



SPI 338

Selling a Book? Overlooking This Page Could Kill Sales— Book Marketing with Bryan Cohen

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Pat Flynn: Writing a book . . . probably one of the hardest things you could ever do in your life. I've written a few books, and I plan to write some more, but every time I think about the process it makes me want to throw up, because it is such a struggle. I'm so thankful that, for example with my book, *Will It Fly?*, I got connected with a guy named Azul who became my book coach. But writing is just part of it. What about the selling and the marketing, and the promotional aspects that should go along with the book-writing process too?

There are so many ways that you can promote a book, and we've talked about a number of those ways in past episodes of the SPI Podcast. We'll include links to all those shows from the past that talk about book marketing on the show notes page. But before that, we need to talk about something that's probably the most important, but underrated, under-talked about, not even really something that people talk about, until today—the thing that you need to do and focus on, or else you might throttle your sales.

We're going to be talking about Amazon, and specifically the page that your book is for sale on Amazon. Because as Bryan Cohen, our special guest today, says, that's your sales page. It needs to be properly created to maximize the sales of your book. There's a lot of aspects to it, from the cover art, to the description and the reviews. We're going to dive into a little bit of detail today about all of those things, so make sure you listen in, because this is going to be a detailed episode for those of you who have books. And those of you that have a book in you in the future—whether it's fiction, nonfiction, doesn't matter—this is going to be an important one. Let's do this.

Announcer: Welcome to the Smart Passive Income Podcast, where it's all about working hard now, so you can sit back and reap the benefits later. And now your host—he's got a shoebox full of business ideas that just aren't quite ready for him yet—Pat Flynn!

Pat Flynn: What's up everybody? Pat Flynn here. Welcome to Session 338 of the Smart Passive Income Podcast. For all you book authors out there and future book authors, this is an episode you're definitely

going to want to listen to. Now, if you haven't hit [subscribe](#) yet to subscribe to the Smart Passive Podcast, make sure you do that. If you don't know who I am, welcome. My name is Pat Flynn, and I'm here to help you make more money, save more time, and help more people too. One of my favorite ways to do that for you is to bring experts on like today's expert, Bryan Cohen, who's been living in the author space, especially on Amazon, for such a long time. He helps thousands of authors in various ways, and we're going to talk about a lot of the ways that you can improve sales for your book or your future book, especially using the Amazon sales page.

Let's just dive right in, because this stuff has to be talked about. Here he is, Bryan Cohen. You can find him at BestPageForward.net. Also, he has a podcast called the [Sell More Books Show](#). Check it out.

What's up, Bryan? Thank you so much for coming on the SPI Podcast. Welcome!

Bryan Cohen: Thank you for having me Pat. Excited to be here.

Pat Flynn: I'm really excited too, because a lot of us in the audience, we are authors. We write books, and we want as many people to get those books as possible. You have a lot of history and experience and have helped thousands of people do just that. You have some very interesting specialties in that realm that we're going to talk about in just a moment, but before that I'd love to know how you got into what it is that you do today. Why don't you give us the rundown really quick?

Bryan Cohen: Of course. Well, much like you I started with blogging. We actually started our blogs around the same time. You kept up with it a little better than I did. But in 2008, I was blogging, and I actually created a blog about writing, trying to give tips to writers who were struggling. It was one of those meta things where I was a writer struggling myself and trying to stay motivated, get motivated. One of the blog posts that I found got the most traffic was a series of creative writing prompts, just trying to get people past their writers block, open themselves up to being able to write what they really

wanted to. I said, “oh, well we’re getting a lot of traffic here. Let’s write as many of these posts as possible,” which I know wouldn’t necessarily work in 2018, but it did in 2008 to 2010.

Then I heard around the grapevine, you know, you can actually publish your books, your content, to Amazon as a book. I wasn’t making all that much money off the blog, so I said, “let’s try it. Let’s give it a shot, and put these books, these creative writing prompts on Amazon, and see what happens.”

Pat Flynn: And the rest is history.

Bryan Cohen: There’s a little more to it than that, but I would say that it’s always the biggest challenge to write your first book, of course. I’m sure you’ve found that. I’m sure . . . Most people that I talk to say that their first book ends up taking five times longer than any of the other books they write. But by putting that content as a book on Amazon, I really just got hooked by the process. I sold a fair number of copies, ended up selling over 25,000 copies of that book.

Pat Flynn: That’s amazing.

Bryan Cohen: I was pretty happy about it. I kept writing more books on writing prompts. Eventually tried my hand at fiction, and then also wrote nonfiction books for other authors, for other people trying to market their work. So many opportunities came from those books; it was just so awesome that I was able to jump in when the whole self publishing thing was just getting started.

