

# **Author Platform Rocket**

## Email Marketing for Authors: How To Transform Subscribers Into Buyers

### **Handout for Session 8: How to Personalize Your Automated Reader Club so it doesn't SOUND Automated**

This handout provides the step-by-step instructions and is designed to be used with the webinar taught on 9/20/2016.

### **Housekeeping**

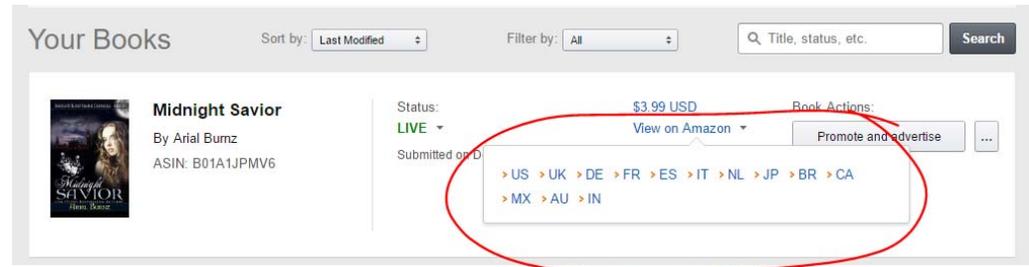
#### **International Winners**

One of the housekeeping issues we discussed in Session 9 was what to do when an author gets an international winner picked for their giveaway. In spite of the notices we put on the giveaways, stating that some prizes are only available to winner in certain locations of the world, some people don't read those warnings and enter the contest anyway. And it's impossible for us to know where a winner is located just by their email address. So what do you do?

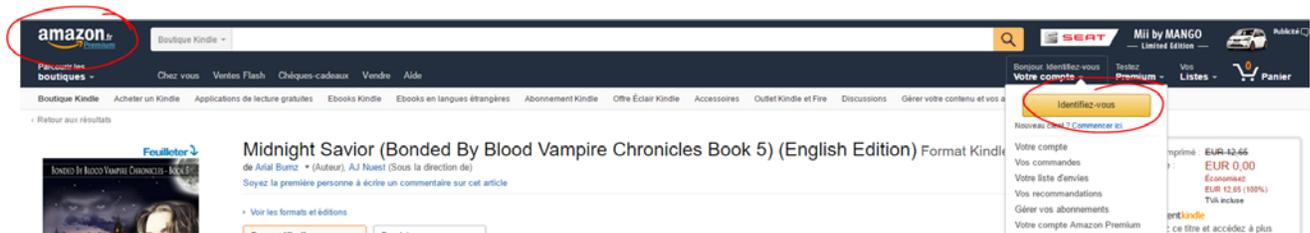
The first thing to remember is YOU control what prizes you will distribute. Secondly, most readers are very accommodating regarding the shipping of prizes. However, the following suggestions should help cut down on some of the problems that might crop up if those international winners slip through the cracks.

- Create an account on the Amazon international websites using your US login credentials. The accounts will be all linked. I've updated my credit card and profile information and noticed the changes across all sites. Though I haven't diligently checked every detail to be sure, I know that when I added a credit card to my US account, when I logged in to my UK account, that credit card was available for me to use. And Amazon is increasing their reach all the time. If you'd like to access one of their international sites...
  - Just visit your KDP dashboard ([kdp.amazon.com](http://kdp.amazon.com))
  - Go to your Bookshelf
  - Hover your mouse over the link "View on Amazon" on one of your books and a popup menu will appear with links to view that book on the various

websites.



- Some browsers will ask if you'd like to translate the page. Go ahead and select the TRANSLATE option. If not, the layout should be the same for each site, so if you know where the "Your Account" button is near the top-right, just click on that and click the large yellow button, which should take you to the login screen. This picture shows the Amazon.fr (France) website.



- It's been a very long time since I've done this, but I believe Amazon has also improved their connection to each of their sites, so you should be able to just login to the international site with your US login information. If not, you may have to fill out your profile information. Since I've already done this, anytime I login to these sites now, it doesn't ask me for information.
- Creating/logging in at the various Amazon website will allow you to gift eCards as well as gift your KU titles.
- Use other electronic gift options:
  - Visa gift cards
  - PayPal cash
- BookDepository.com is another option to award paperback books without having to pay for postage. They ship worldwide for FREE! If you want to personalize and autograph the book, try book plate stickers. [CLICK HERE](#) to go to VistaPrint and order customized, branded stickers specifically for this purpose.
  - Write a personalized inscription on the sticker, just like you would when you sign a paperback
  - Enclose it in an envelope with a personalize card.
  - Including a short note, thanking them for understanding about shipping is a nice touch! You might even want to include instructions on where to put the sticker for their paperback or give them a status update on their book: "I've ordered your book and it should be on the way! Just put this sticker inside the cover when it arrives. I hope you enjoy the novel!" is an example.

