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Amazon Publishing to Authors: 'Review' Our Books and We Will Promote You

By [Emily Witt](#) 6/28/11 3:50pm

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What would James Joyce do?

Amazon Publishing has already shown [little interest](#) in industry traditions, and *The Observer* has now learned how Amazon is looking to revolutionize the process of getting author blurbs: provide a review for a book on an Amazon imprint and Amazon will give the reviewer — and his or her book — extra promotion as a thank you.

While it's easy to be cynical about old publishing's faux-gentlemanly approach to getting promotional quotes (send advanced reading copies to an author's MFA supervisor or writer friends with handwritten requests on nice letterhead for "thoughts") Amazon Publishing dispenses with the niceties altogether.

Exhibit A is an email that was sent in January to Elyse Cheney, a New York literary agent, asking for a quote from one of Ms. Cheney's authors for a book called *Stalina*, "by an exciting author named Emily Rubin." The book was coming out on AmazonEncore, the Amazon imprint that republishes successfully self-published books.

I'm interested in knowing whether [name redacted] would be willing to take a look at *Stalina* and if he likes it, provide a guest review in which we'd also promote [name redacted] and his works, including any upcoming projects.

"They referred to her as a man!" said Ms. Cheney with disdain. The client in question is a woman.

The email went on to detail its promotional efforts:

The review would be prominently featured on Amazon.com in customer emails, rotating campaigns in the Amazon.com Books and Kindle stores, and on the *Stalina* detail page (to which our marketing and PR efforts will be driving significant traffic). This would be a great way to get added exposure on Amazon for [name redacted]'s backlist or upcoming releases.

"It's completely unethical," said Ms. Cheney. "That's just not how blurbs are done."

Another agent, however, saw no problems with the approach. The exclusive review that ultimately ran on *Stalina*'s [page](#) came from the novelist Daphne Kalotay, author of *Russian Winter*.

"Amazon did contact us, as they were fans of *Russian Winter* and felt Daphne would be appropriate given the overlapping interest in Russia," wrote her agent, WME's Dorian Karchmar, in an email to *The Observer*. Ms. Karchmar said there were no stipulations about what Ms. Kalotay could write and added that they weren't "aware of any exchange in terms of featured placement."

"There are a number of publishers, including Amazon Publishing, that try to secure guest reviews for their books," said Sarah Gelman, PR manager for Amazon Publishing. "The guest reviewer often receives some on-site promotion as an added incentive to write the review." Of course, most publishers are not also retailers.

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Comments

1.  *Guest* says:
[June 28, 2011 at 11:08 pm](#)

As opposed to the current, and widespread practice of authors blurbing books they never read.

Good for Amazon.

2.  *PHrbacek* says:
[June 28, 2011 at 11:49 pm](#)

I post reviews of paperback books I read on Amazon and B&N all the time. I think it is a service to both the author and reader. I also have two ebooks to promote. How do I get in on this?

1.  *Nancy O.* says:
[June 29, 2011 at 12:27 am](#)

It looks like this applies to published authors only, not self published ebook authors.

3.  *James* says:
[June 29, 2011 at 3:37 pm](#)

A specious practice. As dubious as publishers paying for featured shelf space at B&N. It's not publishing. It's just marketing. Creepy as it is.

4.  *Anonymous* says:
[June 29, 2011 at 6:01 pm](#)

For the record, none of the reviews received for "The Shenandoah Spy" were solicited. We send review copies on request, even three years after initial publication because the book will remain in print indefinitely and there are also e-book editions. Conversely, any reviews I've posted are there because I read and liked the book. I used to be a paid reviewer for the Los Angeles Daily News. In this context I don't do favors for friends and I actually read the book.

People who want to receive review copies of my next Civil War novel "The Queen of Washington" should send me an e-mail at francishamit (at)@earthlink:disqus .net and tell me which publication or blog the review will be for and give me a mailing address or, of they want an electronic galley, the e-mail address that it should be sent to.

5.  *tangledsynapses* says:
[July 1, 2011 at 2:03 am](#)

Would not mind at all to see my books reviewed.

