

Kindle Non-Device-Related Suggestions (about Documentation, Amazon’s Website, Kindle Blogs, e-Books, and Ads for the Kindle)

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Flaws & Rough Edges

A. Shift the Empty Line in Your Kindle Book Descriptions & Book Reviews

1. At present, your book descriptions are formatted thusly:

Title

Author

Book Description

They should be formatted like this. It’s more conventional and easier for a reader to follow, because there’d be a gap above the text of the description:

Title

Author

Book Description

2. At present, your book reviews are formatted thusly:

“Customer Review” *title*

stars *Review title* *Date*

“Review” *Reviewer’s name*

Text of review

They should be formatted like this. It's more conventional and easier for a reader to follow, because there'd be a gap above the text of the review:

“Customer Review” *title*

stars *Review title* *Date*
“Review” *Reviewer’s name*

Text of review

B. Provide Wireless Access to the Kindle *User’s Guide*

Why can’t one move the latest (4th) edition of the Kindle (keyboard) *User’s Guide* to one’s Kindle wirelessly? One used to be able to do this. But your site now says it can only be moved to the Kindle via the USB cable. Here’s where it says so (at the bottom of the page):

http://www.amazon.com/gp/help/customer/display.html/ref=hp_kindle_nav_ts_guide?ie=UTF8&nodeId=200317150

I’m sure this change was made deliberately and that there’s *some* reason for it. I hope it was a good one, because it’s annoying.

C. “Gray” Alternate Items to Create “Banding” on “Your Kindle Library” Page

If you employ this common “banding” technique, users won’t make mistakes when performing “Actions.” Actions are at the rightmost end of the line, and item-titles are at the left. Each line-item isn’t very tall, so it’s easy to let one’s eyes get off-track and perform an action on the wrong item. If alternate lines were shaded, this would be less likely.

In addition, when the user chooses to delete an item, and you post a new line saying “Successfully Deleted” while the operation is in progress, but before the line has actually been removed, it would help the user to follow the action if you were to append a colon and/or a down-arrow to

the “Successfully Deleted” message so that he’s in no doubt as to what is going on. I.e., to what is about to be deleted—the line below the message. It can be confusing otherwise.

D. Retain Failed Kindle-Store Search Terms in Highlighted Form

When a user's search of the Kindle Store fails to find a match, his search-text should be left in the search-box, instead of being erased. That way, if he only misspelled his search, he could easily correct and re-enter it, by navigating inside it via the arrow keys.

If instead he wanted a completely new search key, his subsequent entry of a new letter in the highlighted search box would automatically erase its contents. ~

E. Display the Title of the Blog One Is Reading

It would be helpful to display the title of the blog one is reading in the heading or footing of a page, at least in the page that starts each blog-thread, or (at worst) when one clicks on the Menu. I subscribe to ten blogs about the Kindle and I often forget which one I’m reading. I’d like to have that information accessible, for various reasons. (For example, so I can go to my computer and access the online blog to make a comment.)

There’s often no indication of where I’ve just been when I return to the home screen, because the blog I’ve read immediately pops ahead of items it was formerly behind, of which there are usually six or more.

F. Flag Kindle-Deleted Items on the “Your Kindle Library” Page

Perhaps, on “Your Kindle Library” web page, flag or highlight the items that the user has removed from his device. In some cases he will have wanted to remove them later from his library as well, so this would give him a hint as to which those were. (It can be hard to find them if one owns thousands of books.) It would also help prevent him from

accidentally removing an item that is still on his device and that he *doesn't* want to delete.

Hmm ... and/or maybe allow users who want to permanently rid themselves of an item to delete it from their Kindles “with prejudice,” meaning that it would be flagged as such when they visit their library page online, making it easier for them to remove it there too.

G. Document How to Use the Kindle Cover’s “Tag”

The documentation on using your cover’s cord-tag should be improved. When I bought one of your covers, I checked out its documentation on <http://www.amazon.com/kindlecover>. I was surprised that there was no explanation of there how to use your cover’s cord-tag properly. It took me three hours to figure it out on my own, from which I infer that a substantial number of owners took even longer, and that some haven’t figured it out even now.

Owners shouldn’t have to wait for a light to dawn, since the tag’s operation isn’t self-evident. It should be explained to them. **Here’s how it might be done:**

The cord-tag should be slid to within about a half-inch of the top or bottom edge, and then pulled upward (toward you) and slightly further in the direction it was sliding (toward the top or bottom of the Kindle) to pull the cord around the corner.

Next, it should be slid along the cord in the opposite direction, to the other edge. Doing so will automatically “pop” the cord around that corner, eliminating the task of pulling it around “manually.” ~

H. Tell Indie Authors How to Insert Page Numbering

Amazon's KDP documentation has nothing on how to include page numbers. I thought they might soon add such information, but then I recently found this quotation, which suggests that the company is

deliberately holding it back from indies. (Possibly because it's complicated and they might muck it up.)

