



# The Virtues of Advertising

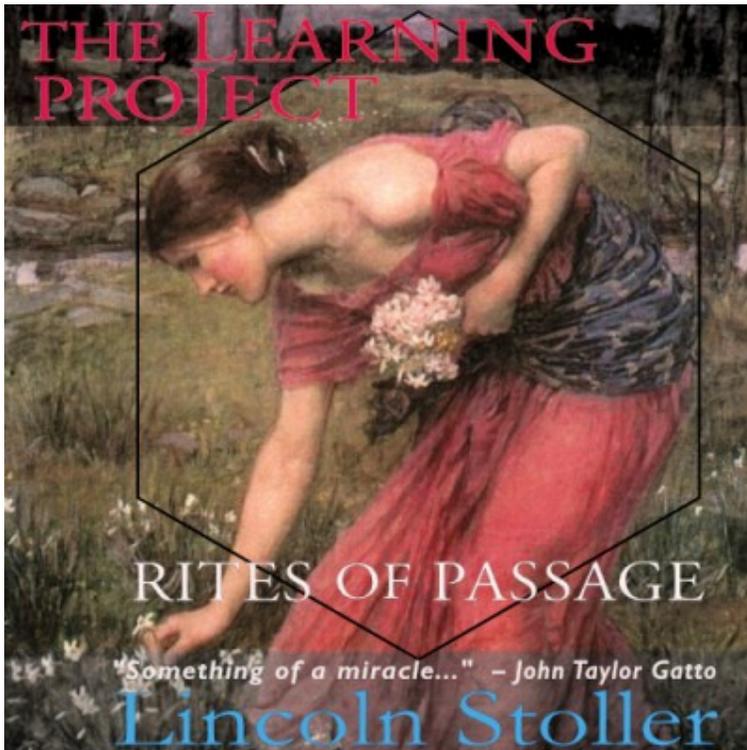
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## Advertising on Amazon

*The Learning Project, Rites of Passage* was my first book that I shepherded through the self-publishing process. Advertising is like fishing, a process of watching the habits of others and inferring how they think. Studying the book's reception reveals interesting results.



Here's how book advertising works on the Amazon.com platform. You fashion a two-sentence pitch, define a profile of the Amazon users you think will respond to it, and set a limit on how much you'll pay to have your pitch displayed.

When a user fitting your profile enters the Amazon website, vendors compete to win a display spot. Winning vendors are charged when a visitor clicks on their ad to see their product. Each day Amazon tells each vendor how many visitors were shown their ad, and how many clicked on it.

As an advertiser you create a series of ads, each with its own 2-sentence pitch, and each to a different audience according to the books they read and search for. As an advertiser you want to know which audiences are the largest, and which are the most responsive your ad.

## Group Responses

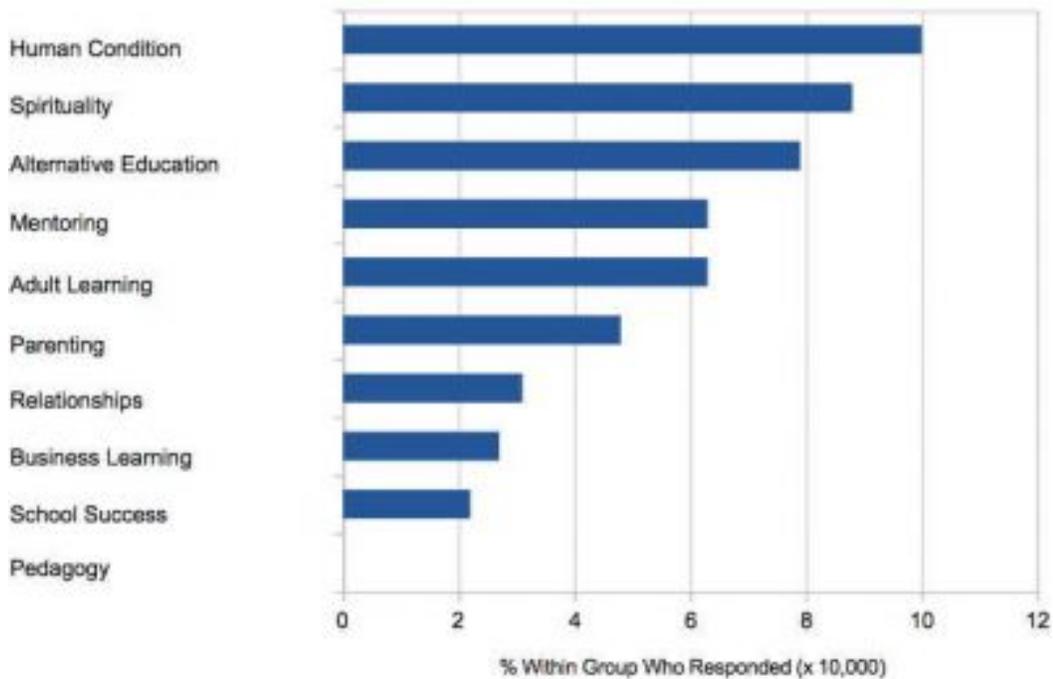
*The Learning Project, Rites of Passage* is a book about learning, mentoring, schooling, and transformation. It explores how people deal with adversity, achieve insight, and find spiritual meaning. It examines these questions for people of all ages, subjects, cultures, and economic classes. The underlying theme is finding personal success through struggle, and what this means.

