

A Publisher's Guide to **Optimizing Your Book Marketing Strategy**

INGRAM®

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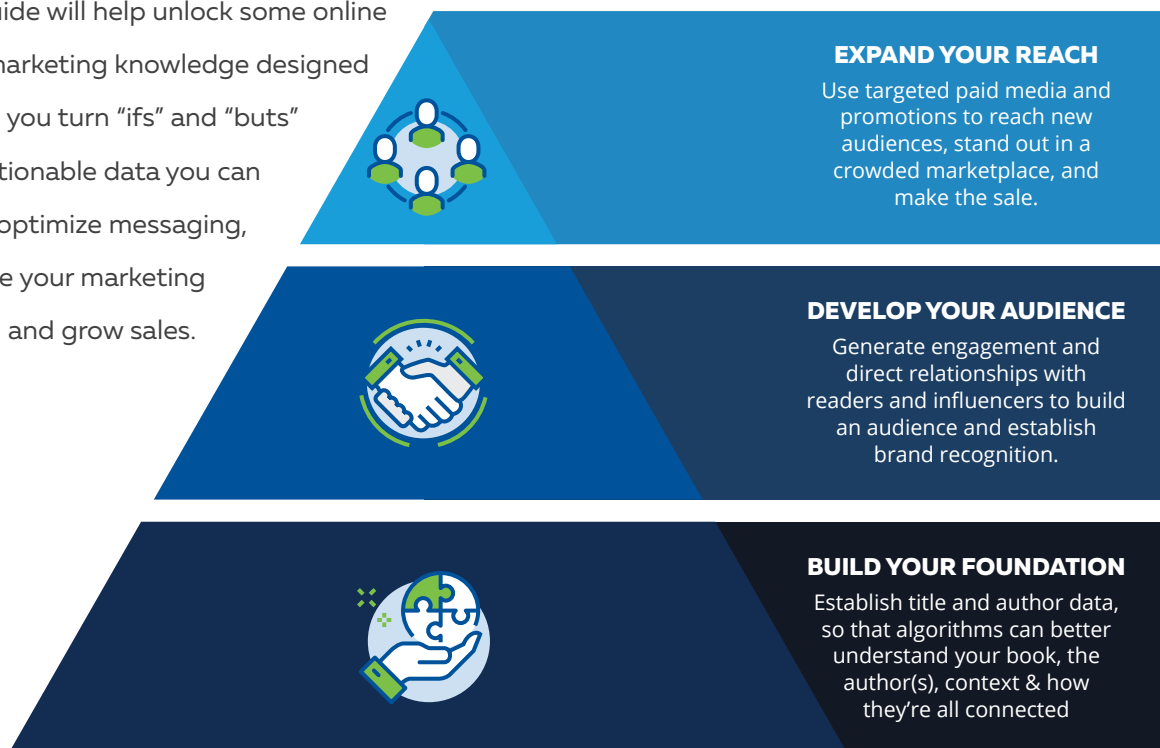
Step 2 Get More From Your Data

There's an online audience for every book. Connecting those booklovers with your content, the content they want and may not yet be aware of, may not be as simple as knowing the content exists.

For example, a romance publisher creates a page on their author's website thanking fans for their ongoing support of a series. They include links to an Amazon page where similar books can be purchased.

For publishers and book marketers alike looking to drive online book sales, a little insight into how certain online platforms steer the customer journey, reveal authors and titles, and enable discoverability and purchases, can make a world of difference.

This guide will help unlock some online book marketing knowledge designed to help you turn "ifs" and "buts" into actionable data you can use to optimize messaging, improve your marketing results, and grow sales.



STEP 1

Understand The Analytics Driving Online Platforms

You must first understand how algorithms work within online platforms and therefore how they impact the way your content is surfaced.