“Books published by major publishers come through a separate publication process to the Kindle Store, and some of them use different file formats that allow a wider range of specifications, including different fonts. But for us folks using DTP or Mobipocket, we've only got a single font choice.”

—*Publish Your Book On The Amazon Kindle: A Practical Guide*,
by Michael R. Hicks (@location 855)

I am planning to publish a public domain book to which I've added a detailed table of contents and an index. I would very much like to know how to insert page-number anchors in the book that match the already-printed version.

I'm hoping it would only require inserting Word-type “bookmarks.” It seems to me that this would be better (more accurate) than an algorithm. The main reason for an algorithm would seem to me to be to reduce the workload on mainstream publishers with thousands of books to paginate. Indie authors for whom it would not be worthwhile to learn the complexities of applying the algorithm should be allowed to do the work “by hand,” so to speak.

(Note: This feature might, I hope, be included in Format 8.)

I. Include “Indexes” Among Criteria that Allow for Republishing Public Domain Books

Kindle Direct Publishing's guidelines state:

In order to provide a better customer buying experience, our policy is to not publish undifferentiated versions of public domain titles where a free version is available in our store. Please ensure that your submission conforms to one of the following criteria before proceeding:

- *It is a unique translation.*
- ***It contains annotations*** (unique, hand-crafted additional content ***including study guides, literary critiques, detailed biographies, or detailed historical context***).

- *It includes 10 or more unique illustrations.*

I suggest that another item should be added after the boldfaced word “including” above, namely “detailed indexes.” Creating a detailed index is very laborious, and it is very valuable to serious readers—more so (IMO) than the other items mentioned. It definitely shouldn't be overlooked in your recommendations.

An index has certain advantages over a search that make it a necessity still:

1. Sometimes a search will turn up too many irrelevant instances of a word; but an index will cite only meaningful instances. This would be the case when one wants only instances of the noun form of a common word, for instance, or where one doesn't want to see only passing references to it.
2. Sometimes one is unsure of the spelling of a word (especially a proper name, a place-name, or a high-tech product name). A scan in an index will soon provide it, even if one is initially unsure of its spelling; a search is hit or miss. Worse, if one thinks one knows the spelling but doesn't, a search will miss the targets completely and one won't know it.
3. Typing on the Kindle isn't as easy as typing on a PC. On the Kindle, a lookup in an index would be easier than typing search terms, especially if the Go To feature were to provide “Index” as one of its options, as it ought to. (I suggested that in my companion-screed.)
4. An index can provide cross-references (i.e., “see also”) to related topics in the index. So an index can allow the reader to locate discussions of vague or abstract conceptual “topics” that don't always contain any keyword.
5. An index can allow the reader to locate passages dealing with the same topic even though the keywords are different. (“Tomahawk” and “hatchet,” for instance.)
6. An index-entry can contain subentries that narrow one's search to the topic of interest. A biography might contain hundreds of instances of a person's name—a situation where a search would be overwhelmed with irrelevancies.

7. An index can typographically distinguish between references to captions of illustrations, allowing one to home in on (or ignore) them.
8. By providing a page-range to indicate the span of the treatment of a topic, an index can alert the reader to keep reading beyond the first instance of a keyword that might have begun the passage. The user of a keyword search might miss the continuation of the discussion, or the lead-in to it.
9. Browsing an index can suggest lookups one wouldn't have thought of searching for.

(The list above the same as that used in my “device-oriented” companion-screed, “Go To Should Include Index Among Its Targets.”)

Documentation

J. Video-Enhance Your *User's Guide*

If you created an online User's Guide that contained numerous short snippets of “clickable” supplementary video & audio it would:

1. Entice more users to actually “Read The Manual” by virtue of its visual entertainment value and lower effort-investment. (The user need only click on a video snippet and then lean-back-and-absorb.) Video snippets would also make the Guide more attractive as a refresher-and-reference to experienced users.
2. Communicate its points more effectively, because many people are “visual learners.” See, for instance, “Clive Thompson on the Power of Visual Thinking” in the September 2010 issue of *Wired*, p. 66, here:
http://www.wired.com/magazine/2010/09/st_thompson_visual/

See also “Film School at Last Year's TED” in the January 2011 *Wired*.

3. **Serve as a sales tool**, by allowing prospective buyers to observe the Kindle in operation.

By “**numerous**” I mean two to four video snippets per page; by “**short**” I mean from five to 15 seconds; and by “**supplementary**” I mean with a voiceover repeating the text of the Guide in conjunction with shots of the Kindle screen and keyboard being operated by a user’s finger. The “clickable” item would be an image of the Kindle screen from the video snippet, similar to an embedded YouTube link.

