

Step-by-Step Ad Profitability Analysis System v2

This is a tracking and analysis system that allows you to analyze which of your ads is performing best—both in the short-term as well as long-term, where you can use the accumulated data from your various promos, launches, and backlist ads to identify patterns in your best-performing creative elements and audiences.

The core of the system is the coded naming convention and its corresponding key. This is designed to be flexible and scalable. At first glance, all the details and potential avenues of analysis may seem overwhelming and too advanced for a beginner. But it's useful for marketers of all levels and helps you future proof your data to be useful now as well as in the future. Thus, when you're ready to incorporate more advanced analysis into your marketing and ads management, the system allows you to do so.

You can also use this framework to deconstruct an ad platform down to its component parts to identify best practices by codifying and testing various features.

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Amazon Attribution: Overview

Since Amazon Attribution underpins the tracking and analysis we'll be doing, we'll cover a few important things about it first.

- Last touch attribution model: this means if, say, you have three tracking links set up for Facebook ads, Pinterest ads, and TikTok social, and the user clicks on all three, but clicks on Facebook last, the sales / reads will only be attributed to Facebook. This is because it was the last click in the chain.
 - A more common scenario might be that you have three tracking links set up for three different Facebook Ads, and the user clicks on all three at various points. The same principle applies: the sales / reads will only be attributed to the last ad that was clicked.
- **14 day attribution window**: the user needs to buy / read the book within 14 days of clicking on the attribution link to be counted on the dashboard. E.g., if they click October 1 and buy October 7, they'll be counted. If they buy October 16, however, they won't be counted since it's outside the attribution window.
 - It takes about 3 4 days for the purchases to be stable enough for analysis (e.g., the purchase # for October 1 will be reasonably stable by October 4 / 5).
 - It takes about 5 7 days for the reads to be stable enough for analysis (e.g., the reads # for October 1 will be reasonably stable by October 6, 7, or 8)
 - Reads don't necessarily get assigned to the day the book was borrowed; if someone borrows the book on October 1, then the corresponding reads might be logged on the Amazon Attribution report under October 4.
 - Since the data doesn't sync in real-time, this makes the attribution more useful for backlist scenarios. However, the links are still worth using for launches / promos, especially when you're using stock photos (since these can convert at 0%).
 - The shortest timeframe you can use for roughly analyzing the sales and reads data is about 2 days; preferably, you'd wait at least 3, at which point it's generally stable enough to make conclusions about performance when it comes to sales (reads data won't be very reliable at this point). Just be aware when using a 2 - 3day timeframe that you're making decisions based on incomplete data that will continue to update.
 - The less reliable the data (e.g., the earlier you're looking at it), the more you want to look for **big wins** when choosing winners. For example, if after 2 days Ad A has 1,000 clicks and 15 sales (1.5% conversion), whereas Ad B has 750 clicks and 25 sales (3.3% conversion), the latter is likely the better performer relative to Ad A. That's a substantial difference in conversion. If, by contrast, Ad A had 1.5% conversion and Ad B had 1.6% conversion, there'd be no way to determine which was actually the better performer—a few sales trickling in over the coming days could shift the balance toward one or the other.
- **Data accuracy**: Amazon indicates that a 10 15% difference in reporting between their dashboard and the source (e.g., Facebook Ads dashboard, BookBub Ads, your email service provider etc.) is normal and to be expected.

- For the Facebook Ads, the Amazon Attribution dashboard consistently reports about a 5 10% higher number of clicks than the Facebook dash across the various accounts I've seen.
- For the BookBub Ads, this looks slightly higher, with the Amazon Attribution dashboard reporting about 10 15% more clicks than the BookBub dash.
- For sales and reads, it looks to be capturing around 80 90% of what the ads are generating within the first 7 days (e.g., if the ads sold 10 books on October 1, the attribution link will likely show 8 9 sales for that day by October 8).
- The accuracy looks close to 90% 95% when you allow the full 14 days for attribution. It's slightly less accurate than the Amazon Ads tracking.
- \circ $\;$ The reads are a bit less accurate and slower to attribute than the sales.