Pat Flynn: Right. I remember that time, too. I had also heard about utilizing Amazon to publish your own ebooks. I had an ebook, as you know, that was published on my own site in the LEED Exam/architecture space. I had never gone into the Amazon world because I had built up this audience and whatnot, on my own site, and I could charge a little bit more. But, I would have loved to get on Amazon because there’s so many things that I now know that can happen over there.

Writing a book is a huge struggle. I know this from my own personal

experience. A lot of you likely have already started to write a book, or may already have one, and know that this is the truth. But after that book is written, your work is not done yet. You're just starting the process of now getting the word out there and selling it. How did you start your shift in your history from focusing on writing more books and writing prompts and helping authors in that way, to now helping authors actually sell more books?

Bryan Cohen: Well, in around, I would say, 2014 or so, I ran a multi-author Facebook event of a bunch of different authors who wrote for other authors. I learned so much from connecting with folks like Steve Scott, who is a seven-figure author now, and Jim Kukral, who now I've done a podcast with for the last four years on book marketing. By seeing what everybody was doing, because there's a lot of different tactics out there, a lot of different tricks that maybe worked in 2012 that don't work so well in 2018, now that I follow that content every week, I can see where the industry's going. I can see what is working now, and what doesn't work anymore.

But one of the big things that I needed to realize, and I think a lot of you guys out there might not understand this yourselves if you have a book, or you're putting a book out in the future, is that your book listing on Amazon, on Apple, on Barnes and Noble, it is not a book a listing, it is not a product description, it is not any of those things. Do you know what it is, Pat?

Pat Flynn: It's a sales page, essentially.

Bryan Cohen: It's a sales page. I am going to make a bold claim here: I am going to say that your book's sales page on Amazon is probably the highest-converting sales page in human history.

Pat Flynn: Why do you say that?

Bryan Cohen: Because Amazon has the money. Amazon can test things, Amazon has tested things for over a decade, and it knows that its color button that says, "buy now with one click"—it knows the psychology behind every single move it has made on its page. Even just having

a book on Amazon, you are tapping into the billion-dollar brain structure of the people who created that very sales page.

Pat Flynn: That's a good point. So by simply having your book on Amazon, is it going to do all the work for you, sort of automatically?

Bryan Cohen: It won't. The reason it won't is because we have a tendency, even though Amazon's page is pretty amazing, we have a tendency to screw it up a little bit by making a few mistakes with our book when we're initially publishing it. And some of the things that we actually can control on Amazon's sales page.

Pat Flynn: It's interesting, when I was creating my book *Will It Fly?*, the Amazon sales page was the last thing on my mind.

Bryan Cohen: Sure.

Pat Flynn: I just wanted to get it up on Amazon. I wanted to get the emails out. I wanted to get more marketing behind it. I wanted to run a contest to get people interested. I wanted the book to do very well. When you position that page on Amazon that sells our product, our book, as the sales page . . . I'm kind of like kicking myself now, that I didn't even spend any time to really think about it. Yes, I wrote a description, and I did my best, and I made the book cover hopefully standout. But is there anything more you can do?

Bryan Cohen: Yes, there is in fact. I think the way you went about it Pat, was probably the way 99 percent of people do, especially if it's a book for a specific topic. Yours of course is connected to your brand and your business. So many authors out there, they're not writing a novel every month. I do know plenty of authors who are somehow putting out a novel every single month. They're writing the book that is going to be a huge part of their business for the next three to five, to ten or more years. They're ready to just run with it after it's published.

But I would say there are four main criteria that you do have control over on your Amazon sales page that you need to pay attention

to. Those are: Your cover, your title/subtitle, the customer reviews you have on your page, and your book description—your product description, whatever you would call it. Those are the four things you have the most control over. Those are the four things that authors, especially first-time authors, don't always think about when they're publishing.

Pat Flynn: The title, the book image, the customer reviews and your product description. Now, when you're setting up a book on Amazon, you have a prompt to put in your title. You have the connection to the artwork for your book. You have a little space to write a product description. Those things are there for us already. In a way, Amazon's helping us along. But, where are most people falling behind with each of these things?

Bryan Cohen: Well, when it comes to the cover, I feel like 99 percent of people don't necessarily have some amazing graphic artist contact, so they find the most inexpensive way to do it, or they try to do it themselves, which in and of itself is not necessarily the end of the world. But when you are creating a cover on Amazon in particular, you aren't trying to just have the most unique image in the world. You aren't trying to necessarily have a cover that depicts scenes from your book, or has a stock photo that is some exact image as you described it in your nonfiction book. It is something that needs to make sense as part of your genre.