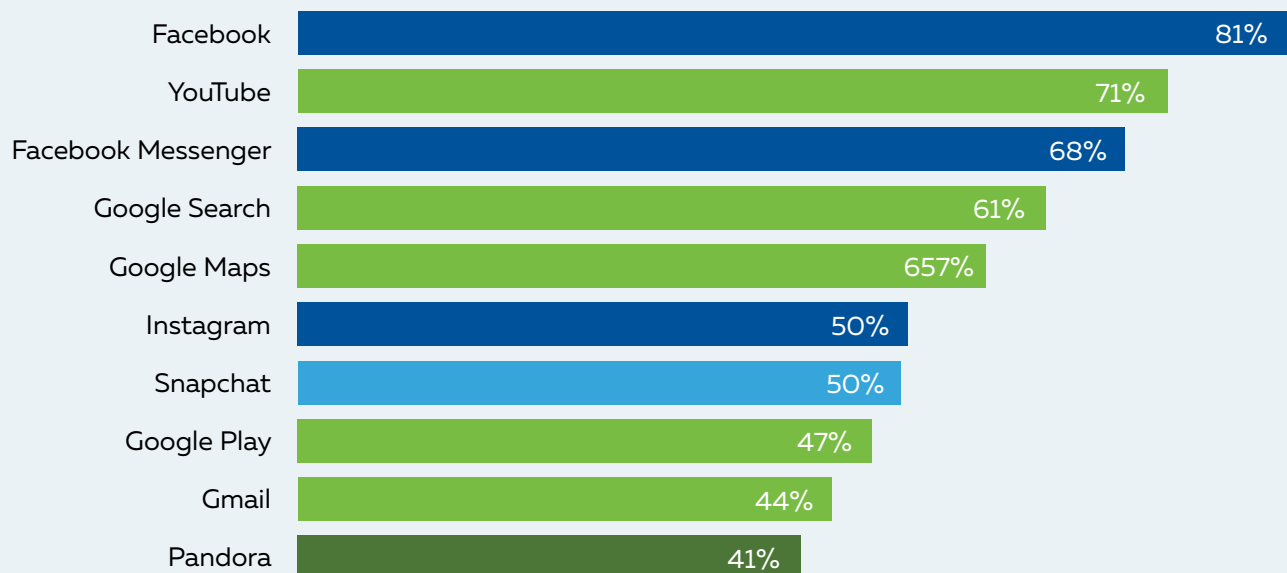
How does search, social media, and retail platforms like Google, Facebook, and Amazon assess online content to ensure users get the best results?

Algorithms: The Great Gatekeepers

For many, the internet has become hands down the easiest and most convenient place to find information, create connections, and shop for goods and services.

When performing those actions most people tend to start off at a few core platforms, several of which are particularly relevant to books—namely Google, Facebook, and Amazon.

