

HANDBOOK

HOW TO GAIN REVIEWS FOR A NEW
PRIVATE LABEL PRODUCT IN 2018

For Amazon FBA sellers



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Handbook description

This handbook is for Amazon FBA private label product sellers who are trying to find ways to gain the first reviews for their new product.

Before getting reviews was easier as sellers could pay for reviews or use review exchange groups. When Amazon changed their review policies and caught up sellers acting against the policies, many sellers lost all of their reviews and that lead to them losing their product listing. Some sellers were banned and some even sued because of violating the rules. Now Amazon has set new guidelines according to their review policy in 2018.

I'm very interested on this subject as I'm going to start selling my own private label products through Amazon FBA. When looking for information online I found out that a lot of sources has old information that are not accurate anymore.

In this handbook, we will be introducing legal ways to gain the first reviews for a private label product. The importance of reviews on Amazon is huge and it can be a struggle to get the first reviews. I'm introducing g strategies to gain reviews for a new private label product in 2018 with sustainable solutions that are following Amazon's policies. This Handbook is based on theories introduced on the theory part of my thesis.

Fulfillment by Amazon and private labeling

This Handbook is for Amazon FBA private label product sellers. Before looking closer how to gain reviews let's open up the meaning of FBA and private labeling.

There are many different ways to sell on Amazon like for example. dropshipping and Amazon FBA. The business strategies are different because of the different types of features the way of selling has. We will be concentrating on Fulfillment by Amazon (FBA). Amazon FBA is a service for sellers that minimizes the effort for a business owner. FBA service means that they store the seller's product on Amazon's warehouse, fill the orders for the seller, ship the product, handle the returns and customer service. For this service Amazon will take a slice of money for every product they take care of.

Private Labeling means that the product has it's own logo or brand name it. Some sellers are selling other brand's products or products without a private label on them, but in this handbook I'm giving advices how to gain reviews for private label products. Some of the strategies and tactics can be implemented in any type of products on Amazon, but I'm concentrating on FBA and private label products.

Amazon Search Algorithm

To understand how to gain reviews on Amazon we need to understand how the platform works. Amazon has got its own search engine. When people are looking for products to buy they put search with their keywords of choice and as a result get a list of products describing those keywords.

The algorithm that Amazon search uses is built to serve the customers in the best possible ways. The goal is to give the shopper the right product that is fitting in the search terms and keywords they are using. For a seller it is important to understand how the algorithm works so that they can rank better with their product listing.

Let's take Google as an example. If I'm looking for a hairdresser from Google, I will most likely choose a hairdresser from the first page of Google's results. Amazon's search engine works the same way. The higher the product is ranked the more sales it will get. Sellers are competing over the highest rankings and pages because they are leading to the most sales. Even if the product would be the best product in the world, if it is on page 310 when searching it with its keywords, no customers will find it. That being said, sellers should understand how the algorithm works and try to satisfy it for better page rankings that will lead to more sales.

Amazon algorithm

The algorithm is based on three things: Listing relevancy, sales and reviews.

1. Maximising relevancy

Listing optimization includes optimizing keyword rankings with targeting relevant keywords and making sure that the listing is describing your product well. All the technical information should be described on the product listing like what the product is made of and how the customers can use it. For a seller it is good to know that customers on Amazon tend to look at the five bullet points more than the product description itself. For that reason, the five bullet points is a great place to write down any unique features that will differentiate your product from the competition and keep the customer's attention. It is really important that the listing is done well and keywords are chosen correctly so that customers can find your product.

2. Maximising Conversions

The second factor is sales. Amazon's sales data helps customers to see which products are the most relevant to the keywords they have used. Looking at past sales is an effective way of measuring that because they can find out which products other customers has purchased with the same keywords. The Amazon algorithm will put more value on recent sales than older sales.