6.  *C.S.Poulsen* says:
[July 1, 2011 at 6:28 pm](#)

so, I'll show Amazon mine, if they show me theirs! No harm, no foul. It's on Kindle anyway and coming out in paperback if I can organize myself with creataspace. So, here I am Amazon, THE INSIDERS by C.S.Poulsen

7.  *Raymond King* says:
[July 4, 2011 at 1:22 am](#)

It worked for me, I left a review of author RAYMONI LOVE'S book: WHEN A BLACK WOMAN CRIES.....and I was promoted. I think the service is great. I am now reading Author RAYMOND STURGIS books, and the promoted was once again offered to me.

8.  [NJ Gilbert](#) says:
[July 23, 2011 at 12:06 am](#)

OK

9.  [NJ Gilbert](#) says:
[July 23, 2011 at 12:06 am](#)

OK

10.  [Thomas Ledford](#) says:
[August 18, 2011 at 12:17 pm](#)

Amazon handles my title called "Silas Marner in Modern Language," intended to make Silas Marner, an old classic novel, more accessible to modern readers. If Amazon were to make me such an offer about reviewing one of their books, I wouldn't see anything wrong with it. It doesn't seem unethical so long as the company doesn't tell the reviewer what he/she has to say

11.  [Guest](#) says:
[September 2, 2011 at 10:16 pm](#)

So, this turns out to be a ploy to sell books to authors in exchange for a reciprocal review. How much money do we need to spend in order to make this possible? one book, two, three, more?

It looks to me like Amazon would like to promote its own books, and this piggyback tactic looks more to me like the tale of the frog and the scorpion. Since Amazon never bothered to promote my books in order to sell them, why should I now give them all the benefits? I had to get others to review my books and in exchange Amazon removed them. My books are now resting on the bottom of the pile again with a sales ranking BELOW what they started out with. Sorry, I am not going to promote the scorpion. Amazon will have to do better than that.

12.  [Guest](#) says:
[September 3, 2011 at 7:50 pm](#)

It's great for writers, either way. Especially those who don't have industry contacts!

1.  [Chiro5435lynn](#) says:
[October 29, 2011 at 10:51 pm](#)

Amazon is not doing this for all authors selling books on their site. This is something they are doing to promote books that they themselves have published, so that they can increase Amazon profits. This comes at the expense of other writers.

13.  [Clinique Bonus Time](#) says:
[September 7, 2011 at 4:28 pm](#)

As dubious as publishers paying for featured shelf space at B&N. It's not publishing. It's just marketing.

14.  *Reviews* says:
[October 9, 2011 at 1:00 pm](#)

Customer support is a range of customer services to assist customers in making cost effective and correct use of a product. It includes assistance in planning, installation, training, trouble shooting, maintenance, upgrading, and disposal of a product

15.  *menu printing* says:
[December 18, 2011 at 8:29 am](#)

LCDs are more energy efficient and offer safer disposal than CRTs. Its low electrical power consumption enables it to be used in battery-powered electronic equipment.

16.  *brochure printing* says:
[January 20, 2012 at 2:47 pm](#)

Johannes Gutenberg's work on his printing press began in approximately 1436 when he partnered with Andreas Dritzehen – a man he had previously instructed in gem-cutting – and Andreas Heilmann, the owner of a paper mill. It was not until a 1439 lawsuit against Gutenberg that an official record exists; witness testimony discussed type, an inventory of metals (including lead) and his type mold.

17.  *business books* says:
[January 20, 2012 at 8:27 pm](#)

Telephones are a point-to-point communication system whose most basic function is to allow two people separated by large distances to talk to each other. Developed in the mid-1870s by Alexander Graham Bell and others, the telephone has long been considered indispensable to businesses, households and governments, is now one of the most common appliances in the developed world.



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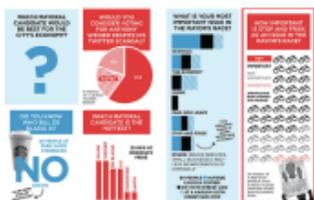


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