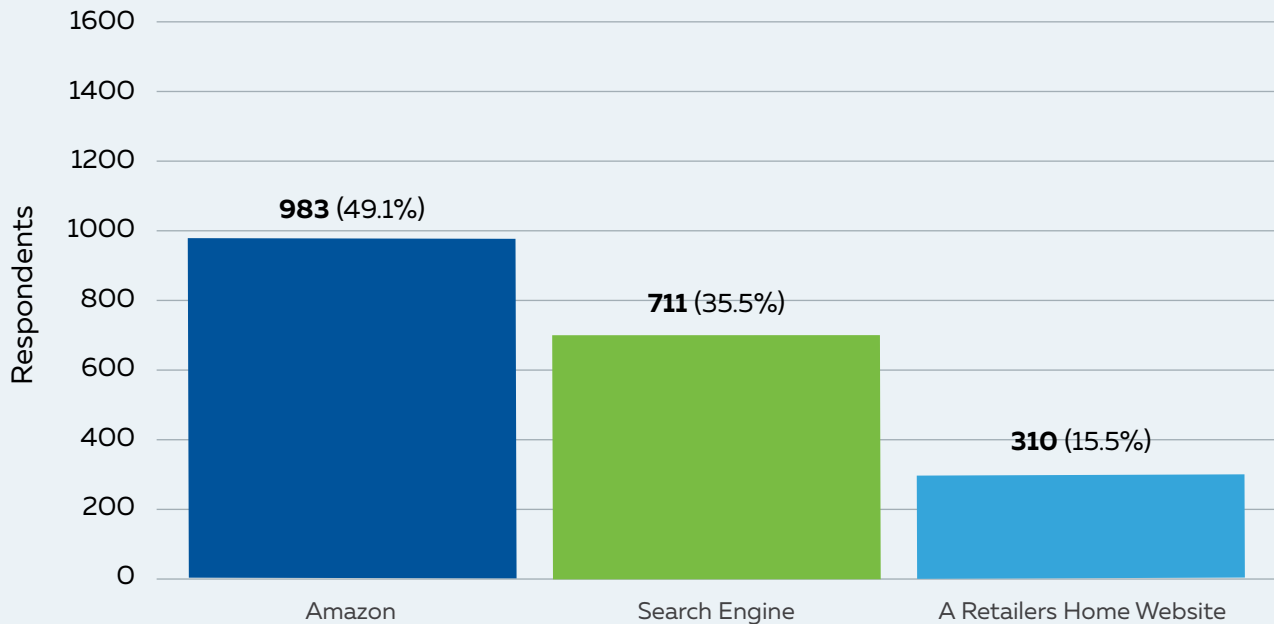
Top 10 Mobile Apps



comScore Mobile Metrix, U.S., Age 18+, June 2017

Depending on what device they're using, most web users can be found on these sites and in these apps.

Where Consumers Begin Their Product Search



Survata.com, December 2017

There's a lot of content on the web, and not all of it is incredibly useful. To ensure only the top quality and most relevant content—high value content—makes its way to the user, each core platform is governed by sets of rules or algorithms.

Making sure your marketing content is high-value isn't about tricking the gatekeeper or finding shortcuts around these rules. It's about understanding why the gatekeepers exist and what elements are being analyzed, measured, and scored.

The Anatomy of an Algorithm

We know that a search engine like Google is constantly tweaking their algorithm, but how does it decide what's important or the elements within?

When content is measured and indexed by a platform's algorithm it produces boatloads of data. These data points help the platform know what is important to a user, and what is not. They include things like:

- Search terms
- Click-through rates
- Number of times content is liked, shared, commented on
- Ads clicked

Search

Search algorithms are designed to provide users with results (organic/paid ads, and listings) that best fit their query.

1. **Keywords:** Search platforms (and most other platforms) first look at the most relevant terms people are searching. Generally speaking, the more they see people searching for a term the higher the value and the greater the competition to “rank” for that given term—that is, to appear toward the top of a results page.

It’s important to note that for search engines, these are keywords used in the copy that appears on a given page.

2. **Visitor Engagement:** Often measured in terms of a bounce rate, this is a measurement of time spent on a web page before leaving.
3. **History:** Does this web page have consistently high levels of traffic? Are other reputable and related web pages linking back to it?
4. **Ease-of-Access:** Mobile responsive, fast loading, secure, intuitive navigation. If it’s easy for the search engine to “crawl” then it is assumed a user can easily navigate the web page or site as well.

Social Media

Social algorithms determine when, where, and how posts/ads appear on a users’ feed.

1. **Engagement:** Likes, comments, shares—all these elements fall into the engagement category. Engaging, sharable content often gets first dibs in a social feed.
2. **Relevance:** Timely, trending, and targeted posts that people care about are often engaging so following the logic of engagement we can see how this works in our favor.
3. **Trust:** Is your brand reputable? Are you sharing content from reputable sources with strong followings? Does this look like clickbait?
4. **History:** What is your relation to the people viewing the content? Have they engaged with your content before? Are they likely to engage again?
5. **Paid:** Most platforms offer some kind of pay-per ad or sponsored content service. This promoted content can be targeted at audiences who are likely to engage. Not organic, but still a valuable measurement.

Retail

Retail algorithms highlight the products users are most likely to purchase and determine which products should be cross-sold on the product detail and cart pages.

1. **Keywords:** These keywords (book specific) live in areas like your book titles, subtitles, descriptions, and categories. Amazon provides a non-user-facing keywords field specific to their search engine that helps connect users with relevant products.
2. **Clicks:** What links, ads, and products pages are people clicking on? What clicks are converting to sale?

Books similar to those that are performing well in this metric will show up more often in a retail search, until they prove otherwise. Algorithms adjust constantly.
3. **Images:** Retail platforms understand people are visual. The more information provided, including images, the more likely we are to show interest. For these reasons retail platforms value products that come with a display images, especially those that support the algorithm. Think the “Look Inside” feature on Amazon.
4. **Price:** Competitively priced in relation to similar books. A mystery book priced too high or too low in comparison to other mystery books of the same quality are likely to score low on this metric.
5. **Brand:** Is the brand—in the case of books, the author or “authoring entity” such as a travel publisher—associated with the product frequently searched with a detailed brand (author bio) page?
6. **Reviews:** Any feedback provided by consumers and reviewers—negative or positive—will support a product listing. Words and phrases used in book reviews also help support keyword rankings.
7. **Special Promotions:** Like a paid ad on Facebook, in the realm of online book sales, products eligible/enrolled in programs like Prime, Kindle Unlimited, and Audible are given a special boost.