Using the Links

- **Campaigns** refer to the container that hold the links you create. This is mainly an organizational tool (you also select what book(s) you want to track sales and reads for at the campaign level).
- Ad groups refer to the attribution links themselves.
- Make sure to use a clean link to build the attribution link: this has all the extraneous stuff removed from the URL.
 - **Ex.** <u>https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08TMPMQGQ/</u>
 - **Ex.** <u>https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B07P6P4JM3/</u>
- At the campaign level, you can either have the link track just the advertised book (e.g., just add that book), or you can have it track multiple books (all the books in the series, your entire catalog, etc.).
 - When you add multiple books, the system will track people who click the link and then buy / borrow the other books during the attribution window as well. These people may or may not have purchased / borrowed the advertised book. You can use this as a way to roughly estimate sellthrough / readthrough from a traffic source, which can differ.

Framework: The System

- 1. What level of tracking precision do you need? (Start with the question you want to answer.)
- 2. Use a naming convention to code the ad and link names by their various components.
- 3. Have a creative key where you store the ad and link name codes, along with the actual creative elements for organization / quick access.
- 4. Enter the data manually or store the raw exported data from the ad platform / Amazon Attribution links. (optional, but highly recommended)
- 5. Analyze the data using revenue per click and profit per click to determine which ads are performing best.
- 6. Adjust the ads according to whether you want to run the ads profitably, breakeven, or at a loss.

(1) Determine Your Level of Tracking Precision

- Start with the question you want to answer. The question you're trying to answer dictates how granular and precise you need to get with your naming conventions and tracking links (Amazon Attribution links).
 - a. **Ex**. how are my BookBub ads converting in general? This would only necessitate a single tracking link that you could use for every single BookBub ad for that book.
 - b. **Ex**. how do specific audiences and creatives convert? This would necessitate a coded naming convention (along the lines of what's outlined below) and a specific tracking link for each individual BookBub ad and audience.
 - c. Generally, I'd recommend tracking down to the specific creative level (e.g., create an attribution link for each new creative you make), as this future proofs your data gathering efforts even if you don't have the need to answer a certain question right now or the current spreadsheet / analysis skills to crunch through the data you're generating.
 - i. This entails two things: having a coded naming convention that codes the key ad components and creating specific links for each ad you run.
 - ii. If you want the greatest level of tracking accuracy, you'd create a specific link for each ad *and* audience (e.g., if ad G100 C100 H100 ran to Audience A, you'd use Link A, and if it ran to Audience B, you'd create a new Link B so you could track and compare the respective performance). This is only necessary when testing audiences and is not recommended otherwise, since it massively increases the number of links you're making.

(2) The Naming Convention

- Naming convention: this allows you to drill down and analyze the performance (CPCs, sales, page reads, conversion etc.) of specific elements (images, copy, headlines, audiences, etc.). It's also searchable on the ad platform dashboards, so if you have no / limited spreadsheet skills, it's still useful for seeing how different ads / elements perform.
 - a. Make sure the naming order is consistent (e.g., G100 C100 H100). This is crucial for the spreadsheet to be able to use the SPLIT formula on the ad name to separate it into the correct columns consistently.
 - b. Make sure the separator between the elements is consistent
 - c. Make sure the code names are consistent on the ad platform and Amazon Attribution links.
 - i. **Ex**. for a BookBub Ad named G104 H100 S102 A116, the Amazon Attribution link should be named with the same exact code. This allows you to visually match them up when you're looking at the data on the respective dashboards, but more importantly allows the spreadsheet formulas to tie them together.