You can't just throw up a cover with no context. That's my big worry when people create a book cover or get a book cover commissioned, is that they just say, "hey designer, can you show this picture of two people shaking hands, since my book is about people making deals?" The designer says, "sure. I'll do it." They run with it. They send back the cover. The authors approves it, and then it's up there and probably forever, because people don't usually go back and change these things. But then, as you start to look later on at the bestselling books in that particular genre, you may notice that your cover looks different than all of the covers out there in your genre, and that can actually be a bad thing.

- Pat Flynn: Really? Okay, because in most cases people might assume well, you want your book to stand out and be different. But, why are you saying the opposite?
- Bryan Cohen: There's a story I heard from *The Power of Habit*, I believe, by Charles Duhigg, where they're talking about the song, "Hey Ya!" by OutKast. I have a feeling you're familiar with that . . .
- Pat Flynn: [singing] "Hey ya . . ."
- Bryan Cohen: That's all I wanted; I just wanted to make you sing.
- Pat Flynn: Thank you.
- Bryan Cohen: My interview is a success. I think that what they talked about with "Hey Ya!" was that the song was so unique, it was so different than any of the other things on the radio, that even though it's a very catchy song—I enjoy it, I've sung it during karaoke before—people were turning off their radio. They were changing the channel. They were going away from "Hey Ya!" because it was too unique. It was too different.
- If you have a book cover that is too unique, that is too different, that doesn't inspire a sense of familiarity with books that they think about when they think about the genre—whether it be self-help, personal development, money management, whatever—they are going to change the channel. They are going to click on another book that they're more comfortable with. I'm sure there's all sorts of psychology behind it, but that is the reason. You want to make sure your cover doesn't look so different that people just straight up, "Hey Ya!", change the channel.
- Pat Flynn: So, if I were to ask you how different it should be in a percentage fashion, could you potentially give us an idea of what that might be?
- Bryan Cohen: Here's what I'm going to say: I think that you should stay in the family of that genre for things like typography, what kind of serif versus sans serif-type thing. The color family—if all the books are

orange-ish, you might want to stay orange-ish. Then I would say play around with the image a little bit. You can make the image yours, but I would keep it in the same placement that images tend to be on those covers. Now, I think some people out there would say, “Bryan, you’re making me have to look exactly like these other covers.” But when you’re first starting out and you don’t necessarily have a very defined brand yet, and you’re just trying to make money, or get some clients, get some referrals from your books, you want to make sure that your book is the kind of book that when readers are looking for an answer to a particular problem, they may pick up two other books, and they pick up your book, and your content is what really makes it stand out.

Pat Flynn: I would also imagine that the way Amazon works favors that as well, because when you see the list of “people who bought this book also bought this book,” or “Amazon recommends these bundles,” if there’s one that’s so different and just kind of out there, it might deter people from making that purchase. Whereas people would be more likely and inclined to go into a group of books that might have the same kind of feel because they have that specific problem.

Bryan Cohen: Absolutely, and this is a little further down the line, but when you use advertising products like the ads that are native to Amazon, Amazon marketing service ads, it shows your cover, front and center. It’s among a line of other covers, or it shows up in your search when you’re searching books on Amazon. If your cover looks like the kind of book that your reader would want to get, they might just one-click straight through that and add it to their Kindle device.

Pat Flynn: I like that. Okay, so the image is important. Was there a specific reason you talked about that first?

Bryan Cohen: It actually ties in with the ads a little bit. That’s a great question because when you do some advertising—and I really do recommend Amazon Ads because if you’re going to have books on Amazon, you might as well advertise straight through Amazon, while people are already on the biggest buyer’s search engine on

the internet. If you have an ad front and center, it's going to be the cover that shows first. The cover is what they look at first. When they actually get to your sales page, they don't even necessarily look at the cover that much. The cover is kind of what gets them there. From there, the other three sales page criteria matter a lot more.

Pat Flynn: Got it. Okay, in addition to the cover, what would be the next thing that we can dive into a little bit? Perhaps the title would obviously be very important. Is there a way to hack that, or is this when we're coming up with the idea for the book, we have to think about the title and how it would be marketed? Should marketing affect what we believe the title of the book should be? There's all these questions that are in my head around this.

Bryan Cohen: So many questions.

Pat Flynn: Questions, which is why you're here to answer them all.