Places Algorithms Hang Out

Now that you know what a search, social, and retail algorithm is looking for, you need to know where they are looking and what tactics you can use to most effectively reach your audience on these platforms.

Search

- Title metadata
- Websites and profiles like: author web sites, pages on Goodreads, Amazon, and Wikipedia
- Content marketing—blog posts, videos, landing pages, etc.
- Search and display ads—paid and organic

Social

- Organic/original posts and content from your own website or blog space
- Shared content, reposts from relevant news sources, posts from authors or influencers, etc.
- Influencer marketing and publicity

- Targeted paid ads

Retail

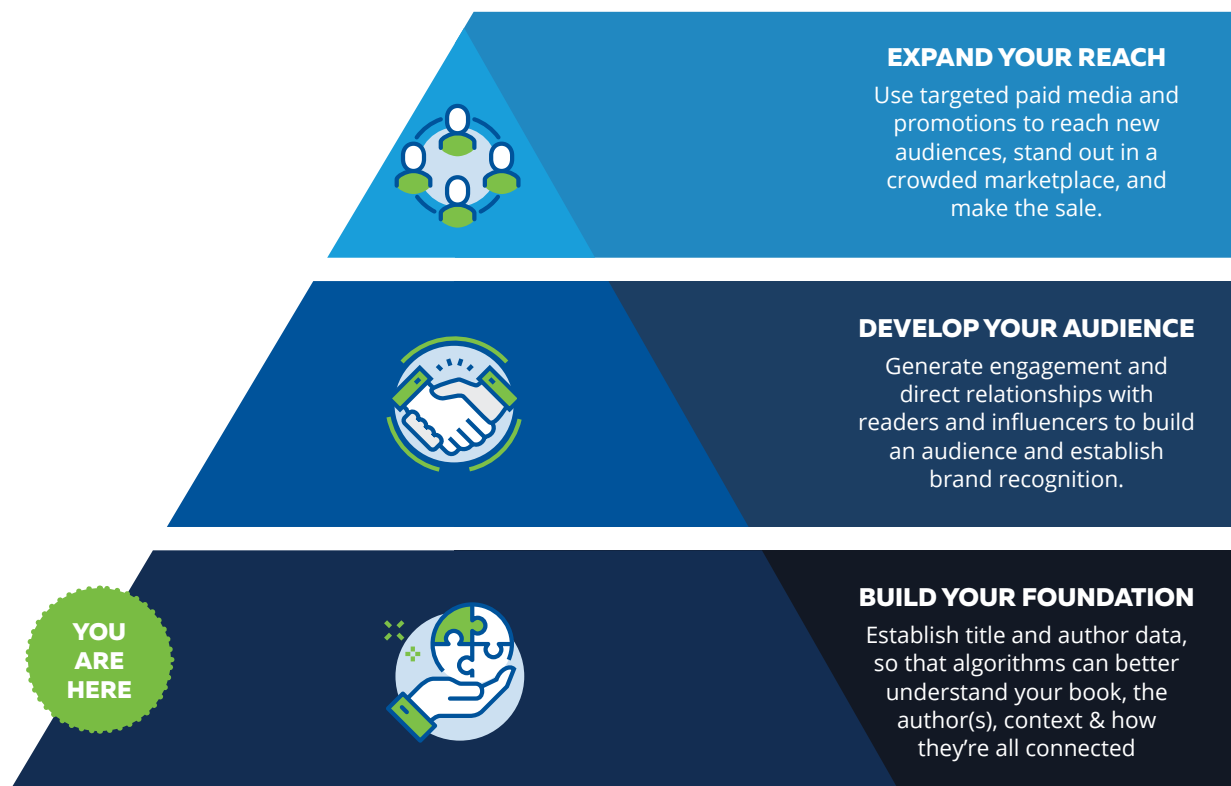
- Title metadata, including title/subtitle, descriptive copy, keywords, and BISAC categories
- Promotions and pricing
- Coop placements
- Advertising and marketing services

Through the insights and the data each of these metrics provides, you can start optimizing your book marketing strategy with high-value content that will increase the chances of discovery and conversion.

