

# Gate 76 Marketing Plan

Andrew Diamond  
June 23, 2018

## Goals & Strategies

The marketing plan for *Gate 76* has two goals:

1. To get the book into the hands of as many readers as possible.
2. To gain credibility within the industry, in case I want to work with an agent and publisher in the future.

These are both strategic goals, aimed at the long term, and I'm willing to lose some money on them. The more readers I have for this book, the more potential readers I'll have for my next book. The more recognition I gain among agents, editors, reviewers and other influencers with this book, the better my chances will be at selling the next book.

To work toward these goals, I did the following:

1. Sent advance copies of the book to respected professional review services.
2. Promoted the book through paid services that distribute advance electronic copies to readers in exchange for reviews.
3. Added new end pages to the electronic version of my last book, *Impala*, with a summary, review blurbs, and links to purchase the new book, *Gate 76*. Then I ran a giveaway promotion to get *Impala* to as many readers as possible.

## Professional Reviews

I submitted to professional reviews about 2-3 months ahead of my book's June 1 publication date, so that reviews would be ready when the book was released. Most of these services let you choose when your review will go live.

### **Kirkus Reviews (\$425)**

Kirkus is among the most respected review services in the industry. Librarians and bookstore owners look here (among other places) when choosing which titles they'll carry.

Kirkus gave *Gate 76* a starred review, and they'll be listing it among the best new releases of the summer in their August 15 print edition. After their starred review appeared online, I was contacted by Sony Pictures and The New York Review of Books, both of whom said the Kirkus review led them to me. (I sent Sony a copy of the book and never heard back. NYRB invited me to participate in a special ad program for selected independently published books of merit, but I declined. More on that below.)

### **IndieReader (\$349)**

IndieReader's normal review price is \$250. I chose a package that includes advance distribution of electronic copies to booksellers and reviewers.

In the past, IndieReader has given me good reviews, but they really didn't like *Gate 76* at all.

They send an email once a month showing who has downloaded the advance copy of the e-book. In three months, they distributed the book to about 45 people. IndieReader has a smaller pool of readers than NetGalley, and they don't have an effective way of promoting titles to advance readers. They show just a tiny thumbnail of your cover, plus a couple sentences of text, so your book is lost among all the other tiny thumbnails.

I believe the book stays in their advance catalog for six months, so there's a chance more readers will look at *Gate 76* after Kirkus publishes their August 15 print edition.

### **BestThrillers.com (\$99)**

This site reviews both Indie and major authors. Their reviews are well written and thorough, and their readers are dedicated mystery/thriller/suspense fans. I recommend this site. It's nice, too, when your review is listed alongside new titles from Stephen King, Michael Connelly and other big names.

### **Readers' Favorite (\$60)**

I paid for three reviews from them, instead of one, as I had in the past. I don't know why I did that. One is fine. If you choose three, you can pick which of the three appears on the site. These guys are pretty good. You can usually pull a blurb from their review to add to your Amazon page.

### **Feathered Quill (\$95)**

I don't think this site has much of a readership, but they usually write well-considered and thorough reviews. I didn't think they did the best job this time around, as much of the review just summarized my opening chapter. But they're worth considering.

### **Midwest Book Review (\$50)**

Although their website looks horrible, these guys are actually well-respected among librarians and bookstores. They put out a print publication, and they push reviews of books they really like to other online sources. Definitely worth using if you're looking for some credibility.

## Advance Copies for Reader Reviews

### **NetGalley (\$699 + \$90)**

I listed *Gate 76* on NetGalley about 2.5 months ahead of publication. NetGalley distributes free digital copies to bloggers, reviewers, librarians, bookstore buyers and enthusiastic readers. I had known about them for years, but had never used them before.

A number of things led me to use them this time. One was that I had spent a huge amount of time trying to get *Impala* into the hands of review bloggers, with no success. (I spent weeks identifying about 100 bloggers who might like *Impala*. Then I spent hours writing custom emails to each of them. I got twelve responses: 10 no and 2 yes. Only one of the two yeses reviewed the book.)

By chance, I came across a book on Amazon that had reviews from many of the bloggers who I had tried to recruit for *Impala*. I noticed all of the reviews said, "I received a copy of this book from NetGalley." I also noticed many other review bloggers had changed their submission guidelines in the past year to say "I only accept titles through NetGalley."

