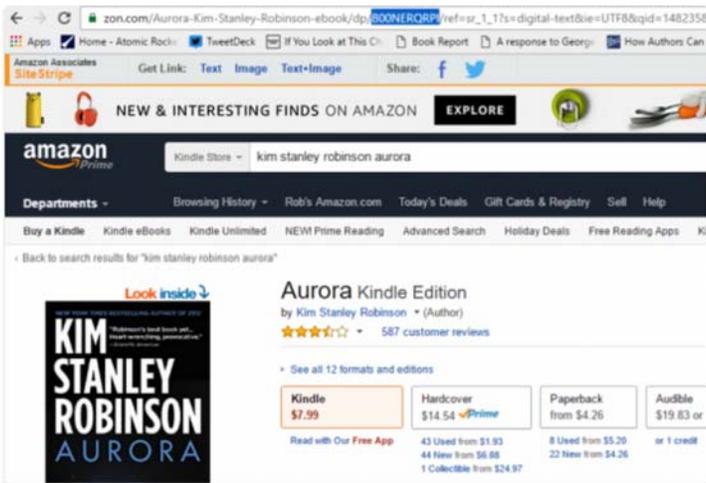
You can also find it under the Product Details:

Paste the ASIN into the text box, click Search and voila! The desired product appears. Click the Add button next to the product to add it to your targeting.

If you try Product Display Ads, I suggest targeting a lot of books.
This increases the amount of places your ad can be shown and also increases impressions. You only pay when someone clicks on your ad, not when they view it, so it generally doesn't hurt to target very widely. (I say "generally" because if your clickthrough rate is extremely low, Amazon may discontinue your ad.)

Alternately, you can target your ad by interest (category) rather than by product. This is a much simpler process. Simply select "By interest" and then click the categories you want to target. Note that most of these categories are
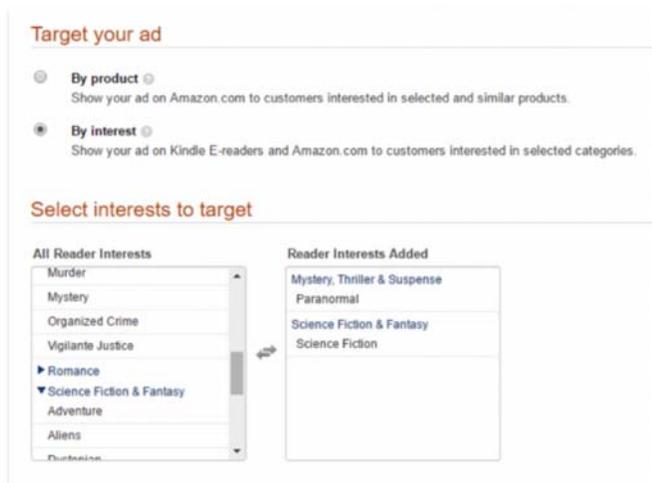
quite broad. Generally, unless your book fits squarely into a particular category, you're going to be better off targeting by product.

When you've finished your targeting, you need to specify a few general settings.

You will see a checkbox labeled "Automatically extend your reach to include related products, such as those frequently bought with your book (recommended)." **Unless you just want to experiment with this feature to see for yourself how well it works, I recommend un-checking the related products option.** The advantage of selecting this option is that it will broaden the targeting of your ad, resulting in more impressions. The disadvantage is that it makes it more difficult to determine which keywords are working. The reports for Product Display ads only show you how effective the campaign is overall, so unless you create a separate campaign for each targeted product, it's hard to know which keywords are working and which are not. Choosing to extend the reach of your ads only exacerbates that problem. Additionally, there's no telling what Amazon considers "related products." If they use the same algorithm as the product targeting keyword search, your book will probably show up next to T-shirts and power tools.