The original, unenhanced manual could be retained for users who preferred it. It would be more compact, FWIW.

Here are examples showing how text from the first page of Ch. 2 (p. 45) **of your User’s Guide** [1st ed.] could be video-enhanced:

“To display the Home screen, press the Home button on your Kindle.”

(A finger presses the Home button and the Home screen pops up.)

“By default, the Home screen lists all of the items that you have on your Kindle beginning with the most recently viewed (or acquired) items.”

(The finger in the video points to the item at the top, then swipes down over all the rest,)

“Each type of content has a slightly different description and label.”

(The finger points to different descriptions and labels.)

Here’s the next short snippet:

“Books are shown by title and author.”

(The finger points to each, in phase with the words “title” and “author.”)

“Below the book title are [is—RK] a series of dots which give you an approximation of how long the book is.”

(The finger points to dots.)

“Bold dots within the series indicate how far along you are in the book based on the last page you viewed.”

(The finger points to bold dots.)

Here’s the third short snippet:

“Periodicals include newspapers and magazines that can be purchased as a single issue or as a subscription delivered on a regular basis. Your Home screen lists the most recent issue of each periodical you have on your Kindle.”

(The finger swipes over the recent periodicals listed.)

“Older issues appear inside a grouping called Periodicals: Back Issues.”

(The finger points to that grouping.)

“Selecting the grouping takes you to a screen that displays the back issues of all the periodicals you have on your Kindle.”

(The finger “selects” using the 5-way and the Kindle screen shifts to a new display showing back issues.)

A pilot project would be cheap, because an experiment would require only the creation of material for a few pages of the manual. The video camera could be set up on a tripod and the photographer could be the enactor as well, speaking the text and moving his finger over the screen and keyboard.

The cost of creating such supplementary material for a whole manual would be small. No professional production values would be needed, just someone with a good speaking voice and the ability to move his/her finger in conjunction with the text he’s reading.

If successful with the Kindle *User Guide*, Amazon could go on to create similar user-clickable video-enhanced instructional material on topics like navigating the Amazon site and using its advanced features, such as Lists, List-creation, Author-related discussion groups, etc. The applicability and usefulness of video-enhanced instruction is endless.

Kindle-Blog-Related

K. Allow the “Gifting” of Kindle Blogs

I hope Amazon will eventually allow the gifting of Kindle blogs, such as Bufo Calvin's “I Love My Kindle.” The gift-subscription period should be for less than the standard full year—say, only for a month or two, instead—since the recipient might be only lukewarm about it and wouldn't want it constantly arriving for a long period.

I'd like to give a recipient short-length subs to five (say) blogs @ \$3 each, figuring that he would become a rabid fan of at least one. That's the sort of gift one likes to give—something the giftee is extremely grateful for. (I'd have five chances to hit the bulls-eye with this sort of gift, and the “misses” wouldn't count against me.)

L. Provide Free, Random, No-Obligation, Ongoing Samples of Kindle Blogs

Ms. Cairo, on “The Kindle Blog Report” wrote about:

“... the importance of subscribing to these blogs—just to take a look at them if nothing else! People put their blogs on Kindle with high hopes ... they get only one or two subscriptions, and then the blog fades away. At a cost of 99 cents a month per blog, and with a 2 week free trial, there's no reason not to subscribe to a blog that interests you!”

Amazon could encourage Kindlers to subscribe to Kindle blogs by offering them the option of being sent a free random sample Kindle blog per (day / week / month—the user would choose the frequency. Kindlers could opt in and/or out of various controversial blog categories like sex, politics, and religion.

And/or Kindlers could opt to be sent only a list of blog titles at intervals, from which they could choose up to six (say) titles for delivery. Users would have to “opt in” to subscribe; it wouldn't be like the current “opt out” situation after signing up for a trial subscription.

This would be easiest to introduce on the KSO (“Special Offer”) models. If KSO owners were rapturously happy with the offerings, Amazon would be justified in asking non-KSO owners if they'd like to sign up too.

<http://thekindlereport.blogspot.com/2011/07/upcoming-reviews.html>

M. Allow Blog Subscribers to “Bookmark” Blog Articles for Rereading

Rather than clipping articles from blogs I subscribe to, I'd sometimes rather “bookmark” them so that I could reread them in the future (when I'm again reading that blog's feed on the Kindle). This would often be more convenient than attempting to read them on the My Clippings file. To do this, I'd click on a Menu item “Select a Bookmarked article from this blog.” This would call up a menu of those articles, one or more of which I could checkbox-click for delivery (over WiFi only, perhaps, to reduce transmission costs) to my Kindle.

(Or maybe the blog's entire roster of past article titles could be presented—perhaps as an extra-cost option.)