3. Maximizing Customer Satisfaction

The last factor that the algorithm counts on is product reviews. This means that if a product has got positive high-quality reviews it has proven to be a success to other people and is worth to rank higher for people to find it. In contrary, a lot of negative reviews or no reviews at all shows that people either don't like the product or don't want to buy it and shouldn't rank as high.

Another reason why reviews are important on Amazon is because of the customers. Many buyers on Amazon have a tendency on buying products by looking if they have bad or good reviews. Reviews are really affecting their decision to purchase and that is also good to keep in mind.

Now that we have understood how the algorithm works we can look deeper on how to satisfy it. At this point, it is important to understand the bigger picture. By satisfying the algorithm a product will get more sales. When a product gets more sales it will lead to getting more reviews as there are more people buying the product. After more reviews, the product will rank better because of the algorithm, and again gain more sales and reviews.

At some point when the listing optimization is done well and the product has got enough reviews and sales, the seller doesn't need to actively promote it. With a good ranking, a seller can get to the point when having passive income without any efforts because people are finding the product because of a high ranking and the fulfillment service is taking care of the logistics.

Before reaching that point with a new private label product we are facing a problem: How to get sales without reviews and how to gain reviews without sales? It is the same problem many students are facing when trying to find their first job. They can't find a job without experience but they can't get any experience without having a job to work on.

**“How to get sales without reviews,
and how to gain reviews without sales?”**

Different type of reviews

To solve this problem of getting the first reviews we need to understand what kind of reviews we are looking to have. There are three different types of reviews on Amazon: Verified Purchase Reviews, Unverified Purchase Reviews, and Amazon Vine Program Reviews.

1. The Vine Reviews comes from a program where consumers can access by invitation only. Amazon invites customers with a history of genuine and honest reviews to the program. We can't make them purchase our product, so, unfortunately, there is no way of affecting them with our own actions. Maybe with good luck, a product can get a review from the vine program, but maybe not. For this reason, we are not concentrating on having these type of Vine Reviews in this Handbook.
2. The next type of reviews is Unverified Purchase Reviews. They mean that Amazon hasn't verified and confirmed that the product has really been purchased by the person who has left the review. Reviews become unverified also if the product has been purchased with a deep discount that normally the most part of Amazon customer's wouldn't have. Unverified reviews don't have as much influence on the Amazon algorithm as verified ones. Also when looking at the history of Amazon trying to get rid of non-genuine reviews by changing their policies, in this handbook we are not looking for ways to gain these type of reviews. Even if now they would be allowed in some cases,

we don't want to take the risk that after half a year Amazon doesn't allow to have them and the product will lose all of its reviews and ranking.

This risk and the fact that they don't affect the algorithm as much are enough to not put the work into gaining them. We are looking for sustainable ways to gain reviews that will last in long-term and grow any business on a durable base and getting unverified reviews are not one of them.

3. Verified Purchase Reviews are the one that we want to have. They enable the buyers to have confidence in the products with real genuine reviews. Verified reviews are an endorsement of the product for potential buyers as they are kind of votes of approval for the product from other people. Verified reviews mean that Amazon has checked that the product was not sold with a deep discount being more than 49%.

Now that we have learned how ranking on Amazon works based on their search engine algorithm and what type of reviews we want to gain we can start to look at different actions that we can do to maximize our chances for getting reviews. As we learned on the previous chapter we want to get Verified Purchase reviews where the buyer has actually bought the product. Therefore we need customers and sales.

Next we are looking at different actions we can do before selling the product, during we are selling it and after the purchase has happened. With all of these actions we are trying to maximize the probability to get verified reviews in the end of the purchase.

Prohibited actions

Before we start to gain reviews we need to look at the new review policy and truly understand it. Amazon has got a hit on their reputation because of incentivized reviews that has affected on customer's trust on their platform. They are trying to fix the problem with the new guidelines. For a seller it is crucial to understand the prohibited actions for not losing their account and business.