Next you need to specify a name for your campaign. Amazon pre-fills the text box with a very unhelpful name that you should definitely not use. I suggest using this format:

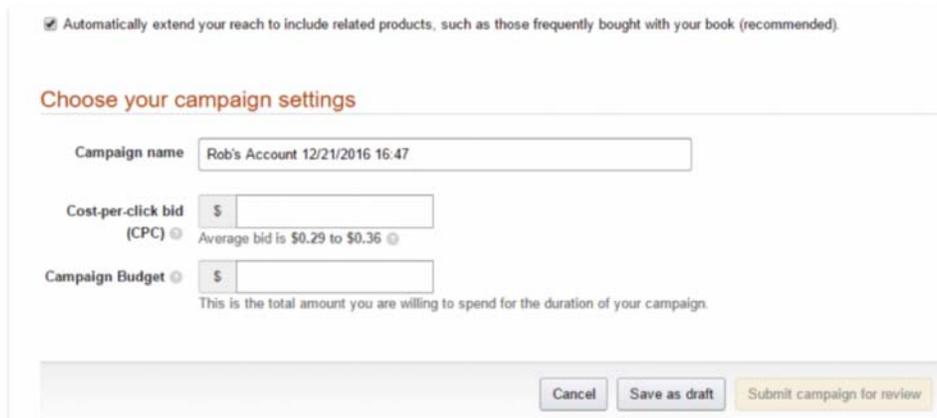Product Title – Type of Ad – Targeting Type – YYYY/MM/DD

For example:

City of Sand – Product Display – Related Products – 2016/01/01

If you use a standard naming convention, it will be much easier to tell which campaign is which after you've got 20 or 30 of them going.

Next, enter your cost-per-click (CPC) bid. This is the most you will pay per

click. The interface will suggest a range based on how competitive your targeted product selection is. Finally, enter an overall budget for your campaign. The minimum budget you can specify is $100.

Choose how long your campaign will run and whether you want your budget used up as quickly as possible or spread evenly throughout the duration of your campaign. Your campaign will end when either the end date is reached or your budget is used up, whichever comes first.
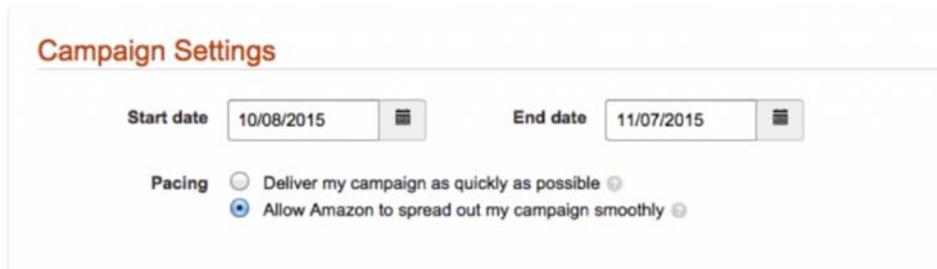
Next, create your ad. For your headline, use something that catches the viewer's attention and makes them want to click the ad. Select your dimensions, check the details of your campaign summary, and then submit your campaign for review. Amazon will generally approve your ad within 72 hours.

Once your ad is approved and starts running, you'll want to regularly check your metrics to see how your campaign is doing. If you're getting not getting many clicks, you may need to tweak your ad's headline. If you're getting clicks but no purchases, something on your product detail page is preventing you from sealing the deal. That could mean you need more reviews (positive reviews, ideally), a better cover, or a more enticing description.
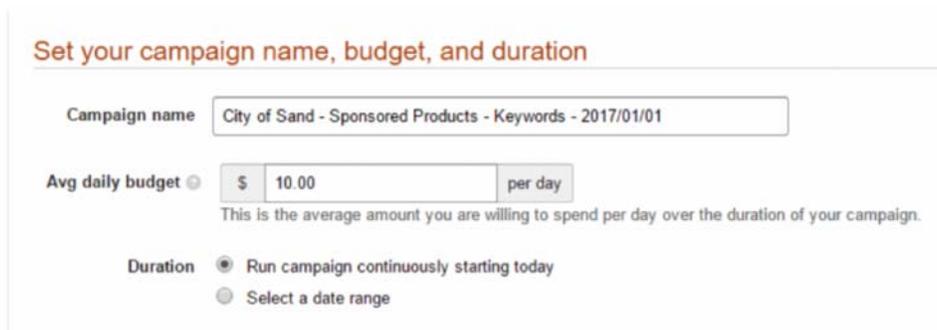
Sponsored Product ads

For most self-publishers, Sponsored Product Ads are a much better bet for generating positive return without forking over hundreds of dollars up front.

To start, go to your Bookshelf in KDP and then click on the **Promote and Advertise** button next to the book you want to advertise. Next, click on the

Create an ad campaign button. You'll see a screen asking you if you want to create a Sponsored Product ad or a Product Display ad. Click **Sponsored Products**.