Bryan Cohen: I'll try to answer them all, Pat, yes, exactly. I'm happy to answer those. When you are brainstorming a title for your book, you might have this instinct to say you come up with this moment of inspiration in the shower, right before bed. You've got the notepad ready to fill out. You say, "This is the title. I'm going to run with it."

But . . . and I'm a copywriter by trade. I'm very attuned, or at least try to be, to the impact of individual words. Possibly the most important words you write related to your book might just be your title and your subtitle, because a reader does judge a book by its cover and its title. The title clues readers into what it is you are going to get out of that book, what the number one benefit or takeaway is. It's going to clue them into what kind of problem you're going to solve.

It's actually—as a blogger, a podcaster, Pat, you know the importance of title on search engine optimization. If you have a title that not only gets readers to read it and say, "That's exactly the book I'm looking for to solve my particular problem," it also can get it a little bit of search juice, mostly on Google to be honest, but on

Amazon itself you can make sure that you have the best particular set of keywords and keyword phrases that relate to your genre.

Pat Flynn: I'm wondering about title versus subtitle. Because when you mention keywords and things like that and benefits, is it pretty common to have a more creative title and then the subtitle do all that work for you? Similar to, for example, *Will it Fly?* That doesn't really tell you anything about the concept or the topic of the book even. Is it a book about paper airplanes, like who knows? But when it's *How to Test Your Next Business Idea so You Don't Waste Your Time and Money*, then it makes more sense. Because of the category it's in, and where people will find it, then it does its job and it does its thing. Title versus subtitle, is that a common strategy, and would you recommend it?

Bryan Cohen: I always assumed *Will it Fly?* was about the Wright Brothers. Am I wrong about that?

Pat Flynn: You are wrong about that. Although there's a lot of crossover obviously because I'm sure they went through a number of validation and experiments to test to make sure that, "Yes, this thing was going to actually fly." They took a process to get there, which is what the book is about, but in your business, although the Wright brothers aren't even mentioned in the book itself.

Bryan Cohen: Look at you taking my joke and making it all important for people to listen to. I love that. This is a great question because I think *Will It Fly?* is actually a perfect example, because you can't necessarily tell what it is just from looking at the title specifically, because it's creative. It's an inspired title. It's a little vague, which is why you had to expand things in the subtitle. I don't have the subtitle handy. What is the subtitle of *Will It Fly?*

Pat Flynn: *How to Test Your Next Business Idea so You Don't Waste Your Time and Money.*

Bryan Cohen: See, that's great! It shows the readers exactly what the book is in the subtitle. One thing I see authors do from time to time, new

authors or even established authors—they get a little too creative in both the title and the subtitle. That means that readers have no idea what it is that they’re potentially getting into.

What I recommend—I got a few of my titles, I prepared them ahead of time—is you got the simple title followed by a keyword rich subtitle that really goes into the inner depths of it. *1,000 Creative Writing Prompts, subtitle: Ideas for Blogs, Scripts, Stories and More. How to Work for Yourself, title, subtitle: 100 Ways to Make the Time, Energy and Priorities to Start a Business, Book or Blog. Then, How to Write a Sizzling Synopsis, a Step by Step System for Enticing New Readers, Selling More Fiction, and Making Your Books Sound Good.*

With those titles, I kept it simple. Then the subtitle, I made sure . . . I do not want a reader to have any confusion about what this book is if they’ve read the combination of the title and the subtitle.

Pat Flynn: Right, okay, perfect. That’s really helpful. It sounds like I did that with *Will It Fly?* Likely other books that might be coming out in the future—I like that because people can still call it *Will It Fly?* who know about it. But then it actually is something, with the subtitle, people can explain to others with too. “Will It Fly? What’s that?” “Oh, it’s about testing your next business idea so you don’t waste your time and money,” is what you want people to explain when people ask, “Well, what does that title mean?”

Bryan Cohen: You did a great job with short branding on that one, because it’s easy to say, “*Will It Fly?*” When I have my book, with *How to Write a Sizzling Synopsis*, people just call it *Sizzling Synopsis* or *Sizzling*. They shorthand it a little bit. If you have a shorter title that’s easy to just rattle off, then that is going to be helpful.

Then focus . . . I would say I think people aren’t going to like when I give them extra work here to do here with their subtitle. I would recommend you sit down, pad or paper, open a Word document, and you write out fifteen to twenty different ideas as if you were trying to brainstorm for an epic blog post title. It’s the exact same

kind of thing. Sit down, write out the different titles.