This would provide faster and more readable access to past articles than either using the web browser or dragging My Clippings over to the computer, extracting the article, and reading it on the computer. A subscriber who's pressed for time could quickly scan through all his incoming blogs and bookmark the interesting articles for later reading. It would therefore stimulate subscriptions to blogs.

I also suggest that users be allowed to “highlight” & capture passages in their bookmarked articles—i.e., those blogs whose authors allow it. This is currently forbidden, by policy.

e-Book Promotion & Improvement

N. Use Popular Highlights as Sales-Teasers for Paperbooks Books on the Amazon Website

These teaser-highlights would be more effective than reading a random page or the first chapter, because they would be shorter and sweeter (much more interesting and provocative than the average level found in a first chapter or in a random page). ~

O. Sell Access to Additional Editorial Reviews for \$1 (+ Extra Illustrations?)

There should be a quick way for users to access what professional book reviewers have to say about books before buying. (Amazon would, I envisage, buy the rights to these from publishers on a bulk basis and pay supplemental royalties depending on the number of clicks.)

How about a \$1 button that, if clicked, would bring up reprints of up to a dozen professional reviews? The \$1 might be refunded if the user bought the book. (Perhaps, until there are ten reviews posted, the charge should be only 50 cents.)

And some readers would also appreciate having access to these *after* reading a book. It would deepen their appreciation of what they'd read and make them think harder about it. Amazon could kick-start the process of reader-involvement by e-mailing, to successive slices of their book-buyers, reminders of the availability of the feature for books they'd already read, along with a (partial?) list of similar books with review-packets available. Each book title, if clicked on, would constitute a press of the book's \$1 button.

Perhaps clicking on the button would also bring up links to sites where the book had been discussed, based on an AI-based selection of the results of a behind-the-scenes Google search.

“Serious readers” should and would be interested enough in their reading material to pay for this “extra” often enough to make it worth including. And Amazon would indirectly benefit, because it would make the Amazon site stickier.

A poll of a representative user sample would (hopefully) indicate the degree of likely support for this feature.

The button could also contain a count of the reviews that will be available to read once the button has been pushed, because it is a “plus” if a book has received a lot of professional reviews—it's at least thought

to be worth taking seriously. A book with only one or two professional reviews is one that serious reviewers have “passed” on—possibly for good reason.

Alternatively, the button might only appear if the publisher or author funded it, in which case access to its content would be free. This would help top-quality, higher-priced books get noticed in the crowd, because their reviews would be much better than those of the average \$3 book. Assisting the emergence of high-quality writing is something that thoughtful eBook observers should be getting concerned about.

Another \$1 (+) button could allow buyers to purchase illustrations or other supplementary book-material, like interviews with the author, etc.

P. Urge Publishers to Offer “Bundles” of Sample Chapters

I suggest that Amazon should urge publishers to offer free “bundles” of sample chapters—say a half-dozen per bundle. Bundles would normally be topic-focused (e.g., sci-fi or biography), although some might be deliberately miscellaneous. Amazon could publicize these offers and provide a central web page where they could all be found. (Kindle bloggers would amplify the publicity.)

This is one way publishers of high-end books could effectively (though partially) appeal to bargain-hunting buyers—with a “first chapter is free” strategy that *pushes* those first chapters into users’ hands—i.e., onto their Kindles. Lots of bargain hunters would succumb to the temptation to snap up such a lot of free text.

If I got such a bundle I’d likely buy one item from it that I wouldn’t have otherwise. Others would too. It’s worth a test-run, anyway.

Q. Publicize and/or Reward Active Tables of Contents & Chapter Headings

I suggest that you indicate, in “Product Details,” whether or not a Kindle book has an active table of contents and “live” chapter headings (ones that enable use of the left and right arrow keys to get to the next and previous chapters). (If you don’t have data on some or all of the books you’ve already listed, you should either display “unknown” or omit the indication-notice.)

These features are virtually essential for serious nonfiction (where one jumps around a good deal or reads only selected parts of the book); and they’re convenient in short story collections—and even in some novels, if they are topics of a book-club discussion.

When there is a choice among editions, as often happens with popular classics, I’d always prefer to get one with an active TOC and live chapter headings, etc. (I’ve sometimes been misled by a disingenuous classic-book-publisher’s claim, “table of contents included” despite its being inactive; so it would be consumer-friendly to provide the facts about this from an impartial source.)

Another way to encourage the inclusion of these features would be to penalize their omission financially, or to reward their inclusion. I.e., by adjusting the royalty rate. Perhaps both methods of encouragement should be employed.

