ALCHEMY BOOKS

Locked Out of TikTok Shop US



INTERNATIONAL AUTHORS

Not Anymore. The Door Is Now Open.

Locked Out of TikTok Shop US

International Authors Finally Have a Way In

David Rafferty

INTERACTIVE ALCHEMY PUBLISHING

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Foreword

I am an international author. Until recently that meant I could not sell my books to TikTok's US audience, and nothing about the books had anything to do with it.

If you have tried, you know the feeling. Millions of American readers finding books through short videos and buying them in numbers nobody expected, and no door you are allowed through. The requirements are real and they are not negotiable. They are simply not written with you in mind.

My partners and I spent eighteen months doing something about it. The American company, the representative, the banking, the compliance, the rejections. We got through, and then we built a platform so that other international authors would not have to.

That platform is Alchemy Books US, and you should know now rather than work it out in chapter four: I have a direct commercial interest in the thing this book ends up recommending.

So read it accordingly. I have tried to write the book I wanted when I started, which is why most of it is not about Alchemy at all. What TikTok requires, and why. What happens if you try to get round it, as a number of people will encourage you to. And what building your own shop really takes, told honestly enough that some

of you will go and do it.

If you finish this and open your own TikTok Shop US, I will have done my job. If you decide our platform is the better first step, better still.
But if you're a successful author, the worst thing you can do is ignore TikTok.

David Rafferty

CHAPTER ONE

Why books sell on TikTok

Dave Perrotta couldn't understand what was happening to his book. It had been selling steadily on Amazon, sitting somewhere around number 3,000 or 4,000 in the bestseller rankings. Then, without warning, it started climbing. Into the top 1,000, then the top 500. He hadn't changed his advertising, adjusted the price or launched a promotion. So where were all these new buyers coming from?

The answer was extraordinary. Someone in China had copied his book and was selling it through TikTok Shop, using videos to attract customers. By Dave's estimate, the seller was generating between $30,000 and $50,000 a month from his stolen work.

Something else was happening as well. Viewers of those TikTok videos grew interested in the book, and then went to Amazon to buy it. A stranger selling a pirated copy on TikTok was driving sales of Dave's own book on Amazon.

He had discovered something that would change the way he marketed his books. And it raises a question every independent author should be asking: what might happen if you deliberately used TikTok to introduce your books to thousands of potential readers?

Amazon answers questions. TikTok asks them.

Most independent authors have spent years learning to sell books on Amazon. We research keywords, improve listings, pick categories, gather reviews and run advertising campaigns. Much of that effort is directed towards one objective: persuading Amazon to show our books to people already searching for something similar.

Someone wants to improve their handwriting. They search Amazon, compare the workbooks and choose one. The demand already exists, and we are competing to capture it.

But what about the parents who have never considered buying a handwriting workbook? A short TikTok video showing a child progressing from awkward first letters to flowing cursive could introduce them to a book they hadn't previously thought of buying. That's where TikTok changes everything.

People open TikTok to be entertained, informed or inspired. They aren't necessarily shopping. Then a video catches their attention. Perhaps it identifies a problem they recognise, demonstrates a technique they haven't seen before, or challenges something they've always believed. Within seconds, someone who had no intention of buying a book can become interested enough to want one. And with TikTok Shop, they can purchase it without leaving the app.

Amazon captures existing demand. TikTok can create demand that didn't exist a minute earlier. For authors, that's an entirely different way of reaching readers.

A market authors can no longer ignore

In 2024, around 59 million print books sold in the United States were attributed to BookTok content, on figures reported by TikTok from Circana BookScan data. Fifty-nine million books, worth an estimated $760 million.

Not all were purchased through TikTok Shop. Many were bought on Amazon, in bookshops or through other retailers after readers discovered them on TikTok. That distinction is important, because it demonstrates that TikTok's influence on book sales extends well beyond transactions completed on its own platform.

For non-fiction authors, the possibilities are particularly interesting. Demonstrate the exercise. Show the technique. Explain the mistake that costs people money, or teach something useful in thirty seconds. Each video gives viewers something they wanted while introducing them to the book behind it.

Instead of showing a cover and asking someone to buy, authors can show readers what their books can help them achieve. A compelling video can reach thousands of people who might never have encountered the book through an Amazon search, and some of those people will become buyers.

But there is another side to this, one that may be worth even more to established Amazon authors.

The unexpected Amazon bonus

Selling books on TikTok may not be the biggest financial benefit of marketing them there. The real surprise is what can happen to your Amazon sales.

Once Dave Perrotta saw what was driving interest in his book, he began promoting it on TikTok himself. One video attracted approximately 1.1 million views in just three or four days, and his TikTok Shop sales accelerated, eventually reaching around 200 books a day. An impressive result by any measure.

But during that same period, Dave reported selling more than 500 additional paperback copies a day on Amazon, which he attributed to the exposure his book was receiving on TikTok. Two hundred books a day on TikTok, more than 500 on Amazon. His book reached number 47 across Amazon's entire bestseller rankings and remained in the top fifty for approximately two weeks.

Consider what that means. Dave promoted the book on TikTok, yet the sales he reported on Amazon were two and a half times those on TikTok. He was reaching customers on one platform and generating substantial extra business on another.

He is not the only publisher to report this. Jonathan Nilsen, who began selling on Amazon KDP in 2024, saw it happen too. After one of his books went viral on TikTok, his Amazon royalties climbed to approximately $10,000 in a month without an increase in his Amazon advertising expenditure. He subsequently reported monthly KDP royalties of $12,000 to $15,000 from that book, along-

side additional audiobook income. His TikTok Shop business was generating sales of its own, but he recognised that the benefits extended far beyond TikTok's checkout.

His approach was strikingly simple: "If I can even just break even on TikTok, then I will just completely explode the KDP account."

For authors used to judging advertising by the sales it makes on Amazon, that is a fascinating change of perspective. TikTok can become a marketing engine for the entire publishing business.

