



EPISODE 15

# *Why You Need a Project Management System to Rapid Release Novels*

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Welcome back everyone! It's Wednesday and you know what that means – it's time for a new episode of the Author Revolution Podcast! So here we are, and as always, I'm your host, Carissa Andrews.

This week's episode is going to be a fun one! Well, fun if you like getting organized and feeling like you have a good handle over your author workflow. No? You don't geek out over making a system that works for you? Well, lucky for you, I'm a total systems geek. I love digging into a project, seeing the messy, expansive cluster for what it is – then using my analytical mind to sort it all out. I kinda blame my grandpa. He loved puzzles and he passed that on to me. So, while I might not have a man cave or he-shed the way he did when he wanted to put puzzles together, I do have good tunes and a great project management tool that keeps me focused. We'll get to which one that is in just a minute, but first... let's talk about all the things.

You know what I mean. The bazillion and one tasks that you could be worrying about or focusing on when it comes to writing a single book, let alone rapid releasing a series. As a side note, the majority of what I teach on Rapid Releasing is also applicable to a single title. The only thing you don't have to think about is how to juggle writing multiple books at once.



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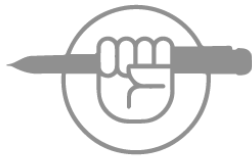


Okay, so there are 5 major components you need to be considering when you're mapping out your rapid release strategy. For those of you who may have missed it, be sure to go back and listen to episode 6 - What is Rapid Releasing to find out what those rapid release strategies are and pick one that works for you. That way, you can make a strategic plan to implement your launch strategy properly.

That being said, let's go over the five major areas you'll need to organize and have a good schedule to refer back to.

1. Project Conception and Outlining Schedule - I've said it before and next week we'll dive into this more, but if you're a pantser... my friend, there is a good chance rapid releasing will not work as well for you. It's not to say you can't do it, but it might mean a year of writing, then a year of releasing. Or getting a number of books ahead of yourself before you start rapid releasing. When you look at project management as a whole, there are usually three major blocks: Planning, Creation, and Implementation. Consider the project conception and outlining to be a crucial step of your project plan. In fact, it accounts for 1/3 of your success. So, please, for the love of all that's holy, spend some time to think about your concept and figure out your game plan. This includes the phase of putting together your plan (like we're talking about right now). You need to go over the goals of the project. What is it you want to write? What readers do you want to reach? When do you want it to release? How long will it take you to accomplish it? Take an honest look at what you feel comfortable with so you don't allow overwhelm to consume you. Once you have a good idea of what you want to write and the how, you want to start outlining your series. Yes, the whole thing. However - you can do it a couple of ways. One way is to do a quick overview of what each book will be about. This could mean 4-5 sentences about what the overarching theme will be. If you easily get overwhelmed outlining, stick with this one so you don't shut down.





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Then, stick to fully outlining book 1. For me, I usually take an afternoon – 2-4 hours to really sit with the story, think about what I want to come out and write a skeletal outline. However, one of the things I've really enjoyed doing with the Windhaven Witches is to create a chapter-by-chapter outline. It gives me just enough details to know what I plan to write about so my subconscious can play with the information, but it also gives me a direction to start running in. I actually did this for all four books, even though I'm only wrapping up Secret Legacy, or book 1, right now. However because I know certain elements that will happen in other books, I can drop little Easter eggs that people may not notice until they go back and reread. I love that sort of thing. It's probably why I love the Marvel Avengers movies so much. My family and I are rewatching the four Avengers movies with my youngest right now and knowing the whole arc, I get chills now seeing all the little hints they dropped that I never even picked up before. Okay, so my tip for you in this section is to spend at least a week going through your planning and outlining process. Ideally, it should be as much as 2-3 weeks because this gets you invested in your goal. Be sure to give yourself specific dates and deadlines that you want to hit and add them to your project management tool. This is, of course, not even touching on all the things you might need to keep track of when it comes to your story. While I love the project management tool that I'll tell you about at the end, I don't use it to keep all my story notes. Instead, I use Scrivener or OneNote to organize everything in one easy-to-find place. It's an added piece of the way I work and it's the way I like to keep organized. You can always find a different organizational system for this. Maybe it's a real notebook, or a wall behind you. Use whatever works for you, but make sure you're adding in this part of the plan to your overall deadline for this phase.