The prohibited actions are mostly actions that are manipulating or short cut actions for gaining more reviews and sales. When keeping this in mind, a seller should be safe when they stay away from any sneaky short cut solutions. However there are few things that are really specific and without knowing them a seller could easily make a mistake not following the rules.

Any attempt to manipulate ratings, feedback or reviews is prohibited. This means any sneaky type of actions to own or competitors products. Sellers are not allowed to post any inappropriate feedback or personal information about a transaction partner. This means posting feedback or ratings to their own or competitors account.

Also any payment or other incentive exchange to reviews is very strictly prohibited. No more facebook groups for exchanging reviews or buying them anywhere. Any compensations for reviews is not allowed. This rule also includes free products or highly discounted products to gain reviews. What comes to products presenting untruthful facts is not allowed so telling the facts in an honest way is a must.

When asking for a review for customers, it is not allowed to ask reviews for only positive experiences. Neither asking a reviewer to modify their review or take it away is allowed. When communicating with customers insisting for reviews or nagging for them is prohibited. Only one follow up-email is allowed after the purchase has been done.

Amazon wants products to have reviews as they are valuable for the customers. They are encouraging seller to gain reviews with genuine actions and will reward them for that. They appreciate sellers that has put the hard work on getting reviews and making the overall customer experience amazing for consumers.

Increasing Customer Satisfaction

Before selling the product there are few things to think about and prepare in terms of gaining reviews in the future. The key word here is to satisfy the customer. When a customer is happy and satisfied, he/she will more likely want to leave a positive review. As we can't force the buyers to leave reviews, we want to make an outstanding experience for them so that they want to reward us with a genuine positive review.

When wanting to gain reviews, I assume that the product that is being sold is top quality. If it is not a quality product, obviously a seller can not expect for good reviews. Even if the product's quality would be the best of the best, we can still make some things to make sure that it stands out in customers eyes by differentiating it from the competitors products. Even if you would have already choose your product, it is wise to do some research about the competition on

Amazon. With researching the seller will see if there are already products like that existing on the market place.

Differentiation

Differentiating the product from competition is important, because if there are extra value on the product comparing to all the other products the customer will most likely be happier and again, chances to gain reviews with happier customers are higher than unsatisfied or neutral customers.

Differentiating a private label product can be done in many ways but here are some tips of different ways to do it.

- 1.Brandind your products by positioning yourself better by highlighting your audience
- 2.Bundling meaning making a product in combo packs or including gifts or other products on the same package
3. Making small (or big) changes to the product to improve it from the competitor's product. This can be done by for example. choosing a different audience and targeting to them.
4. Leveling up your customer service to extreme so that it is clearly better than the competitor's service.
- 5.High-quality packaging
- 6.Excellent copywriting on the product description and other content that the product can be linked into.
7. Creating a valuable and desired product page by using top-quality photos that shows your products better than the competitors' products.

Marketing Inserts

Marketing inserts are ads placed inside of the package with the product. These can be gift cards, cross-sells, thank you notes or anything else the seller desires to put on the package. These marketing inserts can increase customer loyalty, make higher sales with cross-sales and increase the probabilities of customers leaving a review.

When making marketing inserts it is important to think about what is the goal we want to achieve with this type of communication. In this case, the goal is to gain reviews. As we already learned satisfied customers are more likely to leave reviews so we want to put something on the product package that makes the buyer happy. That can be for example an extra gift that the customer didn't know about, little gift card or just a nice poem to wish them a happy day. Something that you would think that the typical users of your product would get happy about. In addition to this, we want to put a text somewhere to be seen that asks the customer to leave a review. It is a good reminder in this busy world for the buyer when she/he receives the product to leave a review.

Follow-up emails

This step should also be done before starting to sell the product.

Communicating with customers through email is made very easy with services like Feedback Genius. It is a service that manages all the emails inside of Amazon and allows to send automatized emails to customers. It is a great way to check on the customer if the product has arrived as planned and if there is anything else the seller could do. This is also a perfect moment to ask them to leave a review, however, keep in mind the review policies we learned about before. Sellers are not allowed to ask reviews only for positive experiences or

demand for reviews. Nowadays Amazon only allows one follow-up email to be sent, so sellers should choose their words carefully on this one because there are no second or third emails allowed anymore.

