

EPISODE 28

The Rapid Release Author's Guide to Finding Your Ideal Readers

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Hi there and welcome to a new episode of the Author Revolution Podcast. I'm your host, international bestselling indie author, Carissa Andrews and CEO of Author Revolution, the author's source for all things rapid releasing.

Have you ever wondered why connecting with readers is super easy for some authors, but incredibly difficult for others? Maybe even you?

Are you slaving away, working on your books, getting your hustle on...you know you have a great book, or maybe a great series of books, but still, you're meeting lackluster results? Then on the other side, your competition has fans practically tripping over themselves to get their latest release...

What's the dealio?

It all comes down to understanding your ideal reader. Your competition knows this and that's why they already know who their ideal reader is, where they frequent, and how to connect to them.

But don't worry... soon, you will too.



**EPISODE 28: THE RAPID RELEASE AUTHOR'S
GUIDE TO FINDING YOUR IDEAL READERS**

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Obviously, this week I've been thinking a lot about how authors connect to their ideal readers (aka superfans). In traditional marketing, this is usually called your ideal customer avatar. For those of you who are new to the concept, or perhaps struggling to find your superfans, you might be wondering how to define your ideal readers or even know how to connect with them. The good news is, I'm here to help.

Truth be told, I have struggled in this arena as well, particularly because my first few books weren't strictly one genre or another. They were genre-benders... and I didn't know if I wanted to stick with the same genres just yet. As a matter of fact, I didn't. But that didn't stop me from trying to narrow down my audience.

So, before I tell you why niching down and knowing your ideal reader inside and out is so important... you first need to know what they are. Ideal readers, as the name suggests, means knowing precisely the type of person who will consume your books ravenously without question. In order to do that, you need to know some very specific things about them.

However, in my personal experience, before you can define them, your goal as an author is to identify first, who you are... When we're confused about who we are, what we like, and what we write, finding our tribe - aka those awesome readers who will love everything you write - will be damn near impossible. I take the saying from the Oracle of Delphi seriously - know thyself.

Once you know who you are... next up is to define what your ideal reader would look like. While it might seem like overkill, niching them down as far as you can could be your golden ticket here. You need to get specific. What's their age, gender, location, ethnicity, educational level, career, reason for reading... Be as specific as you possibly can be. It's not that these are the ONLY people who will read your book, but they're the ones you write for.

Everyone thinks at first they will target EVERYONE. Their book belongs in the hands of all readers. (evil laugh)

But... that's not gonna happen. Even if your book has universal appeal, the chances of the universe finding out about it without those superfans backing you first is next to nill. Even JK Rowling had to start with an ideal reader in mind and allow her marketing to expand from there. She started as a children's fantasy series and look how it's expanded. However, the key here is that you have to find the golden nugget hidden in the weeds first so they can sing your praises and carry the news for you.

Look, trying to build an audience that doesn't even know if they'll like your books will do you no good. You need to connect with the ones who are already resonating with what you're putting out there.

You do this by taking a close look at your story (or various stories) and decide what resonates the most for you as its creator. Then, figure out what genre best fits the theme. You can and should do this for each book, particularly if the ideal reader is different. And as a side note—this is why many authors will have different pen names for different genres. Not all readers can go with the flow. So if you write in one genre, cultivate a relationship with those readers, then swap to a completely different genre – say, from cozy mystery to paranormal romance – you might lose some readers who were previously fans. Yes, I like to consider myself a genre-bending author, but that doesn't mean I'm not wise about the way I market my books. So, even though my books all have a supernatural thread, even the Pendomus Chronicles, when I market my books I make sure to target the readers who are best suited for it.

So, how do we go about doing this? I mentioned it earlier on, but let's dig in a bit more here. Here are a few questions to help you identify who they might be. This is just a starting point, so feel free to dig even deeper, if you like.