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2. Okay, next comes the phase that everyone wants to dive straight into. Writing. Yes, it's important, but in all honestly, it's not MORE important than the other components. It's just likely the one that takes the longest. In this section, you need to know what your book lengths will be. Are you aiming for 50K? 70K? More? Whatever it is, you need to know that number so you can calculate how many words per day you need to write to stay on track. Writing a novel is a marathon, not a sprint, so you need to pace yourself and give yourself the gift of a daily writing habit. When you break it into word count goals, it's a tangible, actionable number that your brain understands. Use it to your advantage. Whether you use Word or Scrivener, you can see how many words are in any given document. Although Scrivener does allow you to keep track of your overall goal and how many words hit the page anywhere inside the manuscript. So, if you hop around from scene to scene, this could be particularly helpful for you. I personally write in Scrivener or the Scrivener app for iPhone and I LOVE it. It keeps my brain on track and focused. For whatever reason, I just don't feel comfortable when my novel is one big run on document when I'm working on it. At any rate once you have your schedule in mind, get it in your project management tool and add in the deadline for each goal. Not just the end-game goal (heehee, Endgame), but your weekly goals as well. I prefer a weekly check in on a goal rather than daily because there will be days that you miss the mark due to unforeseen circumstances. That's life, man. But when you have a weekly goal, you can always work to make it up on days that have more room. When we write, we need as many opportunities to celebrate our wins as possible. Amiright? So, give yourself room to celebrate wins rather than beat yourself up when things don't work out. As you're going along, if you find you're not hitting your goals consistently, rather than give up all together, adjust them so they fit better. This is your goal, remember. You're in charge of it, not the other way around. Just make sure you are working toward progress honestly and not giving in to excuses. Deal?



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3. The next phase you need to keep track of is your editing and revisions schedule. This will look different for every author. If you use beta and alpha readers, you might have them in your schedule. If you send chapters to Crit partners during the writing process, you might keep track of that. If you're an AutoCrit or Grammarly editor, you need to plan out how long this phase of editing will take you to complete. Otherwise, if you work with an editor, maybe their deadline is the only thing you need to keep track of. Whatever it looks like in your world, you need to add this time to your calendar and give enough room to make changes. Regardless of how you implement your edits, you will need to give yourself time to go through them and make those changes to your manuscript before it goes out. How long this phase takes will depend on your system. The important thing is to know what that looks like for you so you can give out deadlines appropriately.
  
4. Post-Production Schedule - This phase includes covers, layout, and publishing. So, if you're an indie author, like I assume you are, then you'll want to have a cover designed as early as possible so you have something to promote. If you're planning a release that's a year out, you can go ahead and do this in Amazon, so you might even want to get the sales page up and loaded early. If a longer runway isn't necessary, then you might just want a few weeks to do a cover reveal and launch it. Either way, you do want to think about covers as early as possible so it gives your designer time to create it. The layout is something you'll need to worry about once you've implemented your revisions. If you don't have a tool like Vellum, you'll want to make sure you have a formatter scheduled. It will take a couple of days, minimum, to get the file created and sent back to you, so make sure you know what your formatter needs and have it built in. Finally, it takes time to get the books up on whatever sites you plan to publish. You'll need to be doing keyword research, category research, blurb research, and finalize all the details in the back end of your dashboard or dashboards.



All of this takes time, too. If you plan to spend an entire day researching with PublisherRocket and going through Bryan Cohen's book, *How to Write a Sizzling Synopsis* to get your book blurb perfect – do it. Make sure it's on the calendar and rock it out. However long you think it might take you doesn't matter, as long as you plan for it.

5. The last component to planning your rapid release is a biggie. It's one that needs to be added in synergistically. At this point, you may have guessed it. I'm talking about your marketing schedule. Most of this stuff is important and while you may not do all of it – but you might – you want to make sure it's on your calendar and you're thinking about how it will work so you can be working on it during all of the phases that come before it. You don't want to get everything done AND THEN start marketing. That's not how this works. You need to be building hype for it as soon as you know the title of your book and series. Get me? Let's go over the main areas that I add into my plan.

