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EPISODE 17

The Author's Ultimate Guide to Editorial Calendars

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Welcome back everyone! Are you ready for a brand-new episode of the Author Revolution Podcast? Goodness, I hope so, because we're in it to win it. Once again, I'm your host, Carissa Andrews.

Wow, guys... I don't know about you, but February is really flying by. There's been a lot going on the past few weeks. And now, this Friday is my husband and my 8th anniversary. We're pretty stoked because we're heading into town to start the process of getting tattoos in celebration of the occasion. He's already got three, but I'm a tattoo virgin, so this ought to be interesting, to say the least. We're planning on having semi-matching tattoos on our forearms with angel wings and an infinity symbol (since, you know, it's an 8). It's been a plan in the making for the past few months and now we're down to the wire of actually taking the time to talk to the tattoo artist and make our arrangements. So, happy anniversary, honey. Love ya!

So, while this story is cute and I love that man to pieces, it's also kind of timely. While it's not content in the form of a blog, book, or podcast – our tattoos are planned content for our bodies. And in all honesty, I'll probably be sharing it on my author social sites, too. Readers love to have the fourth wall removed and letting them in on things you're doing in real life is a great way to do that.



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However, as new authors – or even seasoned authors who are super busy – we often forget, or maybe don't know in the first place how to engage our readers. Or perhaps, how to keep track of what we want to write so it actually gets done.

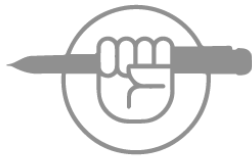
New authors will fall into two camps: they write like lunatics because they know their book is going to be the next Harry Potter... or they write slowly, when they have time, because they're in no particular hurry – or they want the book to be perfect, so they putz with every word.

I was the former. I wrote like a lunatic because the story pulled me straight through, and I swore it was going to be the next big thing once it was done. While it has yet to go on to superstardom status, the Pendomus Chronicles has earned international bestselling status, so I consider that something. However, the more valuable thing that came out of writing it was understanding the value of a consistent writing practice.

So, before we get into the meat of this episode – which will be all about author editorial calendars, I have to give you a foundation to spring from. Before you can really plan out your calendar, you need to understand your why. But it's not the kind of why you're likely thinking. I'm talking about sitting down to craft an author platform content marketing plan.

If you're going, say whuuut? Hang tight. I gotchoo.

An author platform content marketing plan is just a fancy way of saying you get clear on your who, what, why, and how. There are seven questions I ask myself when I'm creating my content marketing plan and I think they'll help you out. So, if you're near a pen and paper, write these down.



1. What is the goal for your content? This helps you define your why so it's strong enough to pull you through week after week. Use SMART goals to define them, meaning, specific, measurable, attainable/achievable, relevant, timely. So, what does that mean? I'll give you an example. Perhaps you want to write a chapter a day as your goal. That's specific. Better yet, you say each chapter has 2000 words. Now it's measurable. Is that attainable for you? If yes, then proceed. If no, then drop it a little until you work yourself up to that. Is it relevant? Well, yes, if your goal is to write your novel. Is it timely? You bet, because you're saying you plan to do this daily. Which, btw, if you did this... you would have a 60000 word novel done in 30 days, just saying.
2. What does success look like? Is it a finished novel in 30 days? Is 10 days without skipping a single day? Is it all 30 days? Or something completely different? Whatever it is, know what success is for you, so you can celebrate once you've accomplished it.
3. Who is your audience? Before you can write any content, whether it's a book, a blog, or a social media post, you need to know who you're speaking to. It makes no sense to write an article about astrophysics to a group of teenage football players. While you might have 1 or 2 kids who like both, the majority of them are not your target audience. You want your posts to resonate with the majority of your readers, not the other way around.
4. What platforms do you want to produce content for? When you're first starting out, creating content should consist of three platforms: your novel, a newsletter, and one social media channel. If you can handle more than that, great – but just make sure you're consistent with one before you try to add more.
5. What's your story? Next, you need to think about how you're going to use who you are, your experiences, and dreams to connect with your target audience. Look, people don't buy books or products from nebulous companies and people. They buy and connect because they resonate with the story they're told. We're literally hardwired to crave them. So, what's yours? Think about it. Tell it.