Amazon may now reward that traffic

There is another reason this matters. Specialists say that changes to Amazon's search and recommendation systems over 2025 and 2026 appear to give more weight to qualified traffic from outside Amazon. Written Word Media, a book marketing firm, discussed this in March 2026, and noted the growing importance of external traffic from platforms such as TikTok, Facebook and email newsletters.

The reported benefit is not only more sales. Traffic that converts may also improve how visible a book is on Amazon.

The commercial implication is compelling. A TikTok video can make sales on TikTok, bring new buyers to Amazon, and may help Amazon introduce the book to still more customers. One marketing activity, several potential benefits. And unlike conventional advertising, a successful video may continue reaching new viewers without the author paying for every impression.

What these results really tell us

Dave and Jonathan achieved exceptional results. Their experiences are not typical, and no author should expect that posting videos will produce similar sales. Some books suit TikTok audiences far better than others, and while some videos gain traction, many attract little attention.

But they point to a real change in how authors should approach marketing. You are not choosing between Amazon and TikTok. All you have built on Amazon stays exactly as it is, and TikTok feeds it. Amazon excels at converting readers who already know what they're looking for, and for many customers it is also the established, trusted platform they prefer to buy from. TikTok is where books get discovered by people who were not looking for one.

Together, they let authors create demand on TikTok and take the sales on both platforms. For established Amazon sellers, TikTok is an essential part of the book-marketing mix now. And some publishers using both platforms believe the opportunity is far bigger than most authors realise.

Why now?

Valentino Saint Lavigne has scaled a publishing business on TikTok Shop, and believes authors are missing an extraordinary opportunity. His message to publishers

who already sell well on Amazon is remarkably direct:

> "If you have a book that has any level of success and you're not on TikTok Shop, I don't know what to tell you. Like now is the time."

And when he tries to explain just how strongly he feels about the opportunity, he reaches for an extraordinary comparison:

> "Right now is Bitcoin 2012. And I'm like, 'Buy a Bitcoin.' And you're like, 'It's $50 or whatever it was, $100. It's not worth it.' Like that's how I'm feeling, because we're currently in the gold mine, basically."

For authors outside the United States, however, there has been a substantial obstacle to taking advantage of that opportunity. And that's where our story continues.

CHAPTER TWO

International authors are locked out

If you live outside the United States, you're not allowed in.

Not because of your book, or your subject, or your readers. TikTok Shop US is an American marketplace, and it's built on the assumption that the people selling on it are American citizens with a Social Security number (SSN), or American businesses. There is no application route for an individual author or a company based in Rotterdam, Auckland or Toronto.

TikTok expects you to be an American registered business. Which means that your work starts long before the application does, and continues long after it, for those international authors determined to open a TikTok Shop US.

There are seven things. None is impossible. Together they are a great deal more than most authors expect.

First, an American company

You need an American company, properly formed in an American state. Delaware and Wyoming are the most popular choices, for cost and privacy reasons.

When we started looking at this, we assumed forming

the company would be the hard part. It wasn't. It turned out to be one of the more straightforward steps.

Choosing the right structure matters more than it might first appear. The simplest and cheapest option is usually a single-member LLC, but a foreign-owned single-member LLC is treated by the IRS as a disregarded entity, which brings its own US filing obligations and a tax treatment that differs significantly from what most authors expect.

For a non-resident owner, a multi-member LLC is the preferred structure. That requires at least two genuine members, although the second member could hold as little as 5%, leaving the author with 95% ownership.

Why that distinction matters is the subject of chapter three.

Then an American who will still be there years from now

This is the one that stops most authors, and the one that deserves the greatest care. You're not simply finding someone to fulfil an administrative requirement to open your TikTok Shop. You are choosing a person whose circumstances, availability and other business connections could affect your shop for years to come.

TikTok requires a named US individual to represent your business. A real person, resident in the United States, with a home address and government identification, whose details are attached to the shop from that point onwards.

Not a PO box. Not your registered agent. Not a mail

forwarding service. A person.

Watch American publishers explain TikTok Shop and you may think it is a mere formality. Someone you trust, who provides their identification, and that is that. It is an understandable blind spot. For an American publisher, the representative is most likely themselves. They have never had to find someone else willing to put their identity behind the business, or consider what happens if that person is no longer available. The requirement has never presented the same obstacle.

Two things can go wrong. One is the person. The other is everyone else they represent.

The person

The Primary Business Representative is not a set-and-forget arrangement. TikTok's own policy, published on 30 June 2026, sets out identity re-verification for sellers. It states that TikTok may ask a seller to re-verify their identity if it detects risk from the shop or its products, such as a spike in negative customer reviews or policy violations, and that failure to successfully verify may result in account suspension or closure.

Two details in that policy matter.

The first is that you must verify with the personal details you gave at onboarding, and those on the identification must match the ones used to register the account. There is no substitute. It has to be that person, with those documents.

The second is that it's a live process rather than a form. It runs through Persona, TikTok's third-party verifica-

tion tool, and it captures both the identification and a selfie. Your representative has to be physically present, with their passport or driving licence, photographing themselves.

Asking someone to help you register a business is one thing. Asking them to remain available for identity checks years into the future is quite another.

Think about where that leaves you three years from now. By then you've built a business. Not a side project, a business, with a book that sells every day, creators who promote it, customers who have bought from you and a US operation that works.

Then TikTok asks for re-verification, and your representative doesn't respond.

The business hasn't failed. Nothing has gone wrong with it. It stops because one person, who agreed to help you years earlier, is no longer there to photograph their driving licence.

So the question an author should be asking is not whether they know an American willing to sign. It is whether they know one who will still be contactable, willing and holding valid identification years from now, when something happens that triggers TikTok to review your shop.

Everyone else they represent

Everything above assumes the person helping you is a friend or a relative. Many international authors, having no American they can ask, turn to the freelancer sites where this service is sold, and the Primary Business

Representative problem appears to be solved.