Then I read [this article](#), in which the author notes that he picked up the bulk of his reviewers through NetGalley targeted email blasts (which are expensive). When I checked NetGalley's site, I noticed their annual mystery/thriller email blast was going out in less than one week, and if I bought a six-month \$699 listing, I could be included in that email at no extra cost. I contacted them and asked if there was space left in that email, and they said there was one slot left.

I signed up, and their annual mystery email got me over 200 readers. They also featured Gate 76 on their homepage for a week (free!) and I paid an extra \$90 for a category spotlight. That's when your book appears on the main page of your category (mystery/thriller) for a week. The homepage and category spotlights earned me another 100 or so readers.

NetGalley reviewers post their reviews on NetGalley, and often on their blogs, on Goodreads, Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and other sites. You can use blurbs from the blog reviews on your Amazon page. I have [several on mine right now](#). These can really help you stand out from other indie titles whose pages are bare.

NetGalley gives you a dashboard with info about how many people are looking at your book, what they think of the cover, the blurb, etc. This is really useful, and it showed me how important the blurb is in leading the reader to look into the book.

The screenshot below shows that 54% of readers chose the book because of the blurb. I've seen similar numbers from other authors. While the cover shows the reader the genre, the blurb is really what hooks the reader.

Activity **Reviews**

Statistics

<b>2183</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>0</b>
Impressions	Clicked to Read	Feedback	Reviews	Social Shares and Views	Excerpt Impressions

 Category Spotlight: 28 May 2018  
 Homepage Title: 30 Apr 2018
 [Add a Promotion](#) >

Activity

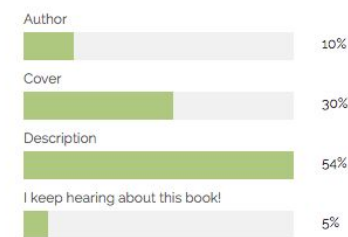
- 379 Members with access
- Wishing
  - Waiting
  - Declined

Cover Rating

 65  3

Reason for Request

645 Votes from 333 Members



Recommends

Average Rating: 4.2 stars from 52 members



NetGalley also collects unpublished comments from readers, which you can access in a downloadable spreadsheet. Many reviewers provide helpful suggestions and critiques in these unpublished comments.

Because so many of my NetGalley reviews came in before the book was published, not all of them made it onto Amazon.com, which doesn't let you post reviews before a book is released. Part of my goal in submitting the book to NetGalley was to have lots of reviews on my Amazon page.

Three weeks after launch, *Gate 76* has 27 reviews on Amazon, and not one of them is from a person I know. I suppose that's pretty good. It's definitely better than hounding your friends to say they liked your book. I do hope that a higher percentage of future NetGalley reviewers will post to Amazon as well. The six month listing on NetGalley ends at the end of September.

NetGalley can bite you too. One reader was quite offended by *Gate 76*, and she posted her angry review on NetGalley, Amazon, Goodreads, Barnes and Noble, Google Books, and probably on billboards all over her hometown.

**BookishFirst (\$750)**

I had never heard of this service before they contacted me, so it wasn't part of my original marketing plan. I believe they had just launched a few weeks prior to featuring my book. Someone at NetGalley really liked *Gate 76*, and they asked BookishFirst to get in touch with me. They knew I couldn't afford the \$1500 they were charging the big

publishers (and almost all the titles they run are from the big publishers), so they said they'd run my book for \$750.

BookishFirst posts your cover and a one-sentence blurb on their homepage, along with a link to an excerpt that you provide. I chose the first chapter of the book as my excerpt. Readers who like the first chapter can enter to win one of 100 free copies of the ebook. In exchange for the ebook, BookishFirst asks them to write a full review of the book if they win, and they encourage winners to share their reviews on Amazon and Goodreads.

They handle distribution of the copies, and they actively remind winners to complete and post their reviews. I can tell when their reminder emails go out, but a new batch of reviews will show up on Amazon that day.

One nice thing about BookishFirst is that, because readers read an excerpt of your book before entering to win a copy, you don't get stuck with a lot of readers who don't like your book. The ones who don't like it know that after reading the excerpt and don't enter the giveaway. That's different from Goodreads, where lots of recipients find that your book wasn't what they wanted or expected, then give it a bad review.

### **Goodreads e-giveaway (\$119)**

Goodreads now charges for giveaways, but the new giveaway program has some benefits. For \$119, they distribute 100 copies of your ebook directly from Amazon. It would cost quite a bit more to print and mail 100 paper copies. In addition, the day your 100 copies go out from Amazon, your book jumps in the sales rankings.

Under the new program, Goodreads now reminds winners, 8 weeks after the giveaway, to post their reviews.