- d. Start at 100 and then count up across all the books; e.g., G100, G101, G102. If you then switch to Book B, keep counting up from there (e.g., G103, G104 and so forth).
- e. If you have a minor variant, you can code this as b or c rather than an entirely new number. E.g., a black and white version of the same image that's coded G126 would be coded G126b.
- f. The code numbers do not have to be consistent across ad platforms; e.g., maintain a different key for each platform. This means H100 for BookBub and Facebook would likely be two different headlines.
- Facebook
 - a. Image = G100
 - b. Copy = C100
 - c. Headline = H100
 - d. Audience = A100
 - e. Complete Facebook Creative Code = G100 C100 H100 A100 (must be in this order)
- BookBub
 - a. Background Image = G100
 - b. Headline = H100
 - c. Sub-Headline = S100
 - d. Audience = A100
 - e. Aggregate Audience = AG100 (use this instead of the audience code if your audience has multiple targets)
 - f. Full BookBub Creative Code = G100 H100 S100 A100 (must be in this order)

Again, I'd recommend only using the audience portion of the code when you're testing audiences; otherwise you spend *a lot* of time making individual links.

Ad and Link Names: Make Sure they Match

Make sure the code name in the ad matches the code name in the corresponding attribution link. This is critical for tying the data together.

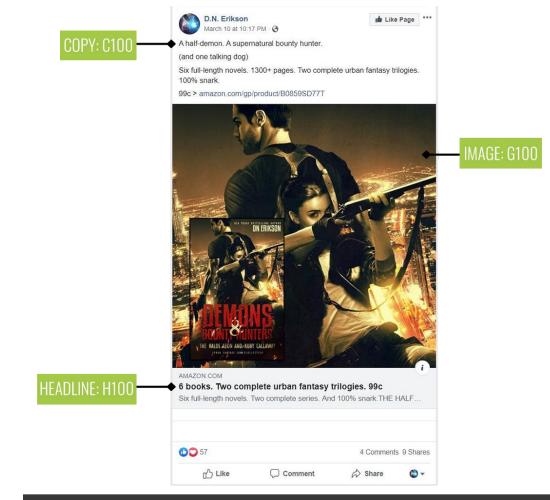
Here's the name of the BookBub Ad with the code G106 H104 S102 AG100:

L5 > 7 > 3%+ > 6106 H104 S102 AG 100 Liop Dead (ress Skye Book 1) Ebook	10/22/22 - 10/22/22	N/A	N/A	\$75.00 (Total)	\$0.00	0	0	N/A	Select Action 👻
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And here's the corresponding attribution link with the identical code:

Ad group 🚯	Channel 🚯	Publisher 🚯	Click-throughs 🛈	DPV 🚯
G106 H104 S102 AG102 589663677549234658	-	-	-	

Facebook: Naming Example



G100 C100 H100: FACEBOOK NAMING CONVENTION BREAKDOWN

BookBub: Naming Example



(3) The Creative Key

- **Creative Key**: this is a spreadsheet in Google Sheets or Excel where you store the images, copy, headlines, sub-headlines, audiences, and so forth along with their corresponding codes.
 - a. I'd recommend using Google Sheets, as it allows you to insert an image directly into a cell.
 - b. This key is a useful reference whether you tie the ad data and Amazon Attribution data together with spreadsheet formulas or not. You can quickly pull past creative elements from a central location and see what's run at a glance.
 - c. You can also add additional parameters to the key—the type of headline, for example (review, deal) or whether an image has a person in it or not. You can then crunch the data to see whether that specific item has an impact on conversion, CPC, etc. to spot patterns and reverse engineer more effective creative formulas.

Here are the basic building blocks for the creative key; this system is highly flexible, so you can add columns to analyze additional parameters whenever you see fit:

cAudience	Author	Genre	Size	Narrowed
A100	Nicholas Woode-Smith	urban fantasy	8,000	n
A101	Fatima Fayez	urban fantasy	9,000	n
A102	Fatima Bader	urban fantasy	8,000	n
A103	Barbara Hartzler	pnr	7,000	n
A104	Theophilus Monroe	urban fantasy	17,000	n

"Narrowed" here refers to whether or not a genre on BookBub was also selected when targeting that particular audience.