An author in one of the publishing communities told how he had finally got his TikTok Shop approved, and posted a link to the Fiverr freelancer who had helped him. Not long afterwards, he was back, completely bewildered. TikTok had issued a violation notice stating: "Your shop is connected to other shops that were identified as high risk." He couldn't understand it. This was his first shop, newly approved, and as far as he knew, he had done nothing wrong. How could his business possibly be connected to other shops?

A Primary Business Representative is the registered representative of your shop. When you hire someone who offers that service commercially, how many other shops might they already represent? And what do you know about those businesses, their owners or how they operate? Probably nothing. Yet by appointing the same person, you have linked your business to theirs in the most direct way TikTok recognises.

TikTok's own guidance, published in June 2026, warns about shared legal representative details between shops. It also confirms that using a third party to register your shop can create connections with other businesses that the same party has assisted. TikTok generally considers several indicators when assessing connected accounts, but where another shop has been closed for serious violations, the consequences can extend to accounts associated with it.

You could run your shop impeccably, serve every customer and follow every rule, yet find your business

under scrutiny because of another shop you've never heard of, run by someone you've never met. All because you hired the same person to help you through registration.

Neither of these shows up early

You may hear that plenty of non-US sellers are doing this without difficulty, and that is true. But many of these shops are young, and neither of these problems shows itself until something triggers it. A shop that has not been tested is not the same as a shop with nothing to worry about.

The company also needs a tax number

The company needs an EIN before it can open a bank account or register with TikTok. Americans get one online in about fifteen minutes. The online application asks for a Social Security number, so that route is closed to you.

What's left is Form SS-4, by fax or by post, with "Foreign" written in the box where a Social Security number would go. The IRS quotes four business days for a fax and around four weeks for post. People who file these for a living report longer, six to twelve weeks when the IRS is busy.

None of it is complicated. It is just slow, and nothing else can start until it arrives.

You'll need an American bank account

The company needs a US bank account in its own name.

Not yours, the company's. TikTok settles to it, and the name on the account has to match the business you registered.

You cannot open it until the EIN arrives, which is why that comes first.

Traditional American banks are difficult from abroad. Most want the account holder to appear in person at a branch, which for an author in Rotterdam, Sydney or Madrid isn't practical. Wise, Mercury and Relay are online banks, with no branches at all, and they open a US business account without a Social Security number. That is why most international sellers end up with one of them.

Which you choose is worth thinking about before you need to. TikTok's Seller Assistant advises a separate company bank account for each shop, to avoid a payout-account validation issue. So a second shop is best served by a second account. Mercury and Relay allow several accounts under a single company, which makes that straightforward. Wise does not. One account per company, no sub-accounts, so a second shop would mean banking somewhere else. What Wise does offer is frequently the lowest currency conversion rates available, which matters when every settlement is converted into your own currency.

None of this is difficult once the EIN is in hand. It is simply another thing that has to exist before you can sell anything.

Your books have to be there before your customers

This is the part authors are most often surprised by, because it's nothing like KDP.

TikTok Shop US isn't print on demand. Nothing specifically precludes it, but TikTok's fulfilment policy flags shops that fail to dispatch on time, which in practice means the book has to physically exist, in a warehouse in the United States, before a customer orders it.

So you have to arrange printing, pay for a print run up front, find somewhere to hold the stock, arrange dispatch, and handle returns when they come. You also have to guess how many copies to print, which is how authors end up with a pallet of books in a California warehouse that nobody has ordered.

And you are running it all from another country

Once the shop exists, you still have to run it from thousands of miles away, and that is less simple than logging in.

TikTok builds a picture of where an account is operated from. The network address you connect through, the device, the time zone it is set to, the SIM in the phone. A US shop logged into from Rotterdam every morning does not match the business TikTok has on file.

TikTok does not publish a policy on this. What it publishes is the re-verification requirement: it may ask you to prove your identity again when it sees a risk on the shop, and failing to do so can cost you the shop. Sellers report that logins from another country, repeated often

enough, are one of the things that brings that request.

Which is why many shops err on the side of caution. They are run through a dedicated US residential IP address, a VPN, an American SIM card, and devices set to American time.

Sellers also report an effect on video distribution, less for a shop account than a personal one, but it is one more thing to worry about.

Approval is only the beginning

Most authors think of approval as the finish line. It is closer to the start.

The company has to be kept alive. Annual filings, a registered agent, state fees, whether or not you sell a single book. Miss them and the company falls out of good standing, which eventually reaches the shop.

The shop's performance is measured continuously by TikTok. How quickly orders are dispatched, whether they arrive, what customers say afterwards. These are not reported to you once a quarter for information. They are scored, and the consequences follow on their own.

And the requirements move. The rules on identity re-verification quoted in this book were published in June 2026. They did not exist before. Whatever you set up has to keep pace with a platform that keeps changing, including the metrics it applies to shops.

TikTok may still reject your application

You can set up your multi-member LLC correctly, have a trusted Primary Business Representative committed

to being available in the long term, apply carefully and ensure there are no mismatches, and your application can still be rejected. TikTok isn't obliged to explain why, and frequently doesn't.

Small differences between documents can cause a rejection. Our own application was turned down again and again, with nothing to go on beyond "documentation error". After several rounds of this we finally reached someone on TikTok's live chat who could look at it properly. The problem was a utility bill we had submitted for our representative. His driving licence gave his address as Jackson Heights, NY. The utility bill said Jackson Heights, Queens, NY.

Same street. Same zip code. Everything the same, set out differently, because that is how the utility company printed it. When this was pointed out, the agent agreed that Jackson Heights is indeed part of Queens. But the documents still didn't match.

We had to ask the utility company to reissue the bill with the address written another way. Explaining that request without sounding like you're attempting fraud is its own small adventure, and not one you complete in a single phone call.

What this adds up to

None of these obstacles is impossible. For some international authors, setting up a US company and running their own shop will be exactly the right decision.

But it means taking on an American company and its tax number, a reliable US representative, banking, stock

and fulfilment, running the whole thing from another country, and ongoing compliance, all before knowing whether your books will sell on TikTok at all.