I've gotten a few reviews from this giveaway, but it hasn't been 8 weeks yet, so I don't know what the final outcome will be.

## **Advance Copies Summary**

Through NetGalley (379), BookishFirst (100) and Goodreads (100), I managed to get 579 copies of *Gate 76* into the hands of readers and reviewers. That's a very good start. As of June 23, 2018, here are the numbers:

<b>Site</b>	<b># Reviews</b>	<b>Avg. Rating</b>
Amazon	27	4.0
Goodreads	74	3.84
NetGalley	52	4.2
BookishFirst (review of first chapter only)	158	4.0

BookishFirst (full review)	23	4.0
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## Impala Giveaway

I signed up with a number of Kindle promotional services to give away copies of *Impala* on May 22 and 23, just before the release of *Gate 76*. These sites list your book on their homepage on the day of the giveaway, and/or send a promotional email to readers with a link to your free book.

I was hoping to give away at least 6,000 copies of *Impala*, which now has a summary, some review blurbs, and a link to *Gate 76* at the end. Anyone who liked *Impala* would have easy one-click access to *Gate 76*.

I had learned from NetGalley feedback that the summary is the most important factor in selling the book, so I made sure to list all of *Impala*'s awards at the top of the summary. This is what the landing page looked like when readers clicked the link in the promotional email.

### **Impala** Paperback – September 21, 2016

by [Andrew Diamond](#) (Author)

★★★★☆ 64 customer reviews

> [See all 2 formats and editions](#)

<p>Kindle</p> <p>\$0.00 <small>kindleunlimited</small></p> <p>Read with <a href="#">Kindle Unlimited</a> to also enjoy access to over 1 million more titles \$2.99 to buy</p>	<p><b>Paperback</b></p> <p><b>\$14.99</b></p> <p>20 Used from \$3.72 16 New from \$11.17</p>
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- **Gold Medal Winner - 2017 Readers' Favorite Awards**
- **First Place Winner - Genre Fiction - 24th Annual Writer's Digest Awards**
- **An IndieReader Best of 2016 Selection**
- **An Amazon Best Book of the Month - Sept. 2016 - Mystery/Thriller**
- **A Kirkus Recommended Review - September 2016**

After four years on the straight and narrow, Russell Fitzpatrick has a boring job, the wrong woman, and an itch for something more. All he needs to get his life going again is a nudge in the wrong direction.

That worked better than I had expected. I gave away over 10,500 copies of *Impala*, and on the night of May 22, the book made it all the way up to #16 in the Kindle store.

This may have driven some sales of *Gate 76*, though not many at this point. I know from co-workers who subscribe to the Kindle promotional sites I was using that several weeks or months may pass between the time they download a free book and when they read it.

Below are my notes on the promotional services. The links in the left column go directly to the service's submission guidelines or sign-up forms. The ones in green are ones I actually used. I was unable to use the ones in red and yellow, though I recommend you try Robin Reads if you can. They're picky about which titles they take, but I've heard they are very effective at getting your book to readers.

<a href="#">Armadillo Ebooks</a>								
<a href="#">Awesome Gang</a>	\$10			Free, or \$10 for featured promo. They do pre-orders too.		Can't sign up due to internal server error.		
<a href="#">Bargain eBook Hunter</a>								
<a href="#">Bargain Booksey</a>								
<a href="#">Book Basset</a>	\$8	\$8	05/22/2018	Guaranteed freebie post. WTF?? Before the summary of my book, they added a long paragraph about cooking onions and mushrooms with basset hounds. The title was Drop the Spoon. Screw these guys.	04/28/2018			
<a href="#">Book Goodies</a>								
<a href="#">Book Gorilla</a>				Not available until June				
<a href="#">Book Runes</a>	\$0		5/22/2018	Submitted through Booksends. Very nice looking site. My book was about ten slots	4/28/2018	Submitted and paid through Booksends.		

