

Why I'm Happy Being an Indentured Writer Again

By Glenn Fleishman

[*Editor's Note:* One of the publishing tragedies mentioned in the Authors Co-op discussion (see front page) was Adam Engst's book, *Internet Starter Kit* — a bestseller with dominant market position until, according to Engst, the publisher "killed the book through inattention and neglect." Two years later, Glenn Fleishman provided this optimistic report on a new venture with Adam Engst.]

Adam Engst and I co-wrote *The Wireless Networking Starter Kit* (Peachpit Press, 2003) with the intent of founding a franchise. We want this book to not only be something we revise as frequently as every 9 to 15 months given the pace of innovation and change in the home and small business wireless networking world, but potentially something we spin into other books, electronic editions, and other projects.

In the first few months, we estimate that we have had an extremely high number of direct sales: copies we've actually touched or interacted with. Adam has a 50,000-recipient mailing list (www.tidbits.com), and I have some moderate-traffic sites with thousands of daily visitors on topics focused on wireless networking.

Affiliate Sales

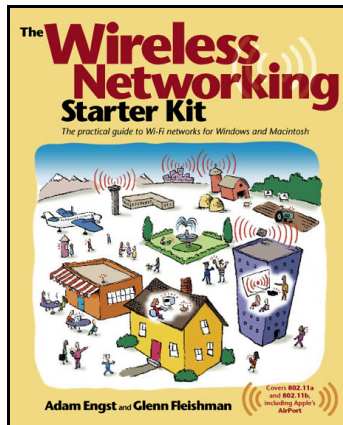
We sold several hundred copies of our book in the first few weeks through our Amazon.com affiliate link, meaning we get our author royalties plus 15 percent of Amazon.com's 30 percent-off-retail price for the book. I can't tell you our precise royalty, but it's well within industry standards. So any Amazon.com sale results in approximately a 100-percent increase in our revenue from the book. We negotiated a similar referral fee from Peachpit for referring sales to their site, as well.

We believe that somewhere between 15 and 20 percent of the books sold in the first month were through Peachpit or Amazon.com links from

our site, which makes a substantial impact on our overall average per-book revenue.

Trade Show Sales

In addition, we pushed the book like crazy at Macworld Expo, doing three book signings, making sure that several booths were selling the book, and I appeared on TechTV's *The Screen Savers* program. As a result, we believe 150 to 200 books were sold on the show floor. Everyone selling books appeared to run out of their copies on hand, and we know how many they had.



Because of all this, we stand to not just pay out our advance and see royalties faster, but get the icing on the cake — the extra affiliate and referral revenue, plus any ancillary purchases in someone's shopping basket at Amazon.com that gives us just a little extra here and there.

Publisher Supports Publicity

Peachpit's support has been magnificent. We've presented them with long lists of very well justified press contacts and influencers, and they've had no complaints about sending out books to this highly targeted group. Adam and I are doing some personal follow-up with many of the people we've sent books to that is resulting in good feedback and some reviews. We've had positive comments in an InfoWorld email publication, a Lockergnome newsletter (which raised our

rank at Amazon.com to as low as 300 for a few hours), and *Fortune's* Personal Technology Web Log written by editor Peter Lewis.

We wrote a 3,000-word update to the book focusing on a suddenly emergent faster flavor of wireless networks — 802.11g — that burst out a few weeks after the book shipped. We made this excerpt available for free on the site, and two other sites published it (part of the O'Keefe model!), as well using it as an article in TidBITS, pushing more users to purchase the book from our site. We were able to get substantial attention from many Mac sites, too, by discussing a new Apple product in the update. This also raised awareness for the book — along with sales.

E-Book Sales

Because we negotiated the right for non-exclusive electronic editions of the book, we are pursuing arrangements now that could result in something like four times the revenue from selling a print copy for each electronic copy sold. Because our book has such international impact and interest, we expect — just as Jakob Nielsen has found out — that selling an e-book is really about selling overseas without the costs of shipping.

Also, I should note that we packaged the book. Therefore, we have full access to the raw graphics and page layout, allowing us to repurpose, repackage, and republish quite easily.

We're getting closer to the revenue and outcome we wanted from the Author's Co-op by working with an extraordinary publisher.

Glenn Fleishman, Unsolicited Pundit, is a freelance reporter for *The New York Times*, *Macworld*, *InfoWorld*, et al., Macintosh columnist for *The Seattle Times*, and co-author, with Adam Engst, of the new book, *The Wireless Networking Starter Kit: A Practical Guide to Wi-Fi Networks for Windows and Macintosh* (Peachpit Press, 2003). The best entry point for numerous online articles and resources Glenn offers is <http://glennf.com>.

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