For some authors, that investment is the right one, and the ownership at the end justifies it. For others, the sensible order is the other way round: find out whether TikTok works for your book, then decide whether to build your own operation around it.

Until recently, only the first of those was possible.

That was our conclusion too. Rather than accept it, we spent eighteen months building a platform for international authors to reach TikTok's US audience, and chapter four sets out how it works.

But before any of that, there's something you need to know about, because you will meet it the moment you start looking. A barrier this frustrating always creates a market for workarounds, and one in particular has been circulating widely. It appears to remove the need for a Primary Business Representative altogether, which on the face of it looks very attractive.

Let's take a closer look.

CHAPTER THREE

The shortcut that could close your shop

Imagine a method that removes the Primary Business Representative requirement altogether. No American to find. No complicated arrangements. Just a US company, a bank account and a few clicks. And nothing, you are assured, that breaks any TikTok rule or any IRS one.

It sounds almost too good to be true. Unfortunately, there's a very good reason to be cautious.

The shortcut

The method starts legitimately enough. You set up a US single-member LLC, get an EIN (your business tax identification number) and open a US bank account. Then you apply for TikTok Shop US, and the very first registration screen asks what your business type is, offering three choices.

For a single-member LLC owned by one individual, the answer is Sole proprietorship. Here's where the advice takes a dangerous turn.

A single-member LLC owned by a foreign individual is normally treated by the IRS as a disregarded entity. Unless it has elected corporate tax treatment, it is not taxed as a separate corporation. But the work-around



TikTok Shop US registration: the first question it asks. Reproduction of original.

method tells you to select Corporation instead.

Why? Because selecting the correct option leads to a request for a Social Security number or ITIN, which most international authors don't have. Selecting Corporation allows you to enter your company's EIN instead, and the registration continues. That classification then carries through to the W-9 tax form later in the process.

Problem solved? No.

1. The IRS says otherwise

> **Owner of single-member LLC**
>
> If a single-member LLC does not elect to be treated as a corporation, the LLC is a "disregarded entity," and the LLC's activities should be reflected on its owner's federal tax return.

IRS, Single Member Limited Liability Companies. Reproduction of original.

The IRS makes the classification clear. A single-member

LLC that has not elected corporate tax treatment is disregarded for federal income tax purposes. And directly beneath the classification boxes on the W-9, the IRS tells you exactly what to do.

3a Check the appropriate box for federal tax classification of the entity/individual whose name is entered on line 1. Check only **one** of the following seven boxes.

☐ Individual/sole proprietor ☐ C corporation ☐ S corporation

☐ Partnership ☐ Trust/estate

☐ LLC. Enter the tax classification (C = C corporation, S = S corporation, P = Partnership) . . . . _____

Note: Check the "LLC" box above and, in the entry space, enter the appropriate code (C, S, or P) for the tax classification of the LLC, unless it is a disregarded entity. A disregarded entity should instead check the appropriate box for the tax classification of its owner.

☐ Other (see instructions)

Form W-9, line 3a. Reproduction of original.

A disregarded entity must select the tax classification of its owner. Not the classification that makes the application easier. Look again at how TikTok describes a corporation on that first screen. A corporation is a legal entity independent from its owners. A disregarded entity is the opposite, not recognised as separate from its owner at all.

TikTok's own Seller Assistant, which sits alongside the registration screens, says the same thing when asked directly. A single-member LLC is not automatically a C corporation. If it has one individual owner, select Individual, Sole Proprietor, Single-Member LLC. Choose Corporation only if the LLC has formally elected to be treated as a corporation for US federal tax purposes, and your IRS documents support that classification. It also

addresses the shortcut by name: you should not select Corporation simply to avoid the disregarded-entity tax treatment.

The people promoting this method acknowledge that a single-member LLC isn't actually a C corporation. They argue that the W-9 is simply a way of reporting payments, and that the correct tax position can be sorted out later. But the W-9 asks for your actual tax classification, not how you would prefer your payments to be reported.

2. You're signing under penalties of perjury

This is the part that should make every author stop and think.

Part II	Certification
Under penalties of perjury, I certify that:	
1. The number shown on this form is my correct taxpayer identification number (or I am waiting for a number to be issued to me); and	
2. I am not subject to backup withholding because (a) I am exempt from backup withholding, or (b) I have not been notified by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) that I am subject to backup withholding as a result of a failure to report all interest or dividends, or (c) the IRS has notified me that I am no longer subject to backup withholding; and	
3. I am a U.S. citizen or other U.S. person (defined below); and	
4. The FATCA code(s) entered on this form (if any) indicating that I am exempt from FATCA reporting is correct.	

Form W-9, Part II. Reproduction of original.

When you sign the W-9 you certify, under penalties of perjury, that the statements on it are true, including that you are a US person. A foreign individual who owns a US single-member LLC does not become a US person simply by registering that company. If the LLC is a disregarded

entity, the IRS looks to the owner's tax status.

TikTok's Seller Assistant puts it the same way: having a US LLC, an EIN, a US warehouse or a US-based business representative does not by itself make a foreign owner a US person for W-9 purposes.

The form says what that can mean, a few lines below where you signed.

Penalties

Failure to furnish TIN. If you fail to furnish your correct TIN to a requester, you are subject to a penalty of $50 for each such failure unless your failure is due to reasonable cause and not to willful neglect.

Civil penalty for false information with respect to withholding. If you make a false statement with no reasonable basis that results in no backup withholding, you are subject to a $500 penalty.

Criminal penalty for falsifying information. Willfully falsifying certifications or affirmations may subject you to criminal penalties including fines and/or imprisonment.

Misuse of TINs. If the requester discloses or uses TINs in violation of federal law, the requester may be subject to civil and criminal penalties.

Form W-9, Penalties. Reproduction of original.

> Willfully falsifying certifications or affirmations may subject you to criminal penalties including fines and/or imprisonment.