## How To Award Prizes

Surprisingly enough, we've had authors a bit perplexed about which prizes to award to which winners. The short answer is – you can give the prizes to the winners any way you like. However, we suggest you use the spreadsheet we give you not only as a method of getting their email addresses to contact them, but there are useful columns in the spreadsheet that will help you keep track of when you've contacted them. Take advantage of this tool and add a couple of columns:

- **Deadline:** We recommend when you contact the winners with their prize notification, give them a deadline as to when they need to respond to claim their prize. Two week to one month is more than acceptable. We wouldn't recommend any longer than that, though. Let them know if they don't respond by the deadline, you'll award the prize to someone else. We'll be happy to pick a new winner for you – just let us know the email address of the person who didn't claim their gift so we can replace them in our system. So add a column with the heading "Deadline" and put down the deadline you gave them. Then be sure to put a reminder on your calendar so you can stay on top of awarding your prizes!
- **Responded Date:** You might want to add a column with this heading so you can record when the person responded to your message. This is a great tool to judge how long it takes people to respond to what prizes and you can either extend or contract your deadlines accordingly for future giveaways.
- **Prizes:** In this column, list the prizes you're giving away. You can either list them in the order we have them on your giveaway landing page. OR you can list the prizes on the spreadsheet in any order you wish.

Contact your winners, letting them know what they've won – be sure to give them the deadline to respond – and update your spreadsheet. And if they provide their first and/or last name, make sure you update your mailing list information, too! You might even want to ask them for this information, along with their birthday, to let them know this will help personalize their experience.

For example: "My records show I only have your email address. I would love to make your experience more personalized for your reader club membership. This allows me to address messages to you, as well as send you birthday greetings and even notify my fans when I'm in the area for conventions or book signings. Please respond with the following information (have a bulleted list for them to complete) and I'll be happy to update your profile for you."

Most people respond very well to such requests or simply say, "No thank you." No problem! (I have yet to have anyone NOT share this information).

## Ideas for Personalizing Your Reader Club

As mentioned in the presentation, here are a list of ideas for how you can keep your readers up to date with current events and other ways to automate a personalize experience.

## *Current Event Messages*

As events happen, you can send out broadcast messages to your entire list. Not only does this keep them updated on current events, but it makes all of your other automatic drip messages seem less...well, automatic!

- **New Releases** – We’ll be going into a LOT more detail about how to leverage your mailing list to have a successful book campaign, but sending new release notices to all your subscribers – regardless of where they are in the auto-drip series – can work in your favor to create hype AND put a fire under their butt to get caught up on the other books in your series! Take advantage of that and don’t be afraid to include everyone!
- **Author Group Projects** – These come and go all the time and if you belong to very active Facebook author group, you’ll have a lot of cross promotion opportunities to take advantage of. Examples of group projects
  - Boxed sets
  - Holiday or seasonal sales
  - Reader Group activities (e.g., sales created specifically for followers of a particular blog or a Facebook reader group)
- **Online & Offline Events** – Whether it’s virtual or physical events, your subscribers should be informed so they can participate! Examples:
  - **Facebook Parties** – yours or for other authors! Help each other out by advertising it to your mailing list.
  - **Conventions & Book Signings** – Send a notice as soon as you know you’re going to give people time to budget their finances and/or attend locally. Then send a couple of messages as you get closer to the event to be sure they don’t forget to be there AND you can let them know where you’ll be. You could even plan a little get-together with your fans!
- **General Information** – Did you win an award? Perhaps got your letters (NYTimes or USA Today bestseller)? Let your readers know! If you’re a sci-fi writer, you can send out a notice on an astronomy event, like a comet or when a planet is coming closest to earth or with an upcoming lunar or solar eclipse! My novel *Midnight Eclipse* was released on a blood moon – perfect for my vampires and shapeshifters and the storyline featured the Lunar and Solar Eclipse rings the characters were seeking. Fun information to share while relating it to my books.

**TIP:** Be mindful of group options you’ve provided for readers. If you’ve given them the option to only get new release notifications, be sure to add a segment to EXCLUDE that group from your messages. We need to respect their subscription options if we give them a choice.

**TIP:** Try as often as possible to provide at least ONE buy link to your books. But always give the readers something to click so you can gauge interest.

### *Pre-Scheduled Campaigns*

There are a bunch of fun opportunities you can take advantage of if you plan ahead and pre-schedule messages going out. I totally recommend you to sit down and write a list of messages you can send out for annual events or occasions. Then slowly create one message at a time so you don't overwhelm yourself with trying to do them all at once. Here are some examples of annual opportunities where the dates can change, but you know they're coming up:

- **Daylight Savings Time** – this is really great for those authors who write time travel! Fun way to tie in your books. But at a bare minimum, your subscribers will appreciate the reminder to set their clocks back. Update your records for those people who either don't experience time zone changes OR who set their clocks forward/back at a different time in the year (e.g., Europe & the US have different days they practice daylight savings).
- **Holidays** – Which holidays you like to celebrate also reveal your personality and allow you to relate to your readers. AND the holidays may very well tie in with events or themes for your books. Did you write a story about a fertility god? The Spring Equinox is a great excuse to send a greeting! Write about vampires, werewolves or witches? Halloween is a great day to share some teaser scenes! Do you have a Christmas story on your backlist? Promote it during the winter holiday!
- **Character Birthdays & Anniversaries** – If you've shared the birthdays of your characters OR those are important elements of your stories, then celebrating those dates with your readers gives you an excuse to talk about how the special day(s) fit into the novels.
- **Book Release Anniversaries** – Wanna generate hype for an old series? Celebrate the date the first book was released. This is especially useful if you're planning to revamp a series by redoing all the covers OR you've just gotten your rights back from a publisher and you're relaunching the series. You could pick the anniversary date it was started – or finished – and celebrate with some sales!