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6. How do you plan to stand out? You are a unique being. While you could hypothetically write a story similar to another author (I mean, there are literally only seven story archetypes in the entire world, people), no other author will ever tell it the exact same way as you. Your perspective and talents are unique and your content should emulate that. Whether it's a unique angle for a book, or a punchy headline for a blog post, or a consistent thread on your social media platforms, think about how you want to stand out. You can either define it yourself, or the world will do it for you.

7. What does your ideal content schedule look like? Consistency is truly key. So, for this example, you want to take the three main platforms and determine what the schedule will be for each. For example, I write daily for an hour. I aim for a full chapter a day, but I know I'm successful when I get my full hour done. For my newsletter, I make sure it goes out weekly. Rain or shine. Stuff to say or not – which, these days, there is always something to say – but that hasn't always been the case. And for social media, I post every single day. But I have a pro tip on that a little later on. I started out with just a Facebook Page, then added Twitter, then a Facebook Group, then Instagram, Pinterest, and YouTube. While I don't post on all of them every day, I do for Facebook and my Facebook Group because that's where my readers currently hang out.

Okay, now that we've answered those pressing questions, there are a number of areas authors can apply the basics of editorial calendars. We mentioned a few of them briefly, but let's go through the main ones that could impact your editorial calendar.

Books – Obviously, you want to know what book you're writing, how often you're writing in it, and what book you're writing next. I know when you're writing your first novel, the idea of writing something else after it seems like lightyears away. Maybe even an impossibility. But let me assure you, that day does come and you want to be ready for it.



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Marketing Plan – Inside your editorial calendar, you want to make a note of anything that might make an impact on the type of posts and details you are delivering. For example, a new book launch, a kindle countdown deal, a free book, or any other promotional items like group giveaways, etc. I keep my marketing plan separate from my editorial plan because I like to keep that in a planner-style print calendar that I can flip through and look ahead. I can see it at a glance and that just helps keep my brain focused and organized. However, I don't use a print planner or calendar to keep track of my editorial calendar and I'll get to the why in just a few minutes.

Newsletters – Like I mentioned, your editorial calendar should include your newsletter. However, I don't get into detail with mine. I literally just map it out so that I know every Sunday morning, I sit down at the computer and write up my newsletter, then schedule it to go out the following day. I create a template that I use time and time again.

Social Media Strategy – Okay, social is a big one on the editorial calendar. Take it from me, don't reinvent the wheel on your social media platforms. Create a daily editorial calendar so you know what type of post needs to be created for a specific day. Again, I don't map out the specific content I want to write about on each day. Instead, I give all seven days a **THEME**. For me, Mondays are motivation and insights, Tuesdays are questions for engagement, Wednesdays are for my current WIP, Thursdays are for throwbacks or promotional requests. This week, it's all about voting for Secret Legacy's cover in the AllAuthor Cover Contest. Fridays are about the family – my kids, dogs, or husband. Sometimes me when my PA Jenny makes me. HA! Saturdays are for shares. That could be a meme, a picture from someone else's site that will resonate with my audience or jive with my story. Sundays are all about my Facebook Live events with Jenny. However, you could schedule yours out completely differently. If you have multiple books, maybe each day is designated to one of them. If you only have one, maybe some of the days go to your characters. Honestly, the limit is truly your imagination.



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The nice thing is, you only have to map out seven different themes. Then, each week, you sit down for an afternoon and craft your posts. Yes, in one afternoon. Set it and forget it. People think I'm everywhere all the time because I'm posting to multiple pages and groups daily. But the truth of the matter is, Sunday afternoon before that chat with Jenny – I'm getting the posts organized for my author page and for Author Revolution. Sometimes Jenny helps me, but there are just some posts that she won't have the details she needs to do that. So, I set 'em up and knock 'em down. And I'm scheduling them to out.