This is not a harmless trick to get past a registration screen. You're signing a federal tax certification.

3. The IRS already provides the correct form

The IRS instructions explain that when a disregarded entity has a foreign owner, that owner must generally provide the appropriate Form W-8, not a W-9. For a foreign individual owner that is a Form W-8BEN. For a

foreign entity owner it is a Form W-8BEN-E. That is the critical distinction.

The problem isn't that the W-9 won't take your EIN. The problem is that you shouldn't be completing a W-9 at all. Selecting Corporation doesn't change that.

You know the old adage, don't build your house on sand

The danger isn't necessarily immediate. Your application might be approved. You might trade successfully for a period, building a profitable TikTok Shop.

That is what makes it so dangerous. Underneath all you have built sits a false declaration. It does not expire because nobody noticed it. And the more successful your business becomes, the more you stand to lose.

Providing false verification information is grounds for termination of your TikTok Shop. Imagine losing a successful business because of a false declaration made on a government tax form when you first registered.

The person who recommended the shortcut carries none of this risk. You do.

A shortcut that gets you through registration is worthless if it puts the future of your business in jeopardy.

Build on rock

Build on foundations you can trust. There is a legitimate alternative, one that doesn't require false tax declarations, or a US representative whose continued cooperation your business depends upon. That's what we spent eighteen months building, and it's what we'll look at in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

There is a way in. And it's open to non-fiction authors now.

The wall has come down

What if your book could be live on TikTok Shop US in as little as three weeks? No American company to establish, no Primary Business Representative to find, no US bank account to open and no questionable short-cuts that could jeopardise everything you've built. Just your existing book, reaching an entirely new audience of American readers.

That opportunity is now available to international non-fiction authors.

We know the frustration of being shut out because we've experienced it ourselves. We formed the company, navigated the requirements, suffered the rejections over an address formatted two ways, and eventually broke through. But having finally succeeded, we couldn't help asking why it should be so difficult, take so much time and cost so much money for international authors to get their books in front of TikTok's American audience.

Most authors were never going to go through all that. So eighteen months ago we set out to build a platform that would let international authors benefit from the

opportunity without having to repeat everything we'd been through. Not a shortcut around TikTok's requirements, but a legitimate American operation with the infrastructure already in place.

The result is Alchemy Books US, a platform built by international authors for international authors. It lets you put your books in front of TikTok's US audience. Your KDP account and your Amazon listings carry on exactly as they are.

Geography should never dictate your readership. And now it doesn't have to.

Your books. Your business. Our platform.

Eighteen months of work have produced something that, until recently, was beyond the reach of most international authors: a fully operational route into TikTok Shop US, without having to establish and manage an American business of their own.

Alchemy Books brings together the infrastructure, expertise and partnerships that open TikTok Shop US to non-fiction authors abroad. All of it sits on one platform, so authors can get on with putting their books in front of TikTok's US audience instead of working round the obstacles that kept them out.

You are not opening your own TikTok Shop, you are joining one that already exists. You bring the book, and we handle everything that previously made it impossible. You retain copyright in your work, and we make it available through the Alchemy Books TikTok Shop. You

have full visibility of your book's performance through the secure members site.

Why we're starting with non-fiction

TikTok's algorithm is very good at putting a video in front of people who are likely to care about it. To do that, it needs to understand what the video is about and who wants it.

Non-fiction makes that easy. A book about lowering blood pressure, learning Spanish, teaching a child to write or growing vegetables in a small garden answers a want the viewer recognises in a couple of seconds. The subject is the hook. A creator can pick up the book, show what it does and explain who it is for, without having to persuade anyone to care about a world they have never entered.

It also means a creator can demonstrate it. Something to pick up, something to show, something the viewer can watch happening.

Fiction sells on TikTok, and in enormous numbers. BookTok is best known for fiction, and for genres such as romance and fantasy. But it works differently, by taste, trope and mood rather than through a want you can name in a hook. That is a different kind of selling from the one Alchemy Books is built for.

Non-fiction is where we have started. It may not be where we finish.

Getting discovered takes work

Your book has already proved what most arrivals on

TikTok Shop cannot. It sells on Amazon, and American readers want what you have written, and you have the sales history to show it.

What is not yet proved is whether that demand will convert through short video.

Joining Alchemy Books gives you access to TikTok Shop US. It does not mean Alchemy will market your book for you. Just as if you were running your own shop, you create the early content, you test what attracts viewers, you establish those first sales. We provide the platform. You provide the momentum.

Think what that actually means, though, because it is better than it sounds.

Until now you have been working inside a system where much of your visibility is outside your control. You publish, you research keywords, you bid on clicks, and then you wait. You can do everything right and move nothing.

TikTok hands that back to you. Make a video on a Sunday afternoon and it could put your book in front of people who have never heard of it, in a country you have never visited, with nobody's permission and nothing spent on reach. Most of those videos will go nowhere. That is normal, and it costs you the afternoon. Then one lands, and a book that was selling steadily is suddenly selling at a different scale entirely.

Jonathan Nilsen, whom we met in chapter one, had a client who spent last December telling him nothing was working. She had posted and posted and had nothing to show for it. By February she did $250,000 in sales in a

month, with an $80,000 week. Another author told him in January that he still had not found the angle. One video went viral and he did $18,000 the following week.

These are exceptional outcomes, not typical earnings or promises of what will happen to your book. But they tell you something worth knowing before you start: the first few weeks do not predict what comes after.

It gets easier

You are not inventing a new sort of video. Search TikTok for your subject and find the ones drawing attention. What stops you scrolling? What makes you stay? How does the creator show the problem, or teach something, or set up the payoff? Paid services such as Kalodata can help you find successful videos, examine their performance and understand what is attracting attention in your niche.

Then adapt it to your book. A cookery author films the step people get wrong. The woodworking author shows the joint closing up properly. Someone writing about dog training films the moment the dog finally does it. You know your subject already. The only question is how to make a stranger curious about it in three seconds.