R. Certify e-Books’ Formatting Features

Abhi Singh, proprietor of the popular “Kindle Review” blog, posted this yesterday:

“The general quality of free books during the recent weeks’ deluge of free book offers has been appalling. I think my brain is fried from listing and looking at books where the author didn’t even spend 5 minutes on the cover and description. It’s almost as if the Big 6 paid Amazon to throw a lot of the worst possible indie novels at Kindle owners and shock them back into Published Books.”

Amazon could / should do something about this, because enough badly formatted books will taint the Kindle brand. Amazon would benefit in the long run if it gave its customers a more reliable buying experience by certifying formatting features of its offerings. I.e., it could go beyond minimally certifying the existence of an active TOC and chapter headings

(as suggested above) by giving each Kindle book a “grade” on half-a-dozen formatting metrics, plus an overall grade that is their weighted average. This would provide at least some sort of quality-encouragement (if not quality control). The publisher would pay an additional \$5 (say) for this service; a “format-graded” icon would be posted in the book’s book description.

Amazon’s being forced in this direction already, by having to “vet” Direct Publishing offerings to ensure that they aren’t spam. (I.e., not mere retreads of already-existing public domain works or purchased texts sold to multiple non-author “authors.”) If it’s already having to search inside the book to filter out offerings that taint its brand, going a little further wouldn’t be that much more expensive. (Non-spam books could get a certification icon too.)

Amazon could minimize its costs by:

- “Turking” the work, as it has done with moderation of readers’ book reviews. (I.e., outsourcing the job on a piecework basis to online contract workers.)
- Charging publishers \$5 to do the certification.
- Allowing publishers to certify their own works, under penalty of fines or reduced royalties for any books that turn out to be falsely certified. (Readers could be given a button to report any falsely claimed features.)

S. Improve Your Deal of the Day on Kindle Thusly

(Note: I wrote this (and a few other suggestions here) early in 2011, so it’s now surely somewhat outdated. Take it for what it’s worth, if anything.)

Amazon should:

1. Supplement its web-site format with a Kindle-friendly small-screen format, as MnyBks does for the Gutenberg site. I.e., something like a slideshow.
2. Include each book’s categories on its Deal page. The categories of some books can’t be discerned from their titles and cover pages, and it’s annoying to have to chase them down and be disappointed.

3. Include the average rating as well.
4. Maybe include the year of publication.
5. Move the space-wasting phrase “auto-delivered wirelessly” out of each item's box. Put it in a heading and/or footing.
6. Supplement its web site with a daily Kindle-deal blog-feed and allow Kindlers to subscribe (free) to it.
7. Provide a “sifted-by-category” blog feed containing only books in those categories the Kindler has check-boxed.
8. Include book descriptions (and cover pictures?) in one or other of its deal-blogs, maybe in a slide-show format (perhaps charging recipients \$1 per month for the bandwidth expense). This would make it “less work” to buy an item.
9. Perhaps provide an “e-mail” link so Kindlers can send alerts to their friends. There would be a check-box way for the sender to indicate the specific book(s) he was excited about.~~

Kindle-Ad-Related

T. A “Kindle Friends” Ad Featuring “It Was a Dark and Stormy Night”

Setup: It’s raining, windy, and dusky. The “Gal” (the female character in the Kindle-friends ad-series) is standing under the awning of an old-fashioned-looking storefront. (Wessel & Lieberman’s Bookstore in Pioneer Square would do nicely.) It might be 180 years ago, as far as the background indicates. She has an umbrella. She glances at her watch, indicating she’s waiting for someone.

Guy: walks up and whispers melodramatically, “*It was a dark and stormy night.*”

Gal: Smiles and says, “*I knew you’d say that—but what’s the next line?*”

Guy: “*And I knew you’d say that, so I loaded an audiobook and we can hear it together.*” (Pushes a button or two in the Kindle and closes the cover.)

Gal: “*Maybe the actor can take us back to 1830.*”

Kindle (reading portentously, with a heavy, old-fashioned English accent): “*It was a dark and stormy night; the rain fell in torrents, and the wind rattled along the housetops, fiercely agitating the scanty flame of the lamps that struggled against the darkness.*”

Time warp #1: During the above, spooky music is heard, the screen ripples, and the camera pans to the street, where “gaslights” flicker in the streetlamps, horses and carriages move by, etc. The camera jumps back to show the Friends (or a portion of them), from behind. Her umbrella has been transformed into a parasol. Other visible portions of the two Friends are in 1830’s garb.

Gal (speaking with an English accent and the tone of an early Victorian seeing her first railway): “*Will wonders never cease?*”

Guy: “*I hope not.*”

Time warp #2: The screen ripples again and the darkness and bad weather vanish, changing to a spring day. The Friends step elaborately into an 1830’s open-top carriage, he bowing her in. The music swells up. Fadeout.

Other books could be given the time-warp treatment too. It could be a recurring theme.