Obviously, if a date is or can be celebrated annually, you can pre-compose and schedule a message about it! Write a list of possible dates you'd like to use for promotion and plan them out on your calendar. Then set up reminders for any preparations you need to do (e.g., use your free days with Amazon or setting a book for free a couple of days before to ensure its free when the event happens).

### *Automated Personal Campaigns*

These are the ones the readers really like because it's all about THEM. Doing something very special for their special days goes a long way with showing you care and your subscribers are not just nameless people on your list. Here are a few examples that make a huge impact:

- Birthday
- Anniversary

- Wedding
- Membership (how long they've been a member)

In the webinar, I showed how I structured my birthday club. For those of you who enjoyed this idea and want to do your own, here are the instructions on how I set my birthday greetings.

### ***How to Setup a Birthday Greeting with MailChimp***

Though these are instructions for what I did using MailChimp, most of this information can be applied to any mailing list service. I'll try to keep it as generic as possible.

1. Add the "birthday" field to your sign-up form (or your Update Profile form if you have the option to create multiple forms for your mailing list service – MailChimp will only allow one form)
2. Create an automation for birthday greetings:
  - a. Automation > Add Automation button > Choose Date Based > Birthdays
  - b. **NOTE:** On the top-left, you'll see the option to choose which date and "birthday" should already be selected. If you've added other date-based fields, those should also be options. But for birthdays, we'll leave the default.
  - c. MailChimp pre-populates three messages in the workflow. And they seem to suggest you send messages on and around their special day. This is especially useful if you're giving your subscribers coupons or discounts. Do you sell items on your website? Perhaps you can create a birthday coupon or gift certificate value on your site. Maybe a promo code for your Etsy or Ebay store, if you have one. For this exercise, we'll use one message in the automation. You don't have to use all three or you can shower them with gifts and give them a greeting every day of the week of their birthday or leading up to.
  - d. Create the message as you would for any other drip campaign. Be sure to plug in their name merge tag so the message is personalized and remind them that if they don't see their name, they should update their profile.
  - e. If you have a gift for them, be sure you've created the web page with the freebie/gift and then use a button to link to that page so they can get it (e.g., for my greeting, I tell them they have a strip-o-gram and a gift, then I link them to the page where I've embedded a humorous video, like the Chris Farley SNL skit where he's trying out for Chippendales).

Search YouTube.com for "humorous birthday" or "birthday bloopers" and you'll find a ton of videos you could embed on your site for the birthday page you create. [CLICK HERE](#) for instructions on how to embed a YouTube video on your site. OR visit YouTube and search for "*how to embed a youtube video on a website*" and you'll get a lot of results with videos showing you how!

## Links in this Document

- **Authorgraph** – a free service that allows you to add your Amazon-published eBooks to your free author page and gives readers the ability to request an autograph and inscription in your books – <http://authorgraph.com>
  - In the presentation, I mentioned that the FAQs page would have instructions for the reader. I was actually wrong about that! The only thing a reader needs to do is go to your author page and click the “Request Authorgraph” button under the book they want you to autograph. It’s that simple! Here’s the link to my author page as an example:  
<https://www.authorgraph.com/authors/arialburnz>
- **BookDepository** - <http://www.bookdepository.com/> for drop-shipping your books to people internationally with free shipping worldwide. Your books must be available through the Amazon/CreateSpace Expanded Distribution program in order for them to show up on BookDepository.
- **VistaPrint Link** – I created a Pretty Link to make it easier to use, but this forwards you to the search page I did to create customized stickers through VistaPrint. I felt the size of these stickers were ideal for writing an inscription and autograph to be put inside the covers of paperback books. Of course, you can use whatever blank stickers you might be able to find at Office Depot or other stationery or office supplies store - <http://www.arialburnz.com/vistaprintbookplatestickers>
- **How to Embed a YouTube Video** - [http://www.htmlgoodies.com/tutorials/web\\_graphics/article.php/3480061/How-To-Add-a-YouTube-Video-to-Your-Web-Site.htm](http://www.htmlgoodies.com/tutorials/web_graphics/article.php/3480061/How-To-Add-a-YouTube-Video-to-Your-Web-Site.htm)

## Questions?

Try as I might, I know I can’t be 100% effective in my communications. What sounds clear to me might be really confusing to you. No problem! If you have any questions about the ideas I’ve shared above, just email us at [aprgiveaways@gmail.com](mailto:aprgiveaways@gmail.com) and either I, Brenda or Jonny can answer your questions.

I hope you found this handout helpful and you’re enjoying the webinars.

Thank you!!

***Arial Burnz***

Author of HOT Scottish Vampires