One fear that stops many authors is appearing on camera. You don't have to. Film the book, show what is inside it, use footage or stills, and put a voice over the top. AI tools will help with ideas, scripts, narration and editing. There is work in it, and it takes experimenting before you find what works, but far less technical difficulty than most people expect.

Batching is what makes it manageable. Rather than making something new each day, research a few ideas, film them in one session and schedule the posts ahead. Jonathan now spends around five hours a week on his whole operation, roughly half of that making videos. Getting to that point took a great deal more, but it shows what an organised routine becomes.

And you can start before the books arrive. While your book is being printed, you have two or three valuable weeks to prepare. Research the niche, write the scripts, film the footage and build a bank of videos ready to go. By the time the shop opens, you are starting from a standing position rather than a cold one.

Where creators come in

Your early videos do more than sell copies. They show that your book works on TikTok, and that matters enormously when you want other people to promote it.

Because you are not expected to generate every sale yourself. The early work is about proving the book has potential, and once it does, other people have a reason to carry it further than you could alone.

Creators are independent businesses. They choose which products deserve their time, and they want a reason to believe a book will land with their audience. Early sales, a video of yours that performed, evidence that viewers respond to your subject: any of it helps make the case.

This is where Alchemy's partnership with Euka AI matters. Euka, which won a 2026 TikTok Shop Catalyst

Award, finds and approaches relevant creators at a scale no author could manage alone. Outreach can begin earlier, but serious creator interest comes more easily once there is evidence the book sells.

The economics here are unlike anything you are used to. With Amazon Sponsored Ads you pay for the click, whether or not anyone buys. With TikTok affiliates, creators earn commission on sales their videos are credited with. Other costs still apply, but paying for sales rather than attention is a different proposition entirely.

If you get stuck, Alchemy can help with scripts, hooks and ideas. For something more structured, we recommend Jonathan Nilsen's course. You will be learning from someone who has built a TikTok book business of his own and knows what it takes. There is a link in the resources section.

The important thing is to begin. You already have a book that sells. And it is worth remembering what Valentino Saint Lavigne said in chapter one:

> "If you have a book that has any level of success and you're not on TikTok Shop, I don't know what to tell you. Like now is the time."

Why we chose Acutrack

Most companies lose something as they grow. Acutrack has not.

The business started in a garage. From those modest beginnings it has grown into an established American print and fulfilment company, and today is a leading name in book printing for TikTok Shop. But what sets Acutrack apart is not how far it has come, or even how quickly it can turn around a print job. It is how much of that original spirit remains.

You can see it in the way they treat their customers. Raj Barman, Acutrack's CEO, knows what it takes to build a business from scratch, to find a way through an unfamiliar market and to make decisions without having all the answers. That understanding has shaped a company that believes helping its customers succeed means doing more than printing their books well.

So Acutrack teaches. Not how to use their service, but how to sell books on TikTok: a free community, regular webinars, a headline sponsorship at Driven Publishers Miami 2026 where the people actually doing this share what is working. None of it sells a single print run. It is not what a printer waiting for the next order would do.

We saw the same thing first hand when we met Raj and Pete Aguilera to present our vision for Alchemy Books. We explained that we wanted to open TikTok Shop US to international authors, and took them through our website, including the members' pricing structure we had developed.

Raj studied what we had shown him. After a moment

he made an observation that changed the conversation.

Some authors, he said, would want to know exactly how many books were left in stock. They would want to be asked about reprints, quantities and every decision along the way. But others wouldn't.

> "David, some authors don't want to think about any of that. They just want to know we've got their backs. That their books will always be in stock, that every order will be fulfilled, and that they can get on with what they really want to do, writing."

It was a simple observation, and it revealed something we had missed entirely. We had built a system that gave authors control over inventory, print runs and quantities. Raj was asking us to think about the authors who do not want that responsibility in the first place.

Out of that came Total Freedom, a second pricing model for authors who would rather leave stock and reprints to us. Rather than watching stock levels and deciding when to fund another print run, they will have a simpler arrangement that keeps their books available while they concentrate on writing and marketing. Details are on our website.

That conversation told us more about Acutrack than any sales presentation could have. Raj and Pete were not simply listening to what we proposed. They were thinking about what our authors might need, including needs we had not recognised ourselves.

Behind all that sits a substantial American operation. Printing, binding, storage and dispatch all happen in one

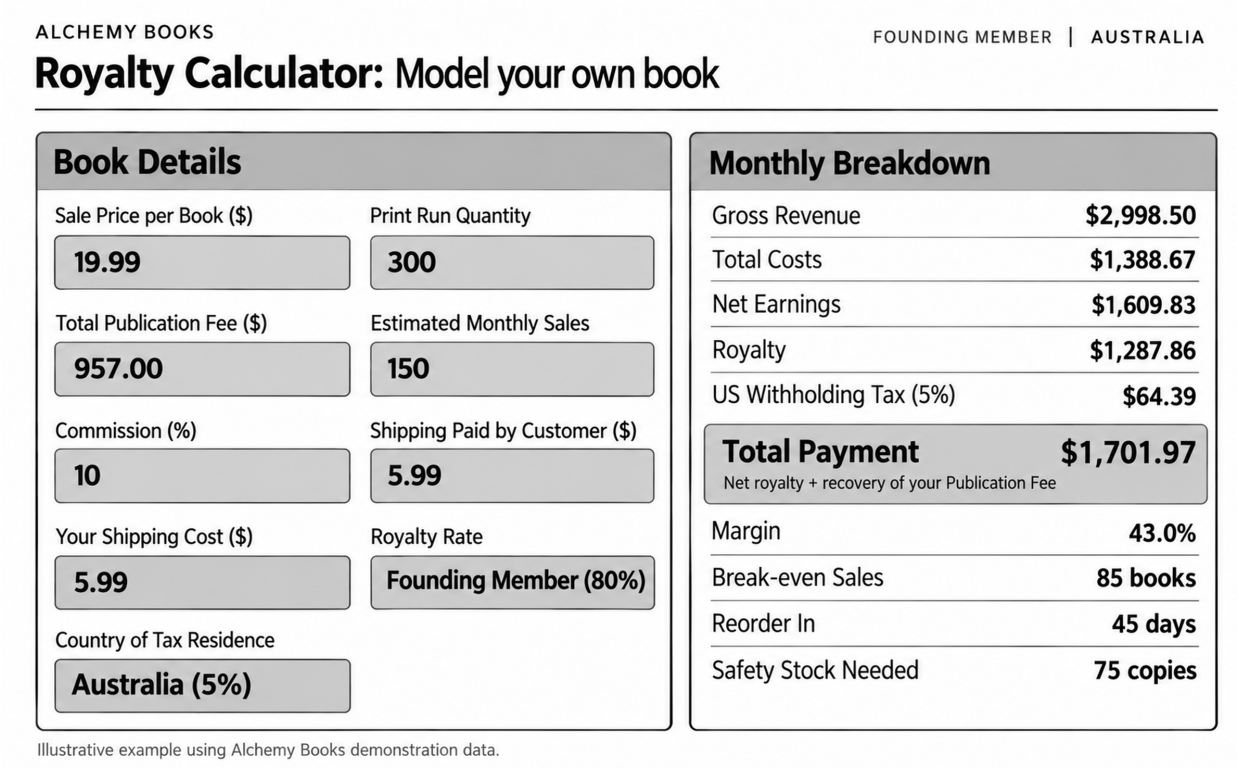
building, so books go straight from press to customer. On TikTok, where orders can arrive faster than anyone forecast, that matters.