BTW, here’s the full opening sentence, which I abbreviated above:

"It was a dark and stormy night; the rain fell in torrents—except at occasional intervals, when it was checked by a violent gust of wind which swept up the streets (for it is in London that our scene lies), rattling along the housetops, and fiercely agitating the scanty flame of the lamps that struggled against the darkness."

—Edward George Bulwer-Lytton, *Paul Clifford* (1830) ~

U. “Big Enough to Be Small”

I.e., if you’re big enough (have enough data) you can be small (personalized). So this phrase might appeal to Jeff for use in ads, given his “genius for jargon” (James Marcus, *Amazonia*, location 1134) and his interest in the “personalization” of Amazon’s site. This interest is supported by the following quotes from Marcus’s book, which I just read:

“... Jeff’s dream would come true: a unique store for every customer.” (location 2614).

“... Personalization: The idea that the store could be ‘rehung for each customer’—tailored, that is, to individual tastes and preferences—had always been part of Jeff’s vision. Instead of a single Amazon, there would be millions of them, one for each visitor. They would be as distinctive as fingerprints, as genetic codes.” (location 2581)

“Jonathan alluded to this vision during my very first visit, when he mentioned his interest in collaborative filtering. This was a linchpin of any personalization system: it allowed you to tease potential affinities out of a huge mass of data,” (location 2584)

V. A Nine-minute Feature-Survey YouTube Ad

I enjoyed the two 4.5-minute ads you have up on YouTube promoting the K3 and the DX, namely:

K3: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ct2yoTle5RU&feature=related>

DX: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQTz96oeaDU&feature=related>

However, I’d enjoy them more if they covered *all* the Kindle’s selling points, not just half of them, and if the spoken words that mentioned a feature were accompanied by video of the Kindle’s screen and keyboard performing the action described. These screen-shots would replace the current shots of happy users gazing at their gadget, etc.

At present most potential buyers have read articles and heard discussions about e-readers and the iPad. They are already educated about, and mostly sold on, the *concept* of an electronic reading device.

There are currently few utter neophytes who'd be put off by a feature-focused ad that took-for-granted their basic awareness the general features of e-readers. Viewers would be more offended by soft-sell ads filled with glittering generalities.

What many potential buyers want instead are ads with more *specifics*, to increase their grasp of the pros-and-cons of the product-choices available to them. At any rate, that's what I personally wanted to know before I acquired my Kindle. I therefore think such feature-survey videos would be more helpful sales tools, at least for a major portion of the buying public. They wouldn't be hard to produce, since home-brew "production values" would be acceptable.

It would be possible to break a nine-minute ad up into a series of one-minute ads suitable for broadcasting, each describing a related handful of features. Either a nine-minute ad, or nine one-minute ads, would effortlessly inculcate the message, "*It's Wonderful!*"

Here is a list of 50 selling points such an ad-series might include, grouped into nine one-minute blocks (labeled A-I) of related features. The first feature is presented in a 15-second standalone ad, which could be a way of pilot-testing the concept of feature-focused bits:

1. Obtaining "more" (in some sense) via the Kindle

1. (Introductory musical "bit" – a sort of Kindle-ad "ringtone.")

"I love my Kindle because ..."

("Reason #1" appears in text in a corner of the screen.)

"... I can hover over an unfamiliar word and its definition pops up. My vocabulary grows daily."

(The camera view shows a "spotlighted" cursor moving and a "spotlighted" definition appearing at the screen bottom, a few lines below the word. I assume there's some video-editing magic that can produce this spotlighting effect.)

(A voice-over perhaps reads out the word and its definition.)

"The more you know the Kindle, the better you like it." (This could be the sign-off for all the ads in this series.)

(Kindle ring-tone signs off. Time elapsed: 10-15 seconds.)

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Of course, a *single* ad can't:

1. Cover *all* the Kindle's attractive features.
2. Educate utter neophytes about e-readers.
3. Inculcate a "feel-good / I-want-to-know-more" impression about the Kindle.

But a *series* of such selling-point ads could cover almost all the attractive features—and, in so doing, indirectly achieve the 2nd and 3rd aims above as well.

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2. "I can magnify pictures when I hover over them."

(This slips in the point that the Kindle can display graphics, including multi-toned graphics, since such a graphic is what the ad would show being enlarged.)

3. "I can magnify the type for my mom."

(Ad shows this being done. (Cursor clicks in the ad should be amplified and transformed into a distinctive "boing" sound so they will be recognized as triggering the subsequent on-screen action.))

4. "I can look up the meaning of any word, not just ones in the book I'm reading."

(Ad shows this being done.)

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2. "Selling points" relating to convenience

5. "I can read for hours without tiring my eyes, because there's no screen-glare—no more than there is from a book."