STEP 2

How Publishers Can Get More From Their Data

Now that you understand algorithms, learn how to create your content to best serve them, so they understand what your book is, what it's about, etc. – all the things that audiences care about.



Your Marketing Strategy Structure

Building Your Foundation: Content + Context

You can't build a house without a foundation, and the same is true for marketing a book. It is tempting to start with outbound marketing tactics, such as email, social posting, or price promotions – but the way to ensure the greatest likelihood of success of any tactic is to have a solid foundation in place first.

There are a number of content types, tools, and supports that go into planning, designing, and executing a successful book marketing campaign—and it all starts with a solid foundation made up of informative and relevant book and author data.

Algorithms and search engines are intuitive, but only to a certain degree. You need to give algorithms (and potential readers!) rich, detailed information in the right places to make sure they understand what your book is, what it's about, who the author is, how they are related to each other and all of the things that audiences care about. This data is critical for online discovery and will strengthen and support all other marketing and optimization efforts.

There are three key areas to focus on:

1. **Book Metadata:** Feeding accurate and robust product data out to retailers and other channels
2. **Book and Author Profiles:** Placing and managing information about the book and author on authoritative sites and networks—eventually creating connections
3. **Publisher and Author Website(s):** Owning and controlling your information

How do these three foundational elements function?

Book Metadata

Your book metadata powers online discovery and sales. It's used by algorithms to understand what the book is about. Your audience experiences metadata in many different ways.

Keep in mind that your title metadata is often the first discovery mechanism for any book – whether print or digital – online, and it is also frequently the last thing potential buyers see when they are deciding whether to buy the book.

What metadata matters for book marketing?

Your book title and description, cover image, and other key consumer-facing (and algorithm-driving) metadata elements are fundamental to your marketing foundation. Each should provide rich, detailed, and accurate information optimized for both machines and humans in general search, and at point-of-sale.

Title, Subtitle, & Series Information

- Distinctive yet descriptive title and series data helps your book stand out in search (and in consumer's minds).

Cover Image

- Make sure the cover image is clear and legible as a thumbnail and larger sizes. Consumers often only see the cover of your book in search results or retail pages before making a decision about whether or not to learn more.

Product Description

- Provide detailed information about your book. This helps potential buyers find your book and aids in the decision making process.
 - What it is about?
 - Who is it for?
 - What are the key topics and themes?
 - Are there any special features to note?
- Start with a bold headline to capture consumers' attention, and use structural elements such as paragraph breaks, unique formatting, and bullet points to highlight key aspects of the book.

Keywords, Topics, & Phrases

- Use language that speaks to your target audience in ways that they will understand. (How do potential buyers talk about and search for books like this?)
- Incorporate this language into the product description and keywords metadata field.

BISAC Codes & Categories

- Specify three (3) BISAC codes. These should be precise. When possible, they should come from more than one top-level category.

Look Inside & Equivalents

- Previews power book search. Consumers are more likely to purchase if they can 'see' the book content before they buy. (This is especially true for illustrated print books or graphic novels.)

Professional Book Reviews

- Include high-quality review excerpts highlighting a diversity of perspectives on the book when possible.