Enter a name for the campaign. I suggest using a standard naming convention like that I specified earlier.

Next, enter a daily budget. $5 to $10 is probably sufficient. Then specify whether you want to run the campaign continuously or for a certain date range.

Then you will need to specify whether you want Amazon to target automatically or manually, based on keywords you enter. I have gotten a positive return on investment using both types of targeting, although I find the automatically targeted ads are so narrowly targeted that they are hardly worth the trouble. If you're just starting out, I suggest creating one ad of each type for each book you want to advertise.
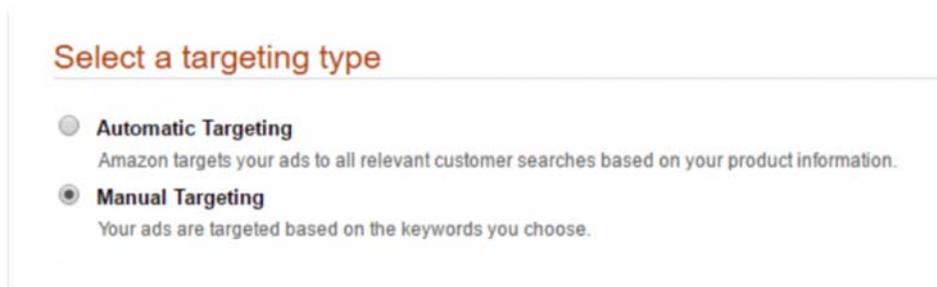
If you select Manual Targeting, the Sponsored Products ad interface will suggest a few keywords based on your book's title, description and categories, but generally these are too broad to be of much use.

If any keywords appear that seem relevant and not overly broad, select them by clicking the Add button. Then click on the **Add your own keywords** tab to manually add keywords.

I suggest using mainly titles of similar books and other authors in your genre as keywords. Go through the bestseller lists in your genre and pick out any books that seem like they would appeal to the same audience as your book. Avoid one-word titles and authors who write in multiple genres, as well as mega-bestsellers. Once your book has been listed on Amazon for a few weeks, it's also helpful to look at the "Also Boughts" that show up on the book's product page and on your author page.

You will need to specify a cost-per-click bid for each keyword. I generally just leave it at the default $0.25. More than that, and you're going to have a hard time breaking even on the ad. Most keywords seem to come in under that value anyway.

You will probably need at least 100 keywords for the ads to generate a significant return. 200 is even better. The more keywords you have, the more impressions you will get and the more data you'll have about which keywords work and which ones don't.

Evaluating your ad effectiveness

It will probably take a day or two for your Sponsored Product ad to be approved. You can see all your ad campaigns by clicking Reports on the KDP home page and then clicking Ad campaigns.

Click on the name of the campaign to see how each of your keywords is performing.

Once approved, it can take a few days for sales data to appear. (You may see a spike in sales in your KDP sales reports, but those reports won't tell you where the sales came from). Don't panic if you're seeing a lot of clicks but no sales, but do keep an eye out for keywords that are costing you a lot ($.20 or more) per click. Unless a significant proportion of those clicks turn into purchases, you're going to end up spending more than you're making.

After a week or so, you'll start to get an idea which keywords are working and which aren't. Since you are paying for clicks, not impressions, using keywords that generate a lot of impressions and few sales doesn't necessarily hurt you.

Only get rid of keywords that are clearly a detriment to your ROI. If your average cost of sale (ACoS) is more than your royalty percentage, you're losing money on that keyword.

On the other side of the equation, identify any keywords that are generating a lot of sales and/or that have a positive ROI. Browse the Also Boughts for those titles and authors for more keywords. Continue to expand and refine your keywords by going through this process once a month or so.

If you're getting impressions but no clicks, the problem could be with your ad—or it could be that your book just isn't a very good match for that keyword. As with Product Display ads, if you are getting clicks but no sales, something on your book's product page is preventing you from closing the deal. You may need more reviews, a more eye-catching cover, or a more enticing description.

Keeping it fresh

The effectiveness of keywords changes over time, but the reports don't break the clicks down by date. **If you have a "stale" campaign that's been using the same keywords for several months, you may be paying a lot of money for keywords that are no longer working.** For any effective campaign, I recommend downloading the keywords and recreating the campaign once a month so that you know which keywords are still working. This is also a good time to add new keywords similar to ones that have performed well recently.