6. *"I can turn a page with just the side of my thumb."*

7. *"I can read a book with just one hand."*

(Camera shows the need to hold a regular book in two hands and use two hands when turning a page. Maybe it even shows the reader licking her finger before turning the page.)

8. *"I can read in landscape mode if I prefer."*

(Ad shows a book that contains landscape-mode (wide) graphics.)

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3. Convenience-related "points" dealing with intra-book navigation

9. *"I can read lots of books at the same time without losing my place. The Kindle remembers the furthest place I got to in each."*

10. *"I can see how far I've read in the books I'm reading."*

(Ad shows the darkened dots.)

11. *"I can jump anywhere in a book from its table of contents."*

(Ad shows)

12. *"I can skip ahead or back a chapter at a time."*

(Ad shows the left- and right-arrow keys in use.)

13. *"I can jump to a bookmark I've made—and see its context before I do so."*

(Ad shows such a jump from the Notes and Marks screen.)

14. *"If I follow a link or visit the Kindle store while I'm in the middle of doing something else, I can't lose my place. Hitting the Back button retraces my steps."*

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4. Highlights, bookmarks, and notes

15. *"I can highlight my favorite passages, and turn-down corners, or make bookmarks, on my favorite pages."*

(Ad shows the cursor being moved to create a highlight or make a bookmark (using the double-click method).)

16. *"I can make notes in my books too—and all of this without upsetting my spouse!"*

(Ad shows a note being typed.)

17. *"I can review and savor all three types of annotation later."*

(Ad shows Menu being clicked, then "View My Notes & Marks.")

18. *"My annotations for all my books are automatically collected in a global clippings file where I can do a search for a favorite quotation and find out where it came from."*

(Ad shows the My Clippings file being opened and a search being run for the phrase, "It was a dark and stormy night.")

19. *"My highlights are automatically backed up on the Amazon site, so I can't lose them."*

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5. Certain non-book items that can be inputted

20. *"I can use e-mail to import & read my own Word documents."*

(Ad shows clicking the e-mail-this-document button in a Word document to bring up an e-mail, followed by typing the initial letter of one's name in the "To" line, then a click to fill in the line from the drop-down list of names, then a click of the Send button.)

21. *"I can wirelessly import and read PDFs (without conversion)."*

(Ad shows one being read, in landscape mode.)

22. *"I can import MP3 music & listen to it anywhere without carrying an extra device."*

(Ad perhaps shows highlights of the download procedure.)

23. *"I can import & play audiobooks on my Kindle."*

(Ad plays a sample.)

24. *"I can subscribe to blogs and periodicals. I get new content pushed to me immediately. And I don't have to get wet getting my newspaper."*

(Ad shows some of this happening.)

25. *"I can 'clip'-and-save whole articles with a couple of clicks."*

26. *"I can even import my own photos."*

(This is described at the end of "Kindle 3 Keyboard Shortcuts," here: <http://blog.diannegorman.net/2010/09/kindle-3-keyboard-shortcuts-et-al/>)

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6. The book-buying process

27. *"After I click on 'Kindle Store' [ad shows this] I can search it just like the regular Amazon bookstore and read reader-reviews. What's better about the Kindle is that I can download sample chapters from many books and read them later at my ease, instead of one-by-one while sitting at a computer."*

(Kindle screen shows cursor clicking on the "Try a Sample" button.)

28. *"I can start reading a book as soon as I've ordered it."*

(Kindle screen shows cursor clicking on the "Buy" button, then clicking on the Home button, where the book has appeared within seconds.)

29. *"If I click the Buy button by mistake, I can cancel my order right then. And I can return unwanted items within a week."*

(Kindle screen shows the cursor clicking on the “Cancel Order” button or the “return item” option in the Action drop-down list in “Your Kindle Library.”)

30. *“My e-books cost less than paper books.”*

31. *“I can get nearly any current best-seller on the Kindle. Publishers make more e-books available for the Kindle than for other readers.”*

32. *“My books are backed up on the Amazon site, so I can't lose them even if I lose my Kindle.”*

33. *“I can organize my books by categories into folders of my choosing. I can put a book into multiple folders if it spans categories.”*

(Ad shows a half-dozen folders, one of which is clicked. (This “point” might be included in the “navigation” bunch that encompasses items 9-14.))

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7. Web-related points

34. *“If a book or magazine article contains a link, I can click it and go there.”*

35. *“I can wirelessly tell my friends about my finds and reactions with a few clicks, at no charge.”*

36. *“Wikipedia & Google searching is built in.”*

37. *“I can browse the web.”*

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The blocks (groups of five) that follow are the first for which actors would be needed. For the prior blocks animated Kindle screenshots would suffice.