We went looking for a printer who could keep up when a book goes viral. We found one who wanted to understand what we were building, and why.

Your numbers

Every author reading this has been doing sums in their head since chapter one. Say my book sells on TikTok. What is actually left after printing, shipping, commission and everything else?

You can find out before you do anything at all.



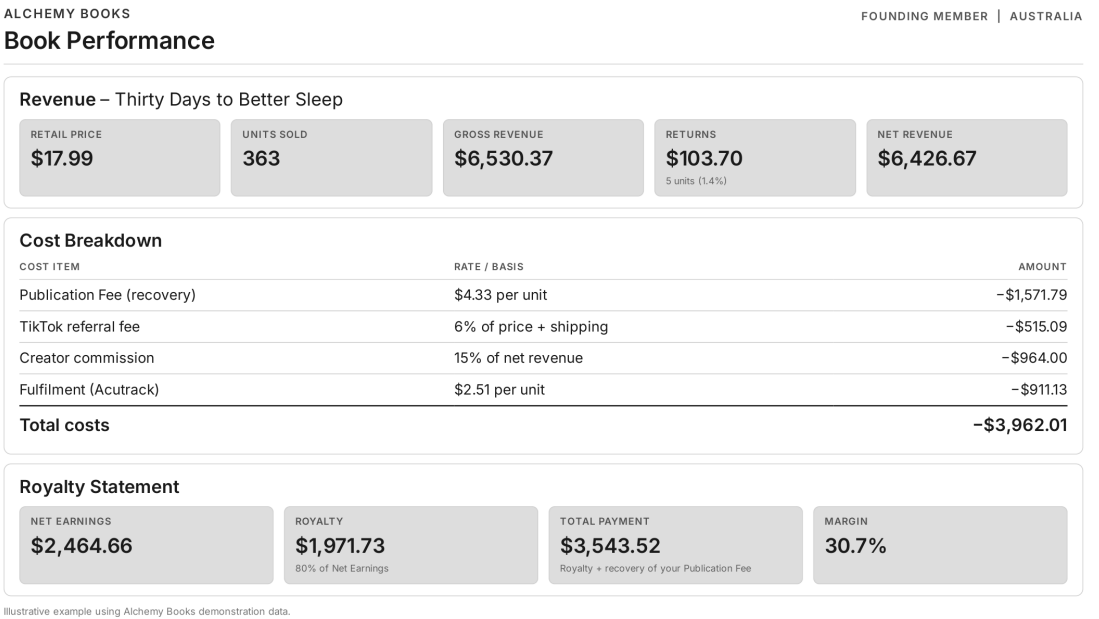
The Alchemy Books royalty calculator.

Five minutes with the calculator and you know where you stand. What your royalty is on a single sale and across a month. How many copies you have to sell before you are ahead. When you would need to reprint. If you have never had to think about print costs, there is an estimator built in, so trim size and page count are all you need.

Then there are the sales that happen on Amazon instead.

Some of the people who see your book on TikTok will buy it on Amazon instead, and nobody can tell you how many. So rather than guess on your behalf, the calculator lets you set the assumption yourself. Put in what you currently sell on Amazon and what you earn per copy, then see what happens if TikTok exposure doubles it, or trebles it, or does nothing at all. These are scenarios, not forecasts, but they let you see the whole picture rather than one platform's half of it.

That is before. Once your book is live, you are not estimating anything.



A single book's financial detail, as shown in the members' dashboard.

Every title has its own page. Units sold, gross revenue and returns, then every cost itemised: publication fee recovery, TikTok fees, commission, fulfilment. Then the royalty statement and what is being paid to you. Nothing is netted off into a single figure you have to take on trust. If you build a list of titles, the portfolio view puts them side by side, so you can see which books are working and which are not.

Your books, your business, your numbers.

From Membership to Launch

In as little as three weeks, your book can finally be live and in front of TikTok's US audience.

Set that against the last two chapters. Months of it, and then three weeks.

You sit down one afternoon with a book you have already published on Amazon. You create your membership profile, complete your tax information and add the bank account your royalties will be paid into. Next you upload your manuscript and cover, product images of your book and its description. That is your part of the administration finished.

A printed proof arrives for you to approve. You check the cover, feel the paper, inspect the binding. Nothing goes into production until you are happy with it. Then your print run begins.

While Acutrack prints and prepares your books, you have something far more interesting to do. It is the window described earlier in this chapter: research your niche, write your scripts, film your footage, and have a



first batch of videos ready to go.

