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## Comment: Amazon's "See a Kindle in Your City" scheme is genius

Online giant sees US public volunteering to show Kindles to strangers

by Amy-Mae Elliott published on 26 June 2009

In one of the most astonishing grass roots marketing campaigns I've ever seen, Kindle owners in the US are voluntarily mobilising in their thousands to promote Amazon's ebook reader.

The promotion takes the form of a mutually convenient meet up with an informal hands-on with the gadget, mostly it appears, in coffee shops, book shops and bars, across America.

The informal scheme is so prevalent now that Amazon has set up a dedicated section of its site under the heading "See a Kindle in Your City", organised by state, that's seen thousands of posts from Kindle owners offering to show off their \$400 device to total strangers considering a purchase.

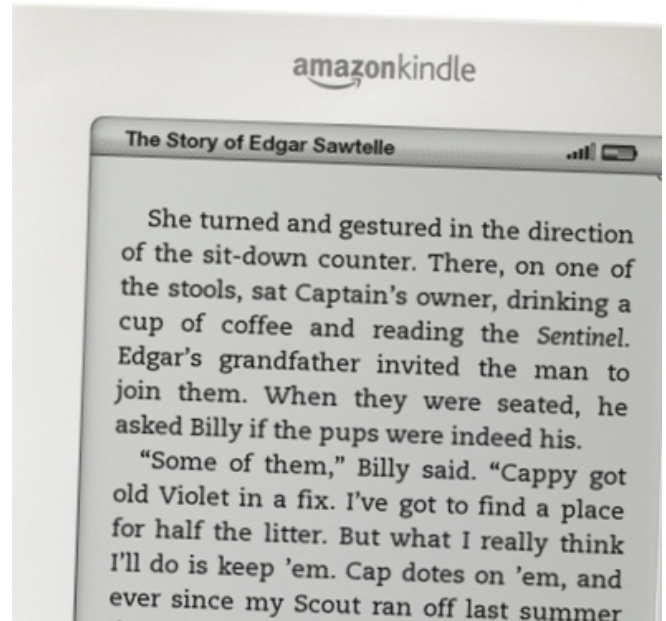
I got in touch with a Kindle shower, and a showee, to find out more about this remarkable development.

Joyce, a university student and adjunct faculty member based in Fairbanks, Alaska who describes herself as an early adopter, said she wasted "a lot of time" researching the Kindle before she bought one.

Her main concern was whether the device's WhisperNet connectivity would work in her neck of the woods, and upon splashing out on the device, and finding it did, says:

"I figured that I should return the favor and do my part by being the first one to post from Fairbanks so that fellow citizens would be reassured".

As well as answering email queries, and posts to



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the forums about the Kindle, Joyce has met up with one curious Kindle wannabe-owner who did purchase the device, as has Joyce's hairdresser, apparently impressed by the instant downloads.

The security aspects of offering to meet with total strangers - whilst clutching an expensive gadget - don't concern Joyce: "I live in a community where I feel pretty safe. I wouldn't have done it if I lived in a city where I felt more vulnerable".

I was interested to find out if Joyce, who admits she has "mixed feelings" about the Kindle, felt her free promotional work should be rewarded by Amazon, a multi-billion dollar corporation.

"I don't expect a reward. I'm not doing it for Amazon, I'm doing it to save others time and make wiser technology purchases".

Amy, a retired reader from Rockford, Michigan interested in buying a Kindle, arranged to meet her Kindle demo buddy in a coffee shop via the Amazon site. Amy says of the meeting: "His demo definitely convinced me that I wanted to buy the Kindle!"

Interestingly it seems Amy's hands-on experience was the thing to push her from ponder to purchase: "I am not sure that I would have purchased one without a demo considering the cost".

Amy has now shown her Kindle off to others, one of whom is reportedly "considering a purchase", suggesting a spider's web of Kindle sales across America from word-of-mouth, as well as the more organised meet-ups.

The "See a Kindle in Your City" scheme is genius. Although my first reaction on hearing about it was how wickedly clever it was for Amazon, as a way of getting round the fact that their cost-saving, online-only business model meant no consumers could fondle a Kindle before they committed to buy it, I think it actually says more about the

Kindle as a device.

To inspire such a vast amount of volunteers who are prepared, in their own time, at their own expense - and risk - to meet with strangers in order to show off the Kindle makes me think it must be a very special device indeed to conjure such devotion.

Perhaps rather than congratulate Amazon with a smirk, about how brilliant it is that they've managed to get the American public to do their marketing for them, for free, as was my aim before getting in touch with people who've got involved, I should congratulate them instead for creating what is clearly a much-loved device.