8. “Niceties,” or convenience-features, of the Kindle

38. *“My spouse and I can read the same book at the same time and talk about it while we read it. (If we share an Amazon account we both have access to a book that either of us buys.)”*

39. *“I can fit my reading into my small segments of free time.”*

(The camera shows reading being done in a check-out line, a laundromat, a waiting room, etc.)

40. *“I can have my Kindle read out loud to me while I’m doing housework or gardening, or while traveling (with the earpiece for privacy while strap-hanging in a bus).”*

(Ad shows ...)

41. *“I can read it in bright sunlight.”*

(Ad shows the reader in her back yard or front porch.)

42. *“I can curl up in bed with it. It weighs only half a pound.”*

43. *“I can fit lots more books into my existing space.”*

(Ad shows a book-stuffed apartment.)

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9. Travel- and commuting-related features

44. *“I can take a lot of reading with me when I travel. It weighs only half a pound.”*

45. *“I can carry my books in my purse [or pocket]. I don't need to carry them in my hand or in a briefcase.”*

(Ad shows a guy slipping a Kindle into his inner breast pocket. This is a definite advantage you have over some competitors, so make a point of it.)

46. *“I can take it on a long vacation without a charger. The battery is good for up to a month.”*

47. "I can download books on the road, from just about anywhere, including abroad."

48. "I can move all my books without a mover. It holds up to 3500 books."

(Ad shows someone wheeling boxes of books into a moving van--a red slash covers the field of view.)

49. "It costs as little as \$99. That's less than the cost of another bookshelf for additional hard-copy books."

50. "I can read any book in public without embarrassment."

(Ad shows a Fabio-type hunk on a florid "romance"-type cover.)

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What prompted me to write the above was a thread on Amazon's Kindle discussion site titled "Do you like the Kindle TV commercials?" A couple of comments there made me think:

Gilgamesh says:

"the iPad commercial is very impressive. Just the product doing its thing. No people. No other products. If they did something like that with the Kindle, I think it would be a lot more effective than the commercials they have put out so far."

Seattleite says:

"I find that the commercials do not really communicate what exactly a Kindle is nor what it can do."

As a result, I posted the following:

How about a blizzard of "bite-sized" (15-second) ads? Each ad would have a number, such as "Reason #7 why I love my Kindle." Each day a new ad would be broadcast. When all had been shown, the sequence would replay. This would keep them fresh.

I followed the text above with the 50 single-sentence selling points that led off this suggestion. I got the following encouraging feedback, which is what emboldened me to write to you (Amazon):

Gilgamesh says:

“Good idea”

Deborah J. Aykit says:

“wow thank you!!! You just sold me on one!!! :)”

Deborah J. Aykit says:

“Actually, being newly in the market for one, I had only thought Kindle was a book reader - I had no idea about the sound, internet, dictionary and other features - so I appreciated the shorties :)”

Seattleite says:

“Roger, Yes!! That's exactly right!!!”

Chief says:

“Outstanding suggestions, Roger”

S. Dunham says:

“Those are really good suggestions, Roger. I didn't care for the earlier Kindle commercials. Like I told my husband, if I didn't already have a Kindle, I wouldn't know what the heck one was.” ~

W. YouTube Reviews of K3, DX, and Competitors

Relevant to the feature-survey ad suggested above, here's a 12-minute YouTube review by Mobile Tech Review that shows how impressive a once-over-lightly feature-survey can be:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gotyZNvtc44>

Here's another 12-minute YouTube review:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8cOMvAHLjw>

(Fits in inner pocket of a sports coat.)

A 13-minute review:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N6FDsM0Yzek&feature=related>

A 4-minute review of the lighted leather cover:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2sINv06Wss4&NR=1>

A 10-minute tour of the Kindle 2:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ct2yoTle5RU&feature=related>

10-minute DX review mentions that typing is hard because of the overweighting from the upper part.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rW-oazz-o5g&feature=fvw>

5-minute Kindle DX ad.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ct2yoTle5RU&feature=related>

Official 4:35-minute K3 ad:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQTz96oeaDU&feature=related>

K2 vs. Nook, 5-minute CNET review:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xBh71oiaunU&NR=1>

K2 vs. Nook

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1smnU5pRnPU&feature=related>

10-minute Nook review

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ReGr_Nlqtk&feature=related

10-minute Alex e-reader review. (Android with touchscreen, no 3G.)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gX32hr_fkKU&feature=channel

In addition, Amazon should consider creating a half-hour infomercial (starring Ron Popiel?! (sp?)). It would pile on all the Kindle's selling points until the viewer cried "Uncle."

http://www.amazon.com/tag/kindle/forum/ref=cm_cd_tfp_ef_tft_tp?_encoding=UTF8&cdForum=Fx1D7SY3BVSESG&cdThread=TxZM3NG3LIUUIZ&displayType=tagsDetail