				down the page, so not sure if the promo was effective.				
<a href="#">Book Zio</a>								
<a href="#">Books Butterfly</a>	\$100	\$100	5/22/2018	Pure Gold promo for FREE books. Couldn't confirm they promoted this, since it looks like I'm no longer subscribed. Can't find my book on their awful Twitter feed either. They didn't list it on freebookdeals.com either. Ugh. DO NOT USE AGAIN.	4/28/2018	Confirmed, but waiting for date confirmation. Supposedly guarantee 1200 downloads, or about 1.2%. Confirmed for 5/22.	100,000	For Gold package.
<a href="#">Bookbub</a>								
<a href="#">Booklovers Heaven</a>								
<a href="#">Booksends</a>	\$180	\$180	5/22/2018	\$125 for book of the day + \$30 for EreaderIQ + \$25 for BookRunes. VERY EXPENSIVE, GIVEN THE SIZE OF THEIR MAILING LIST. Ugly site, but they gave the book good placement. They just chose the first two sentences of the Amazon blurb without thinking about whether that	4/28/2018	Paid via PayPal. Digital Media Revolutions. Confirmed.	57,000	Mystery



				would entice a reader.				
<a href="#">Booktastik</a>								
<a href="#">Choosy Bookworm</a>				Do not use				
<a href="#">Digital Book Today</a>								
<a href="#">Ebook Lister</a>								
<a href="#">Ebook Soda</a>	\$20							
<a href="#">Ebooks Habit</a>								
<a href="#">Ereader IQ</a>	\$30	\$0	5/22/2018	Free book of the day, or \$25 for free mystery of the day. Decent looking site. Gave the book good placement and highlighted the awards it won.		Submitted and paid through Booksends.	35,000	Mystery
<a href="#">Ereader News Today</a>	\$45	\$45	5/23/2018	Submitted under Mystery, dates 5/22 - 5/26	5/3/2018	Confirmed and paid. Payment went to GRASONLINEV	100,000	They have over 200K subscribers. Assuming mystery is one of their larger categories.
<a href="#">Free Booksy</a>	\$85	\$85	5/22/2018	5/15 and 5/22 available. Decent-looking site. Easy to find things. They gave my book second place on the home page and first place on the mystery page.	04/28/2018	Promoting in Mystery Genre	260,000	Mystery

<a href="#">Free Ebooks Daily</a>								
<a href="#">Free Kindle Books and Tips</a>	\$100		5/22/2018	Got "Featured Freebie" May 22. Right at the top of the home page!	04/28/2018	Paid - Gaggler Enterprises	100,000	750k total, but 100k access per day
<a href="#">Genre Pulse</a>	\$18	\$18	5/22/2018	Posted promo dates as 5/22 - 5/26. Owner seems legit, but I can't tell where the books get promoted, or whether promotions are effective. They used to be quite good, but other Kindle authors say GP's promos are not as effective as they used to be.	05/03/2018	Invoiced by BookGrow, through PayPal. Chose mystery/detective.	8,000	8,000 is a guess for their mystery list. They also have 600,000 app downloads.
<a href="#">HotZippy</a>								
<a href="#">Just Kindle Books</a>	\$33	\$0	5/22/2018	Confirmed for premium promo. Running alongside a bunch of romance novels.	4/29/2018	Receipt 62P23914075718 83N. Paul refunded the \$33.	40,000	
<a href="#">Kindle Nation Daily</a>	\$120		5/22/2018	Kindle daily deal. Confirmed. They placed me seven slots down on the first page. Decent blurb text, leading with list of awards. These guys have been very effective in the past.	04/28/2018	Booked Kindle daily deal. May have to set up BookGorilla separately.	288,000	

<a href="#">Many Books</a>	\$29	\$29	5/23/2018	Confirmed and paid. The gave me top spot on the Mystery/Thriller page. Nice looking site, and the cover & blurb look really good.	04/29/2018	Asked for May 22, 23, or 24. Waiting to hear back.	150,000	
<a href="#">People Reads</a>	\$10							
<a href="#">Pixel Scroll</a>								
<a href="#">Price Dropped Books</a>								
<a href="#">Read Cheaply</a>	\$35			Submitted request for 5/22 - 5/26. Never responded. Losers.	05/03/2018	Never got a response. Followed up on May 10th through their online contact form.	45,000	Site says 30-65K subscribers, depending on genre. Guessing 45K, even though mystery is usually one of the largest categories.
<a href="#">Reading Deals</a>	\$29	\$29	5/22/2018	Approved. Email will go out 5/22. Book will appear on their site through 5/26. Very clean, nice looking site. They had me in the third slot.	05/03/2018		40,000	Number is based on what their email says.
<a href="#">Riffle</a>				Not sure how to list here				
<a href="#">Robin Reads</a>	\$65		5/23/2018	Looks good. List of 130k mystery	4/28/2018	Submitted request for 5/23 for free book of the day.		