Then I would recommend—because a book’s going to be around a long time, you want to get this stuff right—you actually ask your target readers or your own existing email list, “Hey, which ones do you like? Why do you like them?” It’s a perfect survey opportunity. You’re going to learn so much from that, just from sharing that potential title. Plus you get an added bonus, which is that your readers, your subscribers, feel as though they’re a deeper part of the process, and they’re going to get more excited about the time when you are going to release that book.

Pat Flynn:

I like that. This is something that we’ve talked about on the podcast before, related to the book marketing, starting essentially as you are writing the book and as you are coming up with ideas. Getting people involved ahead of time. We’ve had conversations with people about creating launch groups, creating little sort of focus groups that are this early in the process to, like you said, really start to feel like they’re involved. When they do that, they’re going to be more likely to share it and want to help it out, too.

I love that. I’m so thankful you talked about that, because for those of you who are thinking of starting, of writing a book, the book marketing starts now. For those of you who already have a book, maybe you can go back and maybe share updates about the next version of it, or the process of the book marketing. That’s always really interesting too, at least in my audience.

But let’s move onto the book description. This is where I feel I dropped the ball initially, before I used your services to help with getting the descriptions right for my books. I wanted to ask you, how do we best approach writing the book description or the product description for maximum sales on our book’s Amazon sales page?

Bryan Cohen:

That’s a great question. I would say that the thing that I see most authors try to do right away, is they want to list every single takeaway you could possibly get from their book and turn it almost

into this bullet point fiesta of all of these potential things you could learn. It's almost like a table of contents in the description itself.

We live in a world where, when your ideal reader is looking at that Amazon sales page, has decided this cover fits with the books they like, this title and subtitle fits with the kind of problem they're trying to solve, they have seven internet tabs open where they have sports scores on one, and the latest Game of Thrones fan theory on the other, their kid is crying in the background, they have the TV on—they are not necessarily as focused on your book description as you'd like them to be.

You do not want to give them information overload. You need to be boiling things down to their essence. You need to try to simplify a little bit. Because if you do not make the effort to make it short, sweet, and to the point, they are going to X out of your tab and go back onto the million other distractions they have going on.

Pat Flynn: Okay, so the product description, after the work that the title does and the cover obviously to grab that initial attention, where do we even start with this? We're getting into Copywriting 101 here. But specifically on Amazon, what's working best right now?

Bryan Cohen: Nothing wrong with Copywriting 101; I love doing a little copywriting teaching. I think you start with the basics. Because authors don't always think about this, but readers want to find a solution to a problem. I love to start with a nice headline, a hook, a log line, whatever you want to call it. I like to start with, "What is the problem?" in the form of a question, followed by, "What is the solution? Is this book the solution?" Obviously you would want it to be the solution. "Are you struggling with crippling debt? Discover a five-step system to get your credit card balances down to zero." You want to say, "I have this problem I want to get solved and this book is the solution. This is the answer to your questions."

Even just by setting up a really strong hook like that in the beginning . . . we live in a one-click Amazon world. Someone could say, "This book sounds like it solves my problem," and click the Buy

Now button, and they've already got your book. It's there. Just from getting that hook right in the beginning of your description, that is the most important thing by far.

Pat Flynn:

The hook in the beginning, yes. This can be carried over to the emails that you write, the sales copy that you have, what you say in the beginning of a podcast episode, the first time you go live with your audience, how you set them up to keep them there, all those kinds of things. But again, framing the Amazon page as a sales page, I think this is beginning to start to make sense to a lot of us.

After the hook . . . It's funny because you had mentioned the whole fiesta of things that this book is going to teach you. That's what I had. I thought that that was the way to go because people would find their specific problems there, or get a sense for what's coming when they read the book, and trying to get them excited. But the hook is important.

Okay, so what might come next?

Bryan Cohen:

I like to follow the hook and maybe any other relevant questions, like if we were on the debt example, it could be like, "Do you feel like your nine to five job is a prison you'll never pay your way out of?" and a couple more questions to expand.

But the real important next part is establishing your expertise. I find so many descriptions, for nonfiction books in particular, where the author makes no effort to share who he or she is. Are you an author of this book for any particular reason? Have you had experience in this area? If I don't see information like that, where I hear of the hundreds of people the author has taught this method to, or in your case, Pat, you'd say maybe how many downloads of your podcast there are, your popularity as a podcast host. You'd have identifiers there that show that you're an expert on this area.

If you don't have that information there, I have no idea why I should spend money on your book if I've never heard of you before. That is the essential next step.

