

LUNCHBREAK with



DVIR COHEN

בקליק אמזון AMAZON IN A CLICK

AGE
43

EMPLOYEES
20+

STARTED
BUSINESS
2009

LOCATION
Tel Aviv, Israel

CURRENT CLIENTS:
300+

WEBSITE
AmazonInAClick.com

So you want to sell on Amazon. Slight problem, you think—because you live in Eretz Yisrael. Enter Dvir Cohen, Israel’s Amazon guru.

After turning a boring lecture into a successful children’s book-writing career, Dvir started selling his own private-label products on Amazon. He then began helping others who wanted to sell on Amazon, guiding them through the process from A to Z.

In today’s increasingly connected world, Dvir helps many Israelis (including *chareidim*) launch their e-commerce careers through his company Amazon in a Click. As the name indicates, with just a few clicks, one can sit in Eretz Yisrael and sell his Chinese-made products in America.

With an online group of sellers totalling 15,000, Dvir sees his job as a *shlichut*—trying to help his fellow Jews earn a *parnasah*.

University for computer science and mathematics; I was 22 at the time. I knew I wanted to do something with computers, but I didn’t know exactly what.

“I’ve been a computer geek for as long as I can remember. Before the Internet of today; I used BBS. I founded ‘The Joker’ BBS website and it became pretty popular in Israel and globally. It was through this that I had my first entrepreneurial experience. I would get games that people shared, put them on floppy disks—remember those?—and sell them in school.

“After the army and college, I started working at a startup company as a programmer. I worked there for two years.

“One day I was sitting through a company lecture, and as you can imagine, it wasn’t very exciting. I had always enjoyed writing as a child. I wrote some computer articles online and in general enjoyed writing. During the lecture I started writing a children’s story about a boy named Yossi. One Shabbat he’s woken up by a cat. He follows the cat and jumps into a hole in



I was born and raised in Tel Aviv in a traditional Jewish family. My father is from Iraq, and my mother is Israeli. We kept the Shabbat, *chagim*, etc. Because I am a *kohen*, they meant a lot to me.

“My father had a successful toy-store business in Bat Yam. Today he has one store, but at his peak he had several. All his life he did business, dealing with China, importing and exporting. My mother worked with my father in the business.

“After high school I served in the air force in intelligence. I was in the air force for three years and then went to Ben Gurion

BY NESANEL GANTZ

the wall he created and chases a mouse...

"My story morphed from *Yossi B'Shabbat* to *Leo the Superhero*. I decided to publish the story online, to be offered on Amazon Kindle. I had it professionally illustrated and posted it. It did surprisingly well, so I wrote some more. The stories sold so well that I quit my day job as a programmer

"I started publishing many different children's stories under several pen names. One of the successful series was the *I Wish* series, where, for example, a cat wishes to be a dog, or a dog wishes to be a horse. I have written over 150 children's books in my career. I found someone in the US who would do the editing for me, and she works with me to this day.

"I offered many books for free, while there were others for which I charged a few dollars. I figured out how to maximize the advertising through Amazon for my Kindle books.

"I realized I could bring *sheirut* (service) to people who were looking for ways to promote their Amazon Kindle through Amazon, even people in the US. What we basically offered was a one-stop-shop to help them publish their book, get them online and help them promote it.

"By the way, the key to writing a successful kids' book is to make sure the child learns a life lesson from the book. The adults will see the benefit in reading such a book to the child, and the child will be happy as well.

"Around ten years ago, when Amazon launched FBA (Fulfillment by Amazon), I saw an opening to apply the knowledge I had gained selling my books to selling other products as well. We did our research and started creating private-label products manufactured in China. We created all sorts of products, from car accessories to toys and more. In total, we have created over 300 products.

"When I was a child, I helped my parents in their business. My father imported from China, so I had some knowledge of how to deal with companies overseas. Of course I made mistakes—not one, but many. You make a mistake and then you try again, and on the fourth time you can succeed. My brother joined my business to help manage many of the logistics.

"We started helping others in Israel start selling on Amazon by importing their own private label from China. I created a group called Amazon b'Click (Amazon in a Click). We started a Facebook group and have over 14,000 sellers as part of our online group. We offer seminars and training in general, and we help individuals privately as part of our business to help Israelis start an Amazon business. It feels great to help people who need a *panasah* do things on their own and be *matzliach*."