Your book is live and waiting to be discovered on TikTok US.

Scaling

Your book is selling. Affiliates are posting. It has its own momentum. That is the point at which you can put money behind it.

TikTok has already learnt who is likely to buy books like yours, and advertising puts your best-performing videos in front of more of those people. Not just a bigger audience, but the right one.

TikTok's advertising engine, GMV Max, works differently from anything you will know from Amazon. There is no audience to pick and no copy to write. You set two things, a daily budget and a target return, and TikTok draws on the videos you and your affiliates have made, tests them, and moves the money toward whatever sells. For a first campaign we suggest letting TikTok choose

which videos run, since it has the widest pool to work from.

Of the two, the target return is the one that matters. For example, set it at 2.5 and you are asking TikTok to find you two dollars fifty of sales for every dollar spent. Set it too low and you spend more than you needed to. Set it too high and the campaign may not spend at all, because the algorithm cannot find buyers at that efficiency.

There is something about GMV Max that rarely gets mentioned. It is covered briefly here and fully in the members' guide.

GMV Max counts in its return all sales of the advertised book during the campaign, whether they came from the advertising, from your own videos or from affiliate promotions. The reported return is not confined to sales the advertising generated. A dashboard showing a healthy return may be taking credit for copies you would have sold anyway.

To help members navigate this, we provide a calculator that works out the return a campaign genuinely needs before it covers its costs. And it is why we will not run one on a book selling fewer than about fifty copies a week. Below that there may simply not be enough sales activity for the algorithm to work with, and it is your money paying the algorithm to learn.

Once a book has shown that people want it, GMV Max is how you build on that momentum.

A last word

Is Alchemy Books as good as owning your own TikTok Shop? No, and I am not going to pretend otherwise.

If you're an international author with an American you genuinely trust, a few titles earning enough to carry the costs, and the ambition to build your own TikTok publishing business, open your own shop. It is harder than it looks, and chapter two is not an exaggeration, but you will own the business you build and have far greater control over how you run it. I would do the same in your position.

For many authors our platform is the sensible first move. You can find out whether TikTok works for your book before spending thousands of dollars and several months establishing your own US shop. And if your book takes off and you decide to open your own shop, you will be making that decision with evidence rather than hope.

Other non-resident authors may have no desire to run their own TikTok Shop US. They would rather concentrate on writing and marketing their books than deal with US banking, compliance, inventory and fulfilment. For them, Alchemy Books is the right long-term choice.

Think back to the first days of KDP. Few imagined what it would become. Authors who saw the chance early went on to build substantial publishing businesses,

although nobody could have guaranteed that outcome at the time. TikTok has something of that same feeling, and windows like it do not stay open. As Valentino Saint Lavigne said, and we quoted in chapter one, there were people who thought Bitcoin at a hundred dollars was already too expensive.

So open your own TikTok Shop US, or use the Alchemy platform. It really doesn't matter which. What I would hate is for you to read all this, agree with it, and then do nothing at all.

We built Alchemy Books because geography should not dictate your readership, and now it doesn't.

David Rafferty
Founder, Alchemy Books US
alchemybooks.us

Sources

TikTok changes its requirements. The figures in this book were accurate when it went to press. Every source below, with a live link, can be found at alchemybooks.us/sources.

Dave Perrotta, interviewed by Peter Holmquist, Driven Publishers, on TikTok Shop for self-publishers, 10 October 2025.

Jonathan Nilsen, interviewed by Sean Dollwet, Royalty Hero, “NEW TikTok Strategy Scaled His Amazon KDP Business to $50k/mo”, 10 August 2026.

Valentino Saint Lavigne, interviewed by Peter Holmquist, Driven Publishers, on scaling a publishing business through TikTok Shop, 7 April 2026.

TikTok Shop, Identity Re-Verification Requirements, 30 June 2026.

TikTok Shop, Understanding Connected Account Risks: Best Practices and Appeal FAQs, 29 June 2026.

TikTok Shop, How to register as a Corporation or Partnership.

Internal Revenue Service, Form W-9, Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification, and

its instructions.

Internal Revenue Service, Single Member Limited Liability Companies.

Internal Revenue Service, Form W-8BEN and Form W-8BEN-E.

Circana BookScan, reported by TikTok: approximately 59 million US print book sales in 2024 attributed to BookTok creators and content, with an estimated value of $760 million.

Written Word Media, on changes to Amazon's search and recommendation algorithms, March 2026.

Resources

Jonathan Nilsen's course, TikTok Shop for Publishers, sold through Royalty Hero. Structured training for anyone starting or growing a TikTok book business.

Kalodata. Subscription research for TikTok Shop. Find the videos selling in your subject and see how they perform.

Acutrack. Our print and fulfilment partner runs a free community and regular webinars for authors selling on TikTok Shop, open to anyone.

IPScore (ipscore.io) and IPFighter (ipfighter.com). Free checks on any internet address: where it resolves to, whether it reads as a proxy or VPN, and the risk score attached to it.

Alchemy Books US. Guides on everything in this book and a good deal more, at alchemybooks.us/resources.

Your book could be reaching readers who will never search for it on Amazon.

TikTok is changing how readers discover books. They see something that catches their attention, recognise something they need, and buy a title they might never have found through a search. One author saw his Amazon royalties reach $10,000 a month after his book went viral, without another dollar spent on advertising.

But watching other authors succeed is frustrating when your location keeps you outside TikTok Shop US. David Rafferty knows that frustration. He and his partners built Alchemy Books US so international non-fiction authors could stop watching from the sidelines and start selling.

This book reveals the opportunity, the shortcuts that can put your business at risk, and how to start selling on TikTok Shop US through Alchemy Books US while retaining your rights, your KDP account and your Amazon listings.

TikTok Shop US was closed to you.
The door is now open.

David Rafferty
Alchemy Books US

INTERACTIVE ALCHEMY PUBLISHING