- Pat Flynn: That makes sense. What about accolades such as “PhD in this,” or “featured on this channel,” or those kinds of things? Is that worth putting in there as well?
- Bryan Cohen: Absolutely. I would stay back from information overload, of course. If you have seven PhDs and MFAs and whatnot, I wouldn’t include all of that. CPA . . . what are the letters for an architect?
- Pat Flynn: There’s AIA and there’s a bunch. It depends on the kind of, what realm you go down. There’s the LEED AP. I’ve seen architects with literally like 40 additional letters after their name, which is kind of overwhelming.
- Bryan Cohen: Yeah, I certainly wouldn’t put all that on a business card, and I wouldn’t put all of it in this expertise-establishing section either. You want to stay relevant. You want to make sure that hey, if this is a book about fitness, but you happen to have a MFA in Fine Arts, probably not going to fit. But you could say you are the creator of a popular blog that has helped hundreds of thousand of people learn about finances. That you should include; that is going to sway a reader who’s on the fence to starting to believe these things you put in your description.
- Pat Flynn: Got it. Okay, so we’ve got the hook. Then we have some proof and some making sure people know why we are the authors of the book, and why they should trust us. What comes after that?
- Bryan Cohen: Then we start to go about how we convey the information. Is this a book about anecdotes that show real life examples of this system that you’re showing off in your nonfiction book? Is it about lots of different tips and tricks that you’re going to use? Essentially, this is a synopsis of how is the book framed, what are you using in the book to convey this information, and you go . . . If you have in the hook that you’ve got a five-step process to get out of debt, you’d share a little bit about the process.
- You don’t have to spill all the beans here, but you share that in this portion, and it gets readers to know . . . I don’t like using more than

three sentences in this paragraph, Pat, because I don't think you need to go into a huge amount of detail. You just need to share what's in the book and why is it relevant to solving this problem.

Pat Flynn: A question popped into my mind: First person or third person?

Bryan Cohen: I'm a big fan of third person. The way I see it is that most readers feel as though the book description has probably been written by a publisher. Maybe we'll come to a time where there isn't the initial thought. I would do this in the third person.

Pat Flynn: Okay. I would agree with that, too, because it's essentially Amazon trying to convince a person that this is a book to buy, in which case it's like almost Amazon speaking to them. "Pat Flynn is this person who has done this; this is this book that he has written that's going to help you XYZ," so on and so forth.

I think it's nice to know that you don't have to essentially write the entire book over again in the description, and have it be like a long-form sale page. You just need to say the right things.

Bryan Cohen: Exactly, exactly.

Pat Flynn: How do we finish off? A good sales page has a call to action. Do you recommend including like, literally a call to action in the product description to go buy the book? Or does Amazon, in the environment that this book is in, enough for that?

Bryan Cohen: I'm a huge proponent of calls to action. We know, from thousands of people doing studies and whatnot that you have a . . . if you have a call to action in your sales page, it gets more people to click the buy button. I wanna kind of go back to my target reader with seven windows open and a bunch of things happening in real life. Sometimes they need a little guidance. I love to refer to it . . . I don't know if I heard this from someone else. Probably. But I like to hold the reader's hand all the way to the shopping cart. I like to say, just kind of a command, "buy this book to get this benefit today. Buy this book to schedule your next vacation today, if you're getting out of

debt or whatever it is you're trying to do. Buy *Will it Fly?* to test your new six figure business today.”

I don't know, that might be a little salesy. But I just think that having that line right at the end where there's no confusion about what it is the reader needs to do next to start having these benefits, is just the best way to go, the best way to close things out. I'm a big fan of CTAs.

Pat Flynn: Okay. I like that. Now, you actually have a service that helps people write these descriptions; this is how important this is. How many authors have you helped thus far through that?

Bryan Cohen: We ran the numbers. We started a few years ago with this and we are now at over 1,200 descriptions that we have written for nonfiction, fiction, memoir—everything in between. It's been an amazing process to see so many different stories, and see so many different transformational books of advice, and help those sales pages to improve and get more people to buy those books.

Pat Flynn: This is a really cool thing, the fact that you've narrowed down your business to service those authors who are in need and who want to sell more books, but to such a specific part of the overall sales process. It's obvious how important this is, as we've talked about, and it's cool that you do this for others, because authors have, obviously, a lot of other things to do.

If anybody in the audience wanted to explore the options to work with you, to have you and your team help them with their product and book description, where might they go?

Bryan Cohen: If you were interested in finding out more about how this whole book description process, the done-for-you book description process works, set up a little page at BestPageForward.net/spi and you can learn more about what we do. If you have a book that you've already written and you want a new description on it or a new book that's coming out in the future, then we'll tell you all about it. BestPageForward.net/spi.