Parting advice

Amazon's advertising tools aren't a secret weapon to turn your sleeper novel into a bestseller, but by using them wisely you can increase your visibility and sales while turning a profit. Sponsored Product ads in particular are an easy, inexpensive way to experiment with advertising to increase your book's sales.

Note from Jane: If you found this post useful, I highly recommend taking a look at the upcoming book from Rob on how to self-publish.

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Posted in Business for Writers, Guest Post and tagged advertising, Amazon, book marketing and promotion.

Rob Kroese

Robert Kroese's sense of irony was honed growing up

in Grand Rapids, Michigan—home of the Amway Corporation and the Gerald R. Ford Museum, and the first city in the United States to fluoridate its water supply. In second grade, he wrote his first novel, the saga of Captain Bill and his spaceship *Thee Eagle*. This turned out to be the high point of his academic career. After barely graduating from Calvin College in 1992 with a philosophy degree, he was fired from a variety of jobs before moving to California, where he stumbled into software development. As this job required neither punctuality nor a sense of direction, he excelled at it. In 2009, he called upon his extensive knowledge of useless information and love of explosions to write his first novel, *Mercury Falls*. Since then, he has four more books in the Mercury series; a humorous epic fantasy trilogy (the Dis trilogy), a space opera farce (*Starship Grifters*) and a quantum physics noir thriller, *Schrodinger's Gat*. His latest book is *The Big Sheep*.

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Harald Johnson

Excellent overview by Rob (thereby, Jane). And timely as I'm considering this for a new series book release with a price reduction. But here's a little tip: you cannot aggressively promote a "deal" or price reduction with AMS ads. But you can say "time limited offer," they admitted when I pressed them on it. Also, everyone says you cannot advertise a series but only a single book. So I'm trying to get around that restriction as well. We'll see how that works. Any suggestions on that one, Rob? (or Jane?)

👍 0 👎   ↩ REPLY   ⏱ 21 hours 46 minutes ago

Meredith Bond

I tried a Product Display add, and as you say, didn't do well. Now I'm trying a Sponsored Product and it's doing pretty well. I have found that the one key word that's doing the best is a mega-seller in my genre–but I only have 25 key words. I'll try more author names based on also-boughts and see how they do. Thanks for the advice!

👍 0 👎   ↩ REPLY   ⏱ 12 hours 44 minutes ago

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to sell your book**

[...] got a guest post up today on Jane Friedman's blog about using KDP ads to sell books on Amazon. If you are a self-published author or aspiring author, [...]

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👍 0 👎   ↩ REPLY   ⏱ 2 hours 16 minutes ago

Karen Inglis

Great overview Jane/Rob — I've been using AMS since late Nov using a

very similar strategy to above and had some good sales, albeit only just breaking even on ROI on my two biggest sellers and losing a bit on two more which I've paused for now – but the exposure has been worth it (I'm a UK children's author). I'm now at the point of wanting to refine and build on the good keywords for the ads that are breaking even. Rob – can you clarify your point about relaunching the campaign to check which keywords are still working?... Read more »

👍 0 👎 | ↩ REPLY   ⏱ 13 minutes 25 seconds ago


ⓘ

About Jane

I have more than 20 years of experience in the book and magazine publishing industry, with expertise in digital media and the future of authorship. I speak around the world at events such as BookExpo America, Frankfurt Book Fair, and Digital Book World, and have keynoted writing conferences such as The Muse & The Marketplace. Read more.

The Hot Sheet
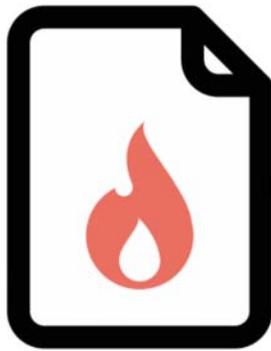
I write and publish The Hot Sheet, the essential industry newsletter for authors.

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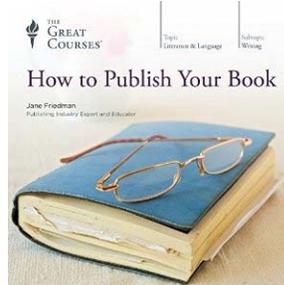
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