- Buffer – My favorite tool to do this is Buffer because you can post to multiple platforms all at the same time. It saves a ton of time and you can see everything in one handy place. In the past, I used Tweetdeck and Hootsuite... but Buffer has since beat them out, hands down. However, it does have a small fee.
- Facebook Native – However, if you are only using one platform, and that platform is Facebook, you don't need Buffer to schedule your posts. You can do this right at your Facebook Page and inside your group. I don't have time to be hopping into social sites and fragmenting my time every day to be creative and come up with new post ideas. So I get in the zone once and I honestly don't think about it again, unless something awesome comes across my desk or if I'm responding to someone.

Blogs – Blogs are an important way of bringing relevance to your writing and I do encourage new authors to use them. I did when I first started out. I can't say I use them as much anymore, but it's mostly because literally I don't have the time. However, by writing new content weekly, bi-weekly, or at the very least, monthly – you are pulling people over to your website and creating relevance in the digital eyes of Google. When you leverage things like keywords, which I know is a whole other topic, you can literally draw thousands of people to a single post. Plus, sometimes, they can be downright fun.



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Ideally, you want the blog to live on your own website, not another place like Medium. It's not to say Medium isn't great, but that you want to make sure you're posting it to BOTH, if you use them. Medium could go under tomorrow and all of your content will go with it. If it's on your own site, it doesn't go down until you do.

Podcasts – If blogging isn't your thing, then maybe think about doing a podcast. Yes, even aspiring authors can utilize this medium. Because I write so much daily for myself and my clients, I focus on podcasting more than blogging these days. It's nice to stretch my vocal cords and get outside of my head a bit. Again, though, I use a single day to get organized. I podcast weekly, so right now that means Tuesday mornings I create my script outline, and I record when my kids are all in school. Then, I take a break to workout and have lunch and come back at to master the audio file and upload it. Then I follow through with the show notes. In an ideal world, I would like to get 3-6 podcasts ahead of myself, but I'm not able to do that just yet with my client load. Trust me, I've tried.

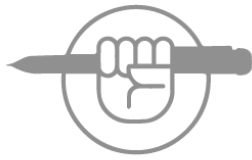
Video Content – Another area you may eventually want to add into your editorial calendar is video content. This could be an actual production video, book trailer, or Facebook or YouTube Live schedule. Whatever video looks like for you, try to be consistent. Obviously, creating book trailers won't be an every week kind of deal, but maybe a weekly Facebook live is? Every Sunday I go live in my Miscreant Readers group with Jenny, like I mentioned. Right now, we're highlighting Secret Legacy by doing them in a local graveyard. (Weather permitting.) We ask a question of the week and then highlight some of the stories on the live. We're basically just silly and talk about the goofy stuff in our lives. But fans love it and we know eventually it will be more relevant as all the threads to the Windhaven Witches Series start coming together for them.



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Backlist Content Ideas – The last thing you might want to consider adding is a sort of slush pile for content ideas. Sometimes I get really good ideas in the shower, mowing the lawn, or even working out. Make sure you have a place to put those thoughts and content ideas down. That way, when you're struggling to be creative, you have a list of cool ideas already ready to go.

Okay, so let's talk about how to set up an editorial calendar as an author. The first thing I would recommend is setting it up online. It's one of the few places that I actually encourage a digital format, but there's a reason behind this madness. When you're creating content on a consistent basis, there's nothing worse than having to find the white out to revamp your calendar. In addition, for the most part, you don't need to create a detailed plan either. Just your themes. In my personal experience, if I try to micromanage my content down to the social posts for any extended period of time, I'm setting myself up to fail. So, here are my recommended programs to use for creating an editorial calendar you can live with:

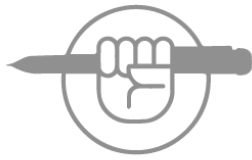
- Asana – You guys already know how much I love Asana. Not only will it keep you organized for all of your other authorly moving parts, it does have a great way of managing your editorial calendar. I have three for myself: My podcast editorial calendar that I do brainstorm topics a few months out and my social media theme days for both my author stuff and Author Revolution. I've been doing my newsletter so long that I don't need to add it. I just know it happens on Sundays. The same for my video content. However, I will mention that if you're planning to do video content, giving it a structure can be helpful for your audience. So take a look at what you've been posting for the week to see if you have a theme or just talk about something big happening in your life.
- Trello – This is another good one and I actually use it for storyboarding, but not for my own editorial calendars. However, I know many authors who do.



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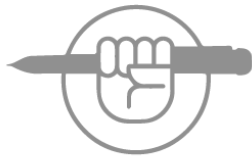
- Evernote – Evernote is another great tool.
- MeisterTask – As is MeisterTask.
- Physical Calendars – Again, I mostly use these for planning out promotional stuff that I want to be able to look at quickly. It's way easier to drag and drop content to a different location when you decide you want to write about something else or something else unexpected happens. And trust me, the majority of your content should be living – meaning it can move around.
- Excel Spreadsheet or Google Sheet – Finally, if you want to go super basic, you can even use an excel spreadsheet or Google sheet to keep track, too.

Okay, so now that we have some tools we can play around with to see which works best, what do you put in your editorial calendar? I will typically have six bits of information I want to keep track of:

Location – Make sure you start in the right editorial calendar. Some authors will keep everything in one calendar and if you're one who likes that, no harm. I just happen to like keeping my calendars separate. That way, I can quickly and easily find something, rather than digging through all of my content in one spot.

Content theme or title of content – The first thing I do is map out my daily content themes or the title of the content if I know I'm mapping out a specific type of content. For example, the book I'm working on and the one up next. Or the blog post topics for the next few weeks.





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Understanding editorial calendars, especially when you're first starting out, might seem like one of two things: Overkill or Overload. However, I encourage you to start today, no matter where you're at. Even if you're small. Even if you don't even have a book out yet.

Remember, consistency is key. You can either make all your flub ups, mistakes, faux pas, and trial and error your heart out when you have three followers or when you have three hundred thousand. I know that I personally, wanted to iron out kinks before I felt the pressure of having thousands of eyes on me.

Yesterday I was doing a workout – 21 Day Fix Extreme Real Time, to be exact, and Autumn Calabrese said something I thought was pretty profound. It was obviously in relation to working out and how athletes train, but it applies to us, too. She said, “Don't just go until you get it right. Keep going until you can't get it wrong.”

I love that so much.

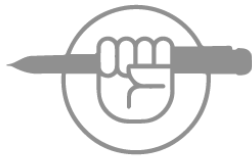
Transformation isn't a future event, guys. It's a present activity and it takes conscious intention. What do you want from your writing? Where do you see yourself in five years? Dream in, plan for, and take action.

If you have questions, drop me a comment at our Author Revolution Facebook Page or if you're a student, ask it in our Online Community. I will make sure we have all the details and links to stuff over at today's show notes, so if you need anything be sure to head over to authorrevolution.org/17



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Next week we're going to be talking about story structure. In specific, the difference between the 3 acts versus the 4 quarters and why you really should know how to use both. Learning them was very eye opening for me and has helped me map out my stories and given me a compass to know whether or not I'm even on track when I'm writing my novel. I think it will do the same for you.

Before I sign off... a final word... have you subscribed to this podcast yet? I would love it if you would. While we might have 17 episodes aired, the Author Revolution Podcast is still pretty new. Every subscribe click actually helps the podcast be discovered by other listeners. And if you liked this episode or the podcast in general, leave me a review or a rating. That, too, helps listeners decide if it's worth giving it their time.

Well, that's it for me today guys.

Until next time. Go forth and be awesome.



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