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Sitting in Israel, ordering from China to sell in the US. How does that work?

I still think it's crazy that I can sit in a coffee shop in Israel and work with China. I don't only sell to the US. I also sell on other Amazons, in Australia, Europe and Japan, but mainly it is in the US. It's a three-step process. I try to find the right product to sell and order a sample. Once I receive the sample in Israel and it meets my standards, I will order a single product to be shipped from China to Amazon FBA.

This step is key. Even though the first sample is good, you don't want to send a 1,000-piece order to FBA as there are many things that can go wrong. The process of Amazon accepting a single product is more or less the same as it is for accepting many products. Once I see that Amazon received the sample and it listed properly, only then will I make the larger order.

Have you ever been to China?

I was never in China; however, I've brought Chinese people to Israel. I recently brought representatives of a large Chinese company. This company does quality control in China, and as we are the largest Israeli influencer in regard to Amazon, they wanted to work with us. They are looking to open a branch here in Israel.

Say someone from Bnei Brak approaches you and wants to sell on Amazon. Guide us through that process.

We have an initial meeting to discuss what their vision is and what products they are interested in selling. There is our fee, generally in the 8,000 NIS range, which is not a lot to help someone start a business. We then begin a three- to four-month process where we guide them through the entire process. They have videos they have to watch. I speak to them once a week for

overall direction and guidance. They are also assigned one of our employees who works with them on an individual basis—someone they can talk to constantly.

We explain to them how one works with China. We help them order their samples and get them listed on Amazon.

One of the most important things we do is teach them the state of mind of e-commerce. E-commerce is a different world for many of our clients. With many clients we help them create their own website for their products, not only Amazon.

You can take someone from zero to having their product created, imported from China, and listed on Amazon in only four months?

Yes. I just got off the phone with a client whom we helped get listed in two months. Look, we want to work fast; we also want to make money (*laughs*). It gets especially crazy around this time of year as the fourth quarter is when the most spending happens online.

Why do you help others start an Amazon business instead of focusing on growing your own?

That's a good question. There is no issue of helping the competition, so to speak, as there is plenty of room for everyone on Amazon. Also, our clients have a direction where they want to sell, and in general the items I sell are in a different category from theirs.

As far as why I spend time helping others as opposed to focusing solely on my business, it sort of developed on its own when people asked for help and it became a business. I enjoy helping others make money. I see it as a personal *zechut* to help others be *matzliach*.

One of our specialties is getting brick-and-mortar companies online.





Local business that have only stores?

Or that sell to stores. There was a company here that produced tablecloths. They did very well without any online presence at all—very old-school. Some of their products are blue and white. They were very surprised by how well they sold in America.

What do you mean that you sell products that your clients don't?

I can't tell you everything I do... The reason I can sell different things is because I am fortunately in a different position from them, having sold for many years. For example, I produce pizza trays or gardening tools with the American flag on them. With some of these products, it costs over \$20,000 for the mold alone, so it's not feasible for most people starting out.

Seems like many things can go wrong if you're shipping from China straight to FBA—like getting stuck with a bad product, and you can't deal with it locally.

One of the most important things when it comes to working with FBA and Amazon is to be flexible, to think out of the box if issues arise. If there is a problem, almost everything can be solved.

We once had a shipment of a refrigerator calendar that one of our people had sent to Amazon—5,000 pieces of it. When Amazon got it, the marker said it had alcohol on it and Amazon would not accept it. We had it sent to a local warehouse with whom we have a relationship. They opened the pieces one by one and removed the marker. We retook photos and resubmitted them to Amazon.

The client didn't make as much money as they would have liked to, but they broke even and a bit more.

That is why I recommend shipping a single item first to Amazon, as I mentioned to you earlier.

Do you think Israelis face more difficulties than Americans when it comes to selling online?

Yes, because they don't understand the American client's mindset. They are different in what they like to buy and in how they think. I fly to the US three times a year simply for

this purpose—to see for myself how the American consumer shops. I walk around Walmarts and other stores to observe.

How do you deal with stress?