- Newsletter Swaps – this is getting other authors to swap with you to share your book and you share theirs. It's extremely useful, but you need to have a consistent newsletter schedule. So if you don't have that, start by making one.
- Lead Magnet Hype – Create a lead magnet so you can build your email list and generate hype. You can do this by uploading the first 3 chapters to your book to a site like StoryOrigin, ProlificWorks, BookFunnel, or Wattpad.
- BookBub Recommendation Swaps – If you're trying to build your BookBub presence (go back and listen to last week's episode #14 if you want to know why this is important), then you can hop into Facebook groups for authors where you can do BB recommendation swaps.



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- Reviews from ARC teams – If you have an ARC or Street team who reads your books and leaves reviews right away, make sure you know when you need to email the ARC out and when you expect them to post their reviews. If you don't have an ARC team yet, you can use sites like StoryOrigin to get advanced readers who promise to post a review and the site tracks whether or not they do this.
- Ad Schedule – If you plan on doing paid ads for your books (which I do recommend if you want to get as many readers as possible), you'll want to decide which ones and your budget. The most frequently used for authors include:
  - Facebook
  - AMS
  - BookBub
  - Twitter
  - Goodreads
- Launch Strategy – When you're getting ready to launch, you'll want to be thinking about what that looks like. Usually, books get the most traction the first few weeks after launch. So, if you plan to do any promo stacking, tours, or cover reveals, you want to add them to your calendar and pay for them as far in advance as possible. Especially if you plan to do paid ads during your launch as well. Sites you might want to stack with (regardless of genre) include:
  - BookBub
  - ENT
  - Freebooksy
  - Bargain Booksy



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- Social Media Schedule – This one might need to be a part of the “planning” phase, but for the sake of what it does, we’ll keep it in marketing. For social, you might want to think about how you’re going to handle posts. Are you doing anything new or different? Want to make it more fun? Exciting? Build some mystery? Whatever it might be, decide on your frequency and maybe even what “kind” of post goes out each day. Then, plan a single afternoon where you “batch” all of these posts by scheduling them to go out all week so you don’t have to be doing it daily. If you have a readers group, don’t forget to think of fun ways to encourage participating and engagement because these people can be some of your biggest advocates once the books go live.
- Giveaways – Which brings me to giveaways. Think about the types of giveaways you might want to do to get people excited. This could be as little as \$5 Amazon giftcards, or a big as a Kindle or larger giftcard! Whatever you choose to do, decide how frequently you’ll run them, where they’ll be posted, and how much you can afford. All of this can go into your plan.

At this point, you might be thinking whoa. That’s a lot of stuff. No wonder authors are crazy. While that might be true, the good news is, once you create a plan once, the next time, you just copy it and tweak it as necessary. Each time gets easier.

So, what kind of tool have I found that does all of this and more?

ASANA.



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I absolutely adore Asana for a number of reasons. Not only can I break things down by deadline, but I can also see things in a visual Gantt Chart way, as well, with the paid version. This helps for when there are items that overlap – for instance marketing with every other phase of the project.

Another thing that's nice about Asana is that I can keep track of multiple projects all at once. So, if I'm doing a series, I can manage each title as its own project and see how everything lays out in relationship to everything else. I can also break out specific items – for example, launch week, so I can manage what that looks like in a more granular and focused way.

Asana will be one of the pillar tools inside my Rapid Release Roadmap course, so if you think you might be joining me for that course later this year, I do encourage you to give Asana a try and get familiar with it. I'll make sure to add a link to it, and all of the other stuff we talked about, in the show notes for today. Just head over to [authorrevolution.org/15](http://authorrevolution.org/15)

Well, there you have it, guys. I hope this podcast episode was helpful for you so that you can wrangle in those feelings of author overwhelm and start getting your system in place for rapid releasing your books. Even if it's just getting faster at writing your first book. Or a single book. Next week we'll be taking a deeper dive into outlining. I'll answer the biggest question of what kind of outlining works best and how to use it on your next novel. I'll even be dropping a worksheet on how you can do this. So, stay tuned.

One last thing before I leave. Have you subscribed to this podcast? If not... why not? It literally takes two seconds and it would totally brighten my day. Plus, you'll be notified whenever a new episode drops, so you never miss a single one.

Well, that's it for me today, guys. Until next time. Go forth and be awesome.



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