Image Code	Image	Book	Cover	Background
G100	CROP DEAD	TS1	paperback	BK1 BG
G101		TS1	n	BK1 BG
G102		TS1	n	BK4 BG
G103	I AST WING OF TRUCT KNOW WITH AND	TS1	2D flat	BK1 BG b/w
G104		TS1	n	BK1 BG
G105		TS1	n	BK1 BG

hCode	Text	Book	Туре
H100	Start the fantasy series for 99c	all	Deal
H101	"I hope this series lasts a long time." ★★★★	TS1	Review
H102	I just woke up. I don't know who I am. And there's a var	TS1	Tagline
H103	"This is next level good." ★★★★	TS1	Review
H104	For fans of Jim Butcher & Ilona Andrews!	all	Comp

sCode	Text	Book	Туре
S100	none	all	just headline
S101	Book 1 99c	all	Deal
S102	Start the fantasy series Book 1 0.99	all	Deal
S103	99¢ Buy Book 1 Now	all	Deal

Here's an example of the full creatives being stored, along with various pieces of data being imported from the raw BookBub and Amazon Attribution sheets that were exported from their respective dashboards:

Image	cCreative	Book	Spend	Impressions	Clicks	Sales	Borrows	Units	CTR	CPC	RPC	Profit Per Click	CV (TOT)
DROP DEAD START THE FARTAST SERIES FOR 0.32	G100 H100 S100	TS1	\$247.00	17,012	487	32	8.5	40.5	2.9%	\$0.51	\$0.40	-\$0.11	8.3%
START THE FANTASY SENIES FOR 0.57	G101 H100 S100	TS2	\$71.89	5,082	171	5	1.9	6.9	3.4%	\$0.42	\$0.19	-\$0.23	4.0%
** I HOPE THIS SENIES LASTS A LONG TIHE. BOOK 1 99c	G102 H101 S101	TS3	\$585.61	40,760	1,678	84	20.9	104.9	4.1%	\$0.35	\$0.30	-\$0.05	6.3%
BUDY DEAD DRUP DEAD	G103 H102 S101	TS4	\$143.94	9,589	157	11	3.9	14.9	1.6%	\$0.92	\$0.45	-\$0.47	9.5%
"THIS IS NEXT GOOD START THE FARTASY SERIES BOOK (2.9)	G104 H103 S102	T85	\$100.02	6,783	200	18	1.0	19.0	2.9%	\$0.50	\$0.47	-\$0.03	9.5%
99c BUY BOOK 1 NOW THOSE SERIES LASIS A LONG THM."	G105 H101 S103	TS6	\$100.00	6,772	284	12	2.0	14.0	4.2%	\$0.35	\$0.24	-\$0.11	4.9%

(4) Store the Ad Data in the Creative Key

Note that this step is technically optional; you can implement the other components of the system (including the revenue per click and profit per click analysis) without storing any of the ad data long-term in your creative key.

This, however, cuts you off from the massive goldmine of insights that your historical data can provide. If you store this data over months and years, you can look back through the archives and analyze it for patterns. So while you might not have the time or spreadsheet experience to make use of it currently, storing the raw data exports can give you a massive data set to work with if / when you introduce more advanced analysis methods in the future.

The various ad platforms and Amazon Attribution all allow you to export the raw data into a spreadsheet that you can then store in your creative key. If your naming convention is consistent,

you can then use spreadsheet formulas to tie this together and have it pull in the data next to the corresponding creative / creative element / audience etc.

The two main formulas that allow you to tie the attribution data and ad data together are:

- **SPLIT**: this allows you to split the ad or link name into different columns to separate out the various element codes.
- **INDEX MATCH**: this allows you to pull data from one data set that's on one sheet into another and match it with the corresponding code.
 - a. This is not the only formula you can use for this task, so if you're comfortable with an alternative like VLOOKUP or QUERY, those can achieve a similar result via a different path (that may be more efficient depending on your needs).