I do exercise and that helps. However, when I am under stress, I try to figure out *why* I am under stress. Many times when one is stressed, he has many things to do or many reasons he feels stressed. It is important to sit down and try to figure out *lamah atah lachutz*—why are you stressed? What is the root cause of your stress at this moment? It can be several things, not just one. But if you isolate what is causing you the immediate stress, write them all down and start addressing each one.

Are there certain products you feel are popular right now, especially for a new seller?

There are many fields, and one can be successful in all of them. However, if I had to choose two right now, I would say auto parts and children's toys.

I have been told by other experts that in order to be successful selling private label on Amazon, you have to have sold something on Amazon previously. In other words, one should practice selling anything on Amazon simply to learn how Amazon operates. Do you agree?

Lo chayav—a person can do without it. Of course, there is benefit to having sold on Amazon previously. But I can tell you from experience that we have helped people whose first experience on Amazon was when they listed their products for sale, and they did well.

Do you think anyone can write a book and do well simply on Kindle?

It's hard. Not everyone can sell well, and this applies to

everything on Amazon. You can't think you will create a good product or a good book and people will buy it simply because it exists. You have to be on top of the product. You have to market it. Amazon changes the rules all the time. You can create a book that can sell, but it's not easy.

You publicize your cellphone and email address. I find it fascinating for someone who runs a large company. Please explain that to me.

Most people will call me or WhatsApp me first, but I agree with you that it's interesting. But it's me. I am a people person, and I like the fact that the first point of interaction with my company is me. I can then direct the caller to a personal mentor in the company. I sometimes have dozens of missed calls in a day, and I try to get back to everyone in due time, usually when I'm driving.

How do you handle it all?

It's hard, and of course I'm not available on Shabbat. It's a theory of mine and I try to make it work. I believe that out of every 100 phone calls, there may be one that can change the landscape of my business, not only from a monetary standpoint but from the point of view of interest—one potential interesting client who can help my business in many ways. I don't want to miss that opportunity.

What advice would you give someone who wants to sell on Amazon or someone who is selling currently?

For someone who wants to sell, it's about the mindset. I ask all prospective clients, "Why do you want to sell on Amazon?" We don't take everyone who wants to work with us.

I have three suggestions for a prospective seller. First, learn to be patient; it's an adventure, and you have to be willing to be in it for the long ride. Second, align yourself and learn from the best people out there. Get a mentor; there are people who are willing to help you learn the ropes.

Finally, learn to think as a client as opposed to a seller. When people want to sell, all they think about is the selling aspect—how will they sell and how much they will sell for. However, to be successful you have to think as a client—how the experience will be for clients and what they are looking for when they shop.

What are three technical tips to help someone sell more on Amazon?

Focus on Amazon's PPC (pay per click); if you do it correctly, you won't need any other form of online advertising. My second suggestion is be different; include a *matanah* (gift) with every purchase order. It could be something small like a key chain, but give customers something extra to remember you by.

Finally, create a club of all the people who have bought from you in the past by gathering their emails and other information in one place. People who have bought from you in the past are more likely to buy from you in the future, even on Amazon. And yes, most sellers don't do this.

Overall, I want to add that you really have to enjoy the process. You can't look at it as an *ol*, a load; you have to learn to enjoy figuring things out.

Do you work with many *chareidim* in Eretz Yisrael who are looking to sell on Amazon?

Yes, I do. Have you ever heard of Bizmax, by the way?

Certainly—they do a lot of training for *chareidim*. It's run by Itzik Crombie. I have interviewed him for Lunchbreak in the past.

I have spoken for them several times in the past. To answer your question, yes, I have dealt with many *chareidim*. Interestingly, most of them have been couples who work together or want to work together in the business. They come very prepared and well organized and have saved a decent amount of their own money. What's beautiful is how *makpid* they are that no work is done on their behalf on Shabbat and *chagim*. Often, the husband will call me and schedule the meeting, and then the wife will take the lead. They are great to work with.

Why doesn't Israel have its own Amazon yet?

That's the million-dollar question. They are working on opening one in Turkey and then will work on opening one here. They are already in talks about it.

Are they in contact with you?

Let's just say I'm not at liberty to talk about it. ●

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