Pat Flynn: Thank you, Bryan. I've utilized your services and I did see an uptick in sales just by simply changing the product description. You're so right when you say it is a sales page, and I think that, hopefully, people moving forward, whether you have books yet or not, even if you have other kinds of products on Amazon, you need to really focus. Now, I think people who have physical products understand it, because they are literally selling their physical product. But for whatever reason, we authors don't consider it like that, and I think that a lot of people now understand the importance of it.

So whether you choose to take advantage of Bryan's services or not . . . is it BestPageForward.com/spi?

Bryan Cohen: It's the dot net.

Pat Flynn: Dot net. Okay. BestPageForward.net/spi. I'm glad we talked about that actually, 'cause I'm sure people wouldn't have thought about that.

Okay, so to finish off really quick, customer reviews. I'd love to have you speak on how we can best utilize this portion of our page, of our sales page, and give any tips, tricks, insights that we can benefit from.

Bryan Cohen: Absolutely. There have been a lot of changes in Amazon's customer review policy over the years. A lot of those changes though, have had to do with physical products, have had to do with either fulfilled by Amazon or fulfilled by different stores—is that you can not be incentivized for a customer review. Amazon has really started to crack down on that. But for books, you can still provide a book to a customer before the book is released. That policy has not changed as of right this moment. Amazon is okay with you providing review copies, 'cause let's face it, that's what all of traditional publishing does. They submit books to the New York Times and what not. Amazon can't get rid of that policy for books, or books just wouldn't have reviews to use. So you can still give a book to a potential reader, a customer.

So if you have a business and you have an email list, those are potential readers. Those are potential reviewers. Now, someone might say that if you provide your books for free to your active email list, to your customers, then you're not going to get those sales. And that is true. And you certainly don't have to give your book to everyone on your list for free. But if you get more reviews from your existing customers, your existing readers, your existing people, your tribe, then your book gets to start out with probably—you can't ask for positive reviews, but probably you're gonna get some positive reviews right off the bat, and that is going to increase your chances of getting strangers to buy your book, which is really where the scalability happens. That gives you the social proof you need to really spread the word about your book in a big way.

Pat Flynn:

I would agree with that. I mean, I had created a launch group for my book, *Will It Fly?*, and it is true. Those people get free access to the manuscript and even review copies beforehand as well. You don't make those sales, but you do make up for them. And having those reviews, especially early on, is really important.

Do people who review your book on Amazon, when receiving an early copy, are they somebody who has to say, or are they required to say, "I received an early copy of this," or is that something you recommend they say in the review?

Bryan Cohen:

It's recommended that readers do disclose that they received a review copy, but I will tell you, and this is a point of contention on the Sell More Books Show, where we're reporting on news and whatnot in the industry—Amazon, what they want you to say changes from month to month. It's a good idea to check what people are disclosing on maybe other books in your genre, what the line is that they're using. "I've received an early review copy of this book. I disclose this and this." Make sure that you know the most updated thing that readers are saying, and then I would advise you when you are connecting with your launch team, and having a launch team is such an amazingly great idea, is that you tell them what they should say just to make sure that you don't run afoul of Amazon.

Pat Flynn: Okay. I like always taking the authentic and honest approach and I think another thing is, I sometimes see books that just come out like today, and they already have 100 reviews. And a lot of people question, “How is that possible? This must be fake. This can’t be real.” But when a person discloses “I got an early copy of this,” well then the review becomes more realistic, at least in my eyes.

Bryan Cohen: Honesty is always the best policy, for sure.

Pat Flynn: Yes. Okay, cool. Now, we get reviews and then we get a negative review. Like, a bad one. One star, perhaps. I know, and I know this from personal experience, but I know a number of people in the audience would freak out because we don’t like to hear bad things about the hard work we’ve put into our books. Not all books are made for everybody, so I would just say, expect some people to not like your book. But how do we deal with that in terms of on the page, because a negative review can have an effect on the sales of your book. Do you recommend any sort of action to take after that? Because we definitely can’t delete them, which even if you had the opportunity to do that, that would just be wrong. But how would you recommend handling a negative review on your sales page?

Bryan Cohen: First of all, if you’ve gotten a one star review, congratulations, because this is a rite of passage that every author must go through. And I see on beginner author groups, all sorts of people just posting about their first one star review saying, “Well, it looks like I’ve graduated into the club.” If you got a one star review, and I’ve definitely gotten plenty of one star reviews, then you’re in the club.