Then you can visualize / analyze this data (using the metrics below—revenue per click and profit per click) using tools like pivot tables or Looker Studio (formerly Google Data Studio) (datastudio.google.com).

You can also enter your attribution and ad data manually, but you'll be limited in what you can track / store, since this takes far longer. Your analysis options will also be limited, since you'll have to manually crunch the data.

For an excellent, inexpensive course on Sheets that I personally used to massively level up my spreadsheet skills, **I highly recommend Google Sheets: The Comprehensive Masterclass on Udemy** (<u>https://www.udemy.com/course/google-sheets-masterclass/</u>). It normally runs \$12 - \$20; if it's at full price for \$200, just wait until it's "on sale."

(5) Analyze with Revenue Per Click and Profit Per Click

You need about 100 clicks on a link to have a large enough sample size to analyze the conversion data. For more important tests that will be reused multiple times across your account (like ad platform features or audiences), aim for 250+ clicks. More data = more certainty. This has nothing to do with the mechanics of the Amazon Attribution system itself and is instead about sample sizes.

Conversion rates will vary based on traffic source and the advertised book's price, but they typically max out at around 5% for a full price book (combining both Kindle Unlimited and sales conversion) for a non-Amazon traffic source. That means that a maximum of 5 out of 100 people will generally borrow / buy a full price book. Often, this can be as low as 1 - 2% (1 or 2 borrows / sales out of 100 clicks). Subsequently, if you get only 20 clicks there's a lot of variance in the number of sales and reads you might see (and hence the revenue per click you calculate). A good ad or audience might yield 0 sales or reads in that timeframe simply because of a limited data sample. If you have a smaller budget, you can use 50 clicks. Just know that you'll generate more false positives (winning ads / audiences that don't turn out to be effective) and eliminate effective ads / audiences that just got off to a slow start.

Revenue Per Sale and Revenue Per Borrow

You use **revenue per click** and **profit per click** to analyze ad performance. These require you to calculate **revenue per sale** and **revenue per borrow** first.

Revenue per sale (RPS) is the total sales revenue generated by a sale of Book 1 when factoring in sellthrough to the rest of the series.

Revenue per borrow (RPB) is the total borrow revenue generated by a borrow of Book 1 when factoring in Kindle Unlimited readthrough to the rest of the series.

Base equations:

REVENUE PER SALE (RPS) = total series sales revenue / Book 1 sales REVENUE PER BORROW (RPB) = total series KU revenue / Book 1 borrows

However, these estimates can be made more accurate by removing paperback and box set sales revenue:

REVENUE PER SALE (RPS) = total series sales revenue – paperback sales revenue – box set sales revenue / Book 1 eBook sales

EX. \$4,032.43 in series sale revenue / 553 eBook sales = \$7.29 revenue per sale

REVENUE PER BORROW (RPB) = total series KU revenue – box set KU revenue / Book 1 borrows

EX. \$8,192.61 in series KU revenue / 1,624.6 borrows = \$5.04 revenue per borrow

To maximize accuracy when calculating revenue per sale and / or revenue per borrow, use a period that meets all the following criteria (optimally) (1 - 7 are mandatory):

- 1. **No Book 1 price changes**. A series will have a different RPS and RPB when Book 1 is free, \$0.99, or full price, as the price of the first volume dramatically impacts sellthrough to the following books. Keep a record of the RPS and RPB at varying price points if you've tested multiple different prices for Book 1.
- 2. No major series promo during or immediately before the measurement period (i.e., no BookBub deals or big promo site pushes—running PPC ads is fine).
- 3. No new releases in the series during or immediately before the measurement period.