				readers. REJECTED.		Waiting to hear back.		
<a href="#">The eReader Cafe</a>	\$40		5/22/2018	Confirmed for 5/22. Decent-looking site. They gave me top spot in the afternoon list.	05/03/2018		56,000	
<a href="#">The Fussy Librarian</a>	\$45	\$45	5/22/2018	Submitted as Mystery and Thriller. Very nice, clean email. Got second spot. These guys are among the best. They tend to have better titles too.	04/29/2018	Confirmed	135,000	
<a href="#">Your New Books</a>	\$23			Maybe worth a shot				
							1414000	
	1025	658.99				\$659 to reach 1,414,000 readers.		
						1% = 14140, 0.5% = 7070, 0.25% = 3535		

## Miscellaneous Promotions

In 2016 and 2017, I paid to promote *Warren Lane* and *Impala* through a site called [NoiseTrade](#). They'll feature your book in the banner ad on their homepage, and in a weekly email to their subscribers (a list of about 1 million).

NoiseTrade users can download a free copy of your ebook in exchange for providing their email address and opting in to receive communications from you. I had about 600 email addresses, and I sent out a promotional email for *Gate 76* about ten days after launch. I got about 30 unsubscribes and maybe 5 or 6 sales from that.

I also tried the new [follower boost promotion](#) from JustKindleBooks.com, where I set up an Amazon giveaway. Anyone who clicked my "Follow this Author" button on Amazon was entered to win a free Kindle copy of *Impala*. JustKindleBooks emailed their subscribers about the giveaway, and 178 people entered.

Amazon notifies all of your followers whenever you have a new release. I don't know if this led to any sales, but it only cost a few bucks.

## Things I Chose Not to Do

### **Clarion/Blue Ink Reviews (\$695)**

I was going to run a review with this service, because they have good credibility and wide distribution among booksellers and librarians. I decided instead to spend this money on NetGalley, and hoped my other professional reviews would be good enough. This turned out to be a good decision.

### **New York Review of Books Independent Publisher Listing (\$297)**

NYRB contacted me to advertise in their independents section after they saw the Kirkus review. I took that as an honor, but I ultimately decided against running the ad after looking at the Amazon pages of a number of other books that had advertised in NYRB. Those books were all high quality, and they all had only 4 or 5 or 10 even a year after advertising in NYRB. That told me readers don't use NYRB ads to make purchasing decisions (although they do use NYRB reviews).

### **Kirkus Ads (\$199 - \$1800)**

I did the same research on Kirkus ads as I had done on NYRB ads and found that these ads don't lead to sales.

## Conclusions (So Far)

Three weeks after launch, it's too early to draw any firm conclusions, but I can see a few things already.

1. Distributing advance copies of your book through services like NetGalley, BookishFirst and Goodreads will give you more reviews early on than you could get on your own. My first two books racked up 5 or 6 reviews each in the first month, and I had to hound my friends to get those.
2. Blog reviews and professional reviews will drive some early sales, but not many. I think *Gate 76* sold 49 ebook copies and 51 paper copies in its first three weeks. Only seven people I know actually bought the book, so the rest are organic sales.
3. The free promo of *Impala* was very successful, but I can't track how many *Impala* readers used the links at the back to buy *Gate 76*. It's probably too early to track that anyway. The free promo did quite a bit to raise my author profile. I've picked up a dozen new followers on Goodreads in the past two weeks, and over 60,000 page reads on Kindle Unlimited in the past month.
4. Book summaries sell books. The numbers on NetGalley and 10,500+ *Impala* downloads prove that.
5. Awards and critical recognition help boost your profile and your sales. 10% of NetGalley readers say they chose to read *Gate 76* because of the author. I can assure you none of them knew who I was, but my author bio on NetGalley focused on my awards and critical recognition. The summary of *Impala* on Amazon also focused on awards and critical honors, and that encouraged the large number of downloads.
6. Traditional print ads, even in top-tier publications, don't sell ebooks, even if the books are really good.

## Next Steps

Later this summer, I'll probably run a 99-cent promotion of *Gate 76* through the same channels I used to give away *Impala*. If *Gate 76* has enough positive reviews, I should be able to sell a few hundred copies. Those sales will connect *Gate 76* to a number of "also bought" titles on Amazon, and that, in turn, can help make Amazon ad campaigns more effective, since Amazon's algorithms can display my paid ads alongside books that my readers rated highly.

If I publish another book, I'll use a similar marketing plan, and I'll run a giveaway of *Gate 76* with links to the new book in the back. I'm taking the long view in this marketing strategy, with the idea that building an audience takes a long time and a lot of effort.