These three little actions can highly increase the chances of getting a review. If imagining yourself as a consumer thinks about this: ordering a product and when getting it, finding that it really stands out from the competition. While feeling happy about the extra gift and extraordinary service you would see a little marketing insert card wishing you a happy day and asking to leave a review. If not pleased enough at this point, seeing a friendly personalized follow-up email asking if everything went well and if you would be kind enough to leave a review would most probably increase the chances of writing it a lot.

Driving traffic to gain sales

Now you have made sure that everything that you can do in advance to satisfy your customers is done. Your product is great quality and different from the competitors, you have inserted extra value on the package with marketing inserts, created an automated follow-up email for every purchase that is being done and optimized your listing on Amazon. Fulfillment by Amazon will take care of the packages arriving on time.

The next step is to create sales to get reviews. To get sales we need potential customers to find your product. This can be done by advertising and different types of sales promotions. Sales promotions are a good solution because they are known to boost the sales for a temporary time. Long lasting advertising campaigns could be great too, but they are more expensive. At this point, we are looking to boost sales for an X amount of time to receive X amount of

reviews. When the number of reviews wanted is achieved, you can leave your listing to live by itself. Your product ranking will get higher when the algorithm has noticed that it is a good product listing, with enough of recent sales and reviews. When the ranking is high enough depending on the product and niche, of course, people will find your product inside of Amazon just by searching with the keywords. Then we have reached out the point what many Amazon sellers are looking for: passive income flow. For creating sales we can drive traffic inside of Amazon's marketplace and from outside of it.

Driving traffic to your product listing Inside of Amazon's marketplace

Top ranked reviewers

You can drive traffic to your product listing by contacting Amazon's top-ranked reviewers. Their reviews are very valuable as many people trust them a lot. They are proven genuine and honest reviewers that Amazon has chosen to be trustworthy.

First, you should find top reviewers that could be interested in your product or product niche. Then contacting them and introducing yourself and the new product you got and asking them if they would like to purchase one. This is a great way of getting a few sales and reviews because it is free to contact them and you don't have to pay anything for it.

PPC

Amazon's Pay per Click (PPC) ads are advertising inside of Amazon.

Consumers on Amazon tend to search for products with keywords rather than going into different categories to look for product ideas. PPC will position your product on the top of the page in their search when potential customers are looking for the keywords your product has on it's listing. You will only pay for the clicks meaning that everytime somebody has visited your product listing. It is a great way of advertising because you won't pay for ad space that nobody has actually used to visit your page.

Another good thing about PPC is that it will give you data about which keywords have led to most of the clicks, so you can improve your keywords based on this data and eventually get more sales.

However, PPC is not recommended right at the beginning with a new private label product before having at least five reviews. If the product doesn't have any reviews on it people on Amazon usually don't purchase the product as they give a lot of value on reviews. So even if you would get a lot of people visiting your product page if they are not buying it, you won't get any reviews which are the thing we are trying to get at this point. After having the first reviews, PPC can be a really good way of getting more until you have the number of reviews that are needed for your goal ranking.

Driving traffic from outside of Amazon to your product page

When driving traffic from outside of Amazon, we are looking for potential customers. This means people who are interested in your product niche and could be interested in buying your product. With targeted advertising and sales promotion, we get better results with fewer resources being wasted on marketing for people that are not interested.

When making sales promotions or different kinds of advertising outside of Amazon, make sure that you don't give more than 49% off discount on your product. If you give more discount you will get Unverified Reviews. Another way to give big discounts is to put your price down on Amazon so it won't be a discount price, it will just be your normal selling price just really cheap.