- 4. Calculate RPS and RPB separately for each individual region where you're advertising. RPS and RPB will differ across regions due to different prices, exchange rates, and sellthrough. You generally only need to calculate this for the US and UK.
- 5. Book 1 as the entry point only. If you're heavily advertising a book *other* than Book 1, you cannot accurately estimate RPS and RPB. This will skew the sellthrough numbers (e.g., if you sell 50 copies of Book 1 and 100 copies of Book 2 because the latter is being advertised more, sellthrough will "be" 200%, which is obviously impossible and incorrect).
- 6. **Exclude paperback sales and revenue.** If you want to calculate the RPS for paperbacks, it must be done separately. The paperback RPS will differ from the eBook RPS due to different pricing and sellthrough.
- 7. **Exclude box set revenue.** You can technically include box set revenue in the total series and borrow revenue, but this often overestimates the RPS and RPB. I usually omit box set revenue for this reason.
- Choose a period with 30 100+ sales or 1,000+ free downloads of Book 1 to smooth out variance from a small data sample.
- 9. Calculate the series' maximum RPS and maximum RPB. These are the maximum royalties you can make if someone buys (RPS) or borrows (RPB) all the current books in the series. The RPS and RPB numbers you calculate cannot exceed these maximums, so this acts as a check of whether your calculations are accurate / realistic.
- 10. Calculate RPS and RPB for two or three different time periods and compare the results to confirm that the estimate is stable enough to be usable.

Revenue Per Click and Profit Per Click

REVENUE PER CLICK (RPC): projected revenue generated per click when factoring in sellthrough and KU readthrough. Useful for analyzing which search terms, ads, traffic sources etc. generate the most revenue per click.

For Amazon Ads you can then optimize the bids on these to scale and maximize profitability. Likewise useful for seeing which search terms are generating low amounts of revenue per click, so you can turn them off, negative target them, or lower the bid.

For Facebook Ads / other traffic sources, you can turn off poorly performing ads / audiences etc. to direct more budget toward your best performers.

Keep in mind that while we're talking about ads in this particular document, you can use revenue per click and profit per click to analyze the performance of any traffic source you're tracking with the attribution links—whether that's your TikTok videos, email newsletter, Facebook Group etc.

This can be used for wide or KU books. For wide books, simply omit the revenue per borrow part of the equation.

Revenue per click (and thus profit per click) assumes that readers are entering the series at Book 1 and reading through from there. When used for later books in the series, it will be considerably less accurate.

REVENUE PER CLICK (RPC) = [(Revenue Per Sale * Book 1 Sales) + (Revenue Per Borrow * Book 1 Borrows)] / Clicks

EX. [(\$7.29 RPS * 23 Book 1 sales) + (\$5.04 RPB * 52 Book 1 borrows)] / 572 clicks =

\$429.75 / 572 clicks = \$0.75 revenue per click

PROFIT PER CLICK: projected profit generated per click when factoring in sellthrough and KU readthrough.

PROFIT PER CLICK = Revenue Per Click – Cost Per Click = Profit Per Click

EX. \$0.75 RPC - \$0.59 CPC = \$0.16 profit per click

Revenue per click and profit per click provide you with common metrics you can use to analyze your ads' performance (e.g., they translate the different sales / reads / clicks / ad spend etc. that each ad has into a comparable number).

(6) Adjust Ads Based on Your Core Strategy

Once you've analyzed your ads and have the revenue and profit per click numbers, there are three core strategic approaches you can use when managing the ads:

- 1. **Profitable**. This means only running ads / audiences etc. with CPCs *lower* than their revenue per click (e.g., if the ad is generating a revenue per click of \$0.40, its CPC would need to be lower than \$0.40, otherwise you'd turned it off). This is the most conservative approach, but means the ads will likely be directly profitable. You sacrifice sales / borrows that you could generate by allowing a higher CPC, however, which limits upside from the Amazon algorithms and how much you can spend.
- 2. **Breakeven**. This means running ads / audiences up to their revenue per click (e.g., if the ad's revenue per click is \$0.40, its CPC could be up to \$0.40 and still be breaking even). CPCs tend to increase as you spend more, so this strategy tends to be much more scalable

than a directly profitable approach. The breakeven strategy is a more aggressive approach that relies on the ads generating enough sales / borrows to get the Amazon algorithms to kick in and start recommending the book organically. A breakeven strategy tends to have higher upside than aiming for direct profitability, but sometimes that algorithmic halo effect never arrives. Thus you can end up running the ads at pretty much breakeven.