Author/Contributor Information

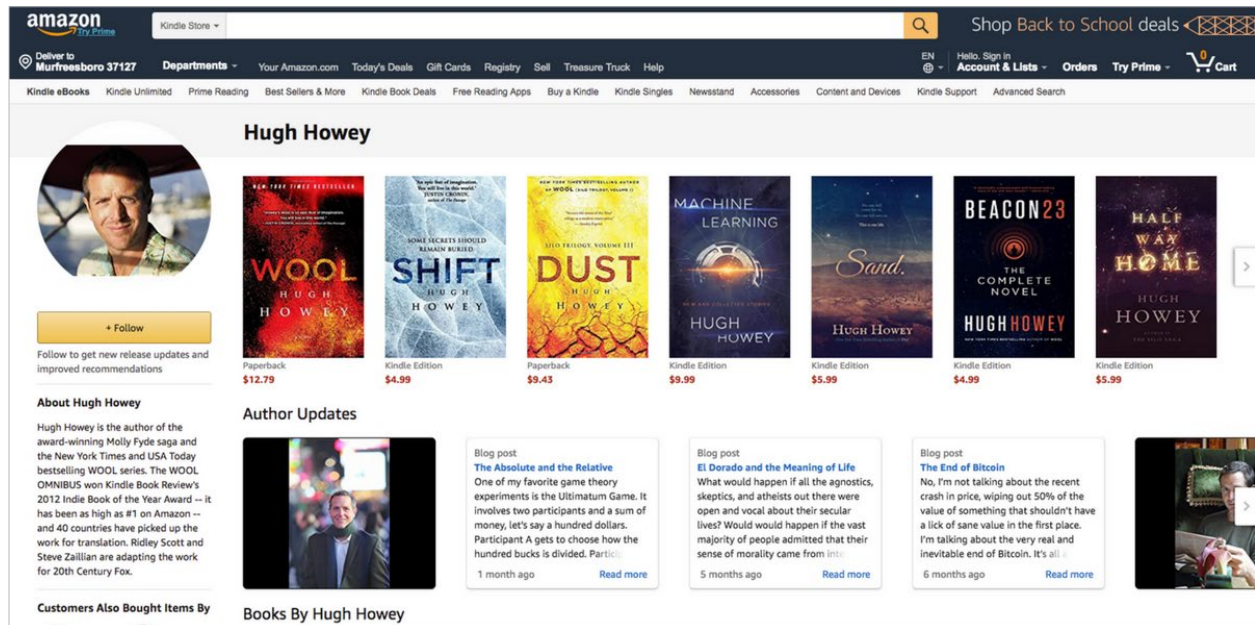
- Provide as much detail as possible for each relevant contributor. Include names and roles as well as a brief biography.

Book & Author Profiles on Authoritative Websites

One way search engines—and readers for that matter—make meaningful connections with book content is by looking to authors and publishers, those behind the pages. The benefits of making this type of information readily available are two-fold:

Where to Start With Online Profiles

Develop a detailed presence for the book and author on leading consumer-facing sites and authority platforms. Fill these profiles out as completely as possible, and make sure to link between them whenever you can.



Amazon Author Page

An Amazon author page helps connect an author to all their titles within the Amazon universe. It also provides readers with the opportunity to follow authors for updates on events, new books, and new blog posts.

Book & Author Pages on Goodreads & Other Book Communities

- Goodreads is owned by Amazon and is an authoritative source of information on authors and books. It's used by millions of readers to track, rate, and review what they're reading. Activity within Goodreads (content, links, user reviews, followers, etc.) is good for author branding and SEO on both Amazon and Google and elsewhere.
- Also consider adding and updating information on LibraryThing, which enables rich, structured book and author data. (LibraryThing Author pages)

Wikipedia (Typically Only for the Author, but Major Books can Qualify as Well)

- Wikipedia is a primary source of authoritative information for search engines like Google.
- Wikipedia author page views are a good indicator of potential online book sales.
- Authors with published works usually qualify for a Wikipedia listing.
- Make sure information is accurate and up-to-date, including a complete bibliography. (Official publisher websites may be cited as sources.)
- If you've never added or updated a Wikipedia page, learn more about contributing to Wikipedia.

Social Profiles

- Social media profiles can help round out an author's web presence, even if they're not frequently used. Choose social networks your target audiences actively use and post engaging content.
- Be sure to provide complete information on any social profile and to link to any and all other online presence.

Publisher & Author Websites

On your own website, you control everything. Your website should be a central hub for the most up-to-date, authoritative information about any book, author, or series you manage.

Author Information

- Include a detailed biography and photo along with supporting info. This can (and should!) be different than what is found in other places online.
- Link to external author profiles and social networks.

Book & Series Details

- Provide complete title information, including detailed descriptions, reviews, and a cover image.

- Create landing pages for book series as appropriate and provide clear chronological information like pub dates for each title in a given series.
- Help simplify the customer's buying experience by linking to retail channels.

Press & Events

- Include links to interviews, related news, and tour/speaking/event schedules if appropriate.

Once you have these foundational elements in place—book metadata, profiles, and websites—you can start attacking other parts of your book marketing strategy with confidence—like forming a mutually beneficial relationship with your audience. View the full version of this guidebook [here](#).

Ingram's [Marketing Insights](#), a marketing and retail analytics platform is designed to deliver key marketing and sales data and alert publishers of opportunities to grow their front and backlist reach via targeted advertising and promotions.