



readeo

Q&A with Readeo Founder Coby Neuenschwander

Q Your background is not in book publishing – what prompted you to create Readeo?

A My own experience of trying to connect my son with my parents even though we live 1500 miles apart. The few in person visits we have each year don't give my son the experiences I would like him to have with his grandparents. We use video chat, and while much better than using the phone, it doesn't create a shared interaction or the bonding that reading does. I created Readeo to give my son more meaningful interaction with my parents when we can't be together.

Q How is Readeo different than reading a book via skype?

A There is really no easy way to read a book to a child just using Skype. Both people would have to have the physical book with them or one person would have to try to hold the book up to the web cam. Either way, it's not a great experience and it's not really what Skype was built to do. Readeo integrates Skype-like video chat functionality with digital children's books so that both sides can see each other and the book on their screens at the same time. It's a very seamless experience centered on making the interaction as close as possible to what you would get if you were together.

Q Who is Readeo for?

A The website is for picture-book aged children (0 – 8) and their families. We offer a great way for families who are apart to share story time together. Readeo is ideal for grandparents, divorced families, military families, and families who are often separated for work or other reasons.

Q Do you need to be tech-savvy to use Readeo?

A Not at all. If you have a high speed Internet connection and a web cam, then you will be able to use the product. There is no need to even download software. We've made it very simple and intuitive so that people of all ages can use it and enjoy it.

Q Is Readeo safe for kids?

A Absolutely! We have designed this site and the way it is used to be safe and secure. Children do not have their own accounts and the very nature of the site creates an interaction with an adult and a child under that adult's supervision.

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Q Why did you choose to include a social networking component to Readeo? How does it work?

A I don't think we set out to create a social networking site in the traditional sense of social networking. When I think of social networking sites, I think about connecting with a broad network of friends, colleagues, or people with a common interest. We don't really do that. However, we do use social networking functionality to connect a more intimate group of family and friends around reading. Users can connect with family, initiate BookChat sessions, and share book recommendations.

Q How do you select which books will be in Readeo's virtual library?

A We are very selective about what makes it on the site. Each book is handpicked by our Editor - Jenny Brown, who has worked in children's books for over twenty years. She works closely with our publisher partners to decide which books will translate well to the site. Finally, our customer opinions help us tweak and improve our approach to book selection.

Q Starting your own business, especially one on such a large scale, can be incredibly complicated and difficult. Can you put your finger on the one part of this venture that you have found to be particularly rewarding or motivating?

A The most rewarding aspect of Readeo is that it helps connect families and promote children's literacy – both of which are very important to me as a father and son of a school teacher. I have really enjoyed getting to know people in this industry – there is something inherently good about reading and children's books that people in this industry are passionate about. It is a lot of fun working with the people at Readeo to create something we all believe in.

Q What's next for Readeo?

A We want to continue to improve the Readeo experience by adding more great books to our library and additional features to enhance the BookChat™ experience. We are excited about some of the things we are working on for the future and we look forward to learning from our customers about what they would like to see us do. We are also working on some exciting relationships that will give Readeo an opportunity to help children and families in disadvantaged situations.