3. Unprofitable. This means running ads that have a higher CPC than their revenue per click (e.g., if the revenue per click is \$0.40, you might still run an ad with a CPC of \$0.50 or \$0.60). This is the most aggressive strategy, and uses the same principle as the breakeven strategy, wherein you're aiming for profitability via the Amazon algorithms. If these don't kick in, however, you can lose money.

The strategy you choose depends on the book, situation, and your personal preference. E.g., for a launch, it's common to run the ads unprofitably, since you're aiming to amplify the natural algorithmic help Amazon provides to new releases (and thus make your profit through the visibility from algos).

This strategy is not set in stone; if one approach proves ineffective, then you can switch. E.g., if you're running the ads at breakeven and they're just breaking even (i.e., you're not getting any algorithmic boost that helps make them profitable), then you can switch gears to a profitable strategy.

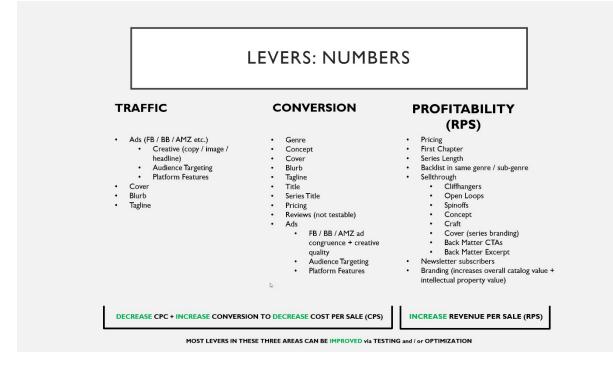
However, any shift in your overarching strategy should be made after careful analysis of the numbers. It should not be done on a whim and change on a weekly or even monthly basis. Commit to a strategy and then see what the numbers say.

The CPC, of course, is not the only lever you can pull to improve your ad numbers.

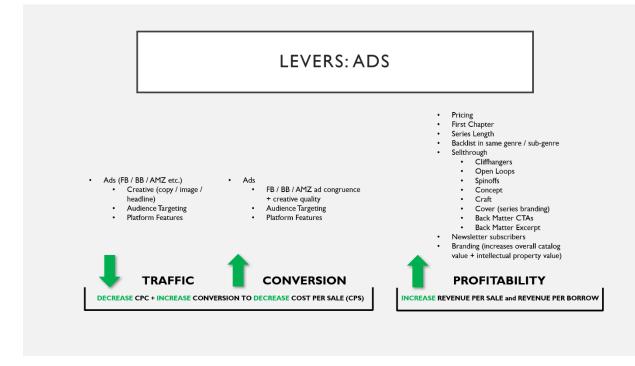
There are three levers, which I call The Internet Marketing Formula:

- 1. Traffic (CPC)
- 2. Conversion
- 3. Profitability

Here's a comprehensive of items that impact these levers:



And here's what you can do when it comes to the ads themselves:



Note that most of the profitability items cannot be changed quickly (some can't really be changed at all once the book is written). They are more overarching, long-term strategic decisions. Much of your success with the ads hinges on these elements, particularly **series length** and the number of books you have in your backlist in the same sub-genre / genre (since this increases **cross-sellthrough** between series).

If you have a ten book series, and a backlist of thirty books in the same sub-genre, you can likely withstand much, much higher CPCs and lower conversion and still be profitable than an author advertising a sci-fi trilogy who has a backlist comprising of two thrillers, three romances, a non-fiction book, and six fantasy books. The cross-sellthrough between these titles will be almost nonexistent.