Social Media

Social Media can be a good channel to drive targeted traffic to your product. In social media's channel of your choice, you can create a following of your own and link them to visit your product page. This can be done by creating a niche page and engaging interactively with the followers and offering them quality content. Advertising in social media can also be very effective as you can target your ads really specifically. This can be an excellent way to get traffic to your product page, but without any experience of advertising online you may need to spend a lot of time researching how to do things or the costs can be expensive.

Facebook groups, however, can be a free way of getting targeted traffic. You can promote your product on facebook groups that are interested in similar things. The group community is already interested in your niche if you choose it correctly and passionate people are great customers. In some groups, you can't promote products so make sure to read the guidelines or be in touch with the owner of the group. Also, nothing stops you from contacting the owner and asking if they could post an offer of your product in exchange for some money or an affiliate link % of every purchase.

PPC Ads

PPC advertising outside of Amazon can be a really effective way to get more sales. PPC means Pay per Click advertising and it works the same way that Amazon's PPC where the advertiser only pays when somebody has clicked the ad. By creating an ad with text, photos, some kind of animations or videos and uploading it to the social media channel wanted, all the potential customers clicking it will be directed straight to the product listing on Amazon's page.

SEO

Search engine optimization (SEO) is also possible outside of Amazon. Driving traffic from search engines can be done by content marketing. Content marketing can be for example. creating a blog and adding content to it or creating a niche website and optimizing them for search engine SEO. The visitors coming to the blog or website can then be linked to the product page on Amazon's listing. This could be a great way of attracting people that are interested in your products because they are already interested in the content you are sharing. You may have to put a lot of effort into this one, because

creating content can be challenging. SEO can be expensive and also difficult, but if you succeed with this option you can have a permanent solution to drive traffic to all of your future products in the same product niche.

Press Releases

Another way of is publishing Press Releases (PR) regularly to lead visitors towards your product page. There are many PR pages available online where people can launch their press release. PR pages with a good reputation can be hard to get on because of their high standards, however, if you get to list on them it is possible to get a lot of traffic to your site.

Influencers

Networking with bloggers and other social media influencers asking or paying them to promote a product can be an effective way to get more sales and eventually more reviews. Looking for influencers who are creating similar content to your niche and promoting a product through them can boost your sales. It is a great way because they already have followers that are trusting their opinion and interested in the same niche's products.

Amazon also has got an Amazon Influencer Program. The Influencer Program allows influencers to have their own URL page on Amazon to show all the products they are recommending to their followers. While it is made easy for their followers to buy products that the influencer is recommending, the recommender will earn money on every purchase with affiliate links. You could use this to your advantage and for example contact influencers asking them to join the program and promote your product and they would get an affiliate link.

Or if not wanting to use the program promoting your products on influencers social media pages can also be a great solution.

Deal site promotions

Deal sites can be an effective way of creating boost on sales. Deal Site means web pages that have got deep discounts on specific products for a limited time. They are easy to use, a lot of potential sales, no effort needed and the seller will know exactly how much the costs are going to be as they are offering a specific amount of discount products in advance.

Final thoughts

Now we have gone through the processes of gaining reviews we can think about the outcome. Customer satisfaction is the main key for gaining positive verified reviews. When all of the aspects of increasing customers satisfactions are maximized, we need to lead traffic to the product page to gain reviews. Because of the consumer behavior and nature of consumers on Amazon, I would recommend leading traffic from outside of Amazon. Amazon's customers tend to put a lot of value on reviews so getting the first reviews might be easier when having traffic outside of Amazon's platform. After having the first 5 or so reviews the seller can start leading traffic inside of Amazon to gain more of them.

This is a really general Handbook introducing the most effective ways of gaining reviews that I have found. These subjects are very large so I suggest that first, you think about carefully about the features of your product. Then choose the right ways for your product to do the actions needed to gain reviews. You can find a lot more specific information, once you have decided which strategies you will use. It is challenging tell the best ways to do things because every product is different.

I hope this Handbook helps you with gaining reviews for your private label product.

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