Now, there are different ways to go about this. If this one star review is malicious and not about the book, you and your readers could definitely report it. You could ask readers to help you out and flag a review as not being relevant. 99 percent of cases, that isn’t what I would recommend because most people are not malicious. I would say look at that review and I would internalize, try to go beyond the emotions. And of course, I get upset when I see a one star review, but I would try to go beyond the emotions and see what it is that reader is saying. And this is a great opportunity to learn when you

write your next book, or you can actually change your ebook at any time if you wanna go back and fix something that's wrong. On a small scale, you can do that. You can even relaunch your book in the future. There's a million opportunities. And you can learn from what that one star review has said.

So what do you do to . . . Say you have five reviews and one of them is a one star and it really brings down your average. This means you gotta go out and get more reviews. You gotta get more reviews that are representative of how good your book is. And that may mean connecting more with your readers to try to get more of them to leave honest reviews. That may mean you have to build your audience so that you can get more honest, genuine reviews over time. But I would, for the most part, use it as a learning experience, use it as kind of a, "Hey, you, you made it past this milestone in your career." And for the most part, just say, "I'm not gonna worry about it."

Pat Flynn:

Cool. I love that. You have an audience out there who needs you. There're gonna be some people who don't agree with you. And I would say getting those one star reviews—as long as not all the comments are one stars, because that would mean maybe there's something wrong with the quality of the book or the topic and who it's for and whatnot. But if you get a few of them, just realize that you've created a book that has some boldness to it. So bold that yes, it's gonna help a lot of your audience, but also that there are people out there who are not gonna agree. I would say that if you tried to write books that would please everybody, you're not actually writing a great book.

I think this is a perfect way to end the conversation today, Bryan. This has been really helpful, we've gotten into the weeds of a lot of things that we don't really even talk about or think about as book marketers and I'm just so appreciative of you coming on and sharing your wisdom here today.

I wanna mention that link one more time. BestPageForward.net/spi, if you wanna check out more of what Bryan's got going on

there and get some help with your own book descriptions. Any final words of advice for us, Bryan, as we dive into Amazon land with our books?

Bryan Cohen: I know that it can be scary to have a book out there and to create your first book, but I think that, particularly because you have the opportunity, so many opportunities to promote your books on Amazon itself, Amazon, it just generally being the number one place for buyers—if you are generating leads or trying to find a new source of passive income, writing a book about the thing you are the expert at and putting it online and following all this advice that we talked about today is such a good move for your business, and you are going to make amazing connections from the readers who find you on Amazon.

I would say if you've been on the fence about writing a book, go out and do it because it can be so beneficial to your business, your company, your service, whatever it is you're trying to do.

Pat Flynn: I love it. Thank you, Bryan. So BestPageForward.net/spi. Where else might people find you and where would you want them to go?

Bryan Cohen: I, likewise, have a weekly podcast where myself and my cohost, Jim Kukral, we discuss the latest news, the latest tips in the publishing world. That is the [Sell More Books Show](http://SellMoreBooksShow.com) podcast. And obviously, anywhere you're subscribed to Smart Passive Income, you can also find the Sell More Books Show there as well. We're out there every Wednesday. Go check us out.

Pat Flynn: Awesome. Thank you, Bryan. We appreciate you, and good luck with everything.

Bryan Cohen: Thanks, Pat. Happy writing.

Pat Flynn: Woo. I hope you enjoyed that interview with Bryan Cohen. You can find him at BestPageForward.net/spi. Again, BestPageForward.net/spi. You can also download his podcasts—Sell More Books Show.



This is a really, really useful episode, for me in particular, because I have a book coming in the near future, a brand new book, one that I've been working on for quite a while. That's all I'm gonna say about that, but I'm definitely gonna be using a lot of the strategies that we talked about in today's episode and in previous episodes of the podcast related to books. I'm gonna have to re-listen to all those things and this episode too.

Make sure you subscribe if you haven't already. If you wanna get all the links to all those other episodes about books and check out the links to Bryan's stuff and also everything else we mentioned in this episode, all you have to do is go to the show notes page, which you can do by going to SmartPassiveIncome.com/session338. Again, that's SmartPassiveIncome.com/session338.

Thank you so much, I appreciate you.

Thank you so much in advance for all the reviews on iTunes and until next week, keep killing it, guys. You guys are amazing. Keep up the great work. You guys are action-takers, or else you wouldn't be listening to this show. And if you've made it this far, just after this episode is done, just do. Just do. Go and do. See you guys, bye.

Announcer: Thanks for listening to the Smart Passive Income podcast at www.SmartPassiveIncome.com.



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