As an advertiser, I identified ten different groups whom I thought might be interested in this topic. For each group I selected a different set of 400 keywords that people in that group might use in their search for reading material. Those people who searched for books on these subjects, titles, or authors were candidates for my pitch. The ten groups are shown in the list below.

We know these groups will be of different size, but we don't know how much interest each group will have in my book's subject matter. You would think people interested in alternative education would want to know what kind of learning is most important, and you'd think teachers would want to know more about learners, but is this true?

Here is the percent of people who showed interest in my pitch.

<b>GROUP</b>	<b>% Within Group Who Responded (x 10,000)</b>
Human Condition	10.0
Spirituality	8.8
Alternative Education	7.9
Adult Learning	6.3
Mentoring	6.3
Parenting	4.8
Relationships	3.1
Business Learning	2.7
School Success	2.2
Pedagogy	0

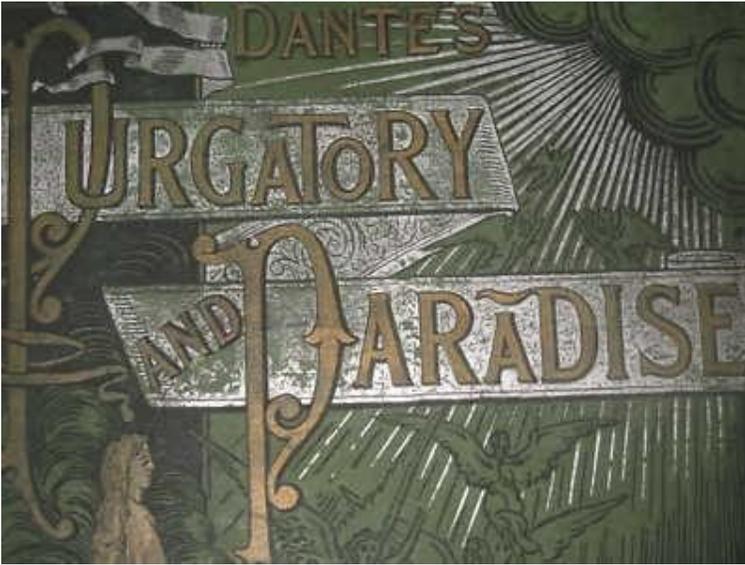


This is all based on people who are interested in books. I'm using these people as proxies for people interested in these subjects. However, not all parents are studying parenting, teachers teaching, or students studying to be successful learners.

Those people who are on Amazon at all are people looking to learn something. And of those, there is an even

smaller group interested in finding meaning and motivation. It's in the comparison between these groups that their differences stand out.

## Drawing Conclusions



In the top third, those I call “the virtuous,” are people interested in the human condition, spirituality, and alternative education. It's good to know that those who say they're seeking higher consciousness are also seeking meaning.

I hope these people become more discerning, effective, and successful. We hope the human condition will improve, better learning options will manifest, and spiritual virtues will prevail.

In the bottom third, what I consider to be purgatory, we have businesses, students, and teachers. These are fields where people model each other, provide for or exploit each other's needs, or act as agents for institutions that do. You might say that business people learn all they need from their customers, students from their teachers, and teachers from... well... just who do teachers learn from? You might say that none of these people have much to learn from books or, in particular, from books that delve into the meaning of what they're doing.

This is true. Few business people explore personal meaning in their jobs, or the social consequences of their work. Few students reflect on the role in their lives of the material they're taught. And teachers, honestly, don't care. Teachers do not question the value of their actions any more than soldiers question the morality of their government. They're not allowed to. For that matter, neither are students or employees.

## The Divine Comedy

This explains why I support the efforts of people who pursue the human condition, spirituality, and alternative education. It explains why I do not support the “do what it takes to be successful” attitude of business people, students, and teachers. One group is taking responsibility to develop virtue in what they're doing, the other group is not. We can argue all day, but these numbers are self-evident.

What is to be said about the people in the middle: the adult learners, mentors, parents, and people building relationships? That remains an open question. For those groups, as they say, further research is required.

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*[Click here](#) for free access to the text and audio files of  
The Learning Project, Rites of Passage.*

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