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1. What is the age of your ideal reader? Are they kids? Young adults? Adults? What age best suits your ideal reader and why?
2. What is the gender of your ideal reader? Look, it's not to say that if you pick a woman as your ideal reader that men won't read your book. We're just niching down so we know how to best resonate with our superfans. More on that in a minute.
3. Do they fall into a specific demographic? For example, the LGBT community, an alternative religion, or ethnicity? Why is this important to you as the author and how does your book resonate with them?
4. If they're adults, are they married? Single? In a partnership?
5. What job do they have? How long have they worked there?
6. What do they secretly long for? Do they want to have magical powers? Find the love of their lives? Rekindle a romance? Step into a bigger destiny?
7. Where do they hang out online? This one can help you identify where to connect with them. Are they in their 30s - 40s? If so, are they Facebook fanatics? If they're younger, say teens to mid-twenties, are they hanging out on Instagram? Or have they moved over to TikTok and Snapchat?
8. Other than reading, what are their interests? Do they enjoy nature? Alternative healing techniques? Do they wonder about life beyond our planet? Do they wish they could fly? Think of things your ideal reader has an interest in and write it down.
9. When it comes to reading... why do they do it? I mean, let's face it, there are a million forms of content out there vying for our attention. What is it about a good book that calls to them? Is it escapism? To feel something? To expand their perspective? To explore?
10. How do they prefer to read? Digitally? Paperback? Audio? The reason this is important has less to do with how you speak to your audience, but how you deliver what they want. Knowing how they'll prefer to read your books makes it easy to give it to them.



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All of these questions will can help you to frame your marketing message so you can connect with them on a level no other author is doing yet. Think about it, your words flow so much better when you know who you're speaking to. Rather than being formal or stilted, or god forbid, all marketing all de time, you can speak to your ideal reader/superfan directly, using fun language that resonates and makes them feel seen.

When you know your ideal reader inside and out, the benefits don't just stop at the marketing message either. Knowing who they are can improve the way you create your characters, plan your story arcs and themes, and improve the overall power of your novel. Plus, as your novel goes on to take form, knowing who your superfans are will also help you to not feel overwhelmed when you revise and strengthen your book during the second pass. Your superfans give you clarity to know which aspects they'll expect you to strengthen, while others can be left in the background.

As final food for thought on defining our ideal readers, because I'm sure I'll be asked, can we be our own ideal reader? Sure. Without question that could work. Often times, I find myself doing that with my own writing. I like mystery and stories that connect to supernatural elements that can surprise me. So, if my own story connects me to those elements, I know I'm on the right track.

However, it doesn't mean you have to be. What if you're a woman scifi writer who loves to dig into militaristic space operas and is targeting guys? Or a male romance writer who is writing for women? There is obviously a cross-over of interests, but in these cases, you wouldn't fit into the role of your own ideal reader.

Okay, so let's say you've now discovered who your ideal reader is and want to start amassing a horde of those superfans. Now what? How do you bring them to life?

The number one rule to this next phase is to be a human. Pretend you have nothing at all to sell (because in this next phase, you don't) – you are just adding value to the conversation. Whatever that conversation might be. Got it? Promise? Zero selling. Nada. Zip. Zilch.

Repeat after me – people don't buy what you do, they buy WHY you do it. Your superfans will be superfans because they've built a level of trust and respect for you. In order to do this, you need to be a person first and grow into your role with them as an author later. Give your superfans some credit. Sooner or later, they'll figure it out.

Okay, so finding those alicorns, I mean, superfans... how do you do it?

Well, if your book is brand new, this may be difficult, particularly if you don't read in your genre. But for new authors (and yes, even some seasoned ones), your best bet is to find other authors and influencers within your own genre. I want you to repeat after me – other authors are not my competition.

One more time: other authors are not my competition.

Yes, they are in the same space as you. Yes, readers might be going to them over you. BUT at the end of the day, readers can and DO read books from hundreds, if not thousands, of different authors over their lifetime. There is room for everyone.

Now, a caveat before I get started on this next section – your time is limited. So don't let this next phase overwhelm you. Find a few of these and do them extremely well. Let the rest fall to the side until you feel called to it (or if what you're doing isn't working).

So, all that being said, I want you to do two things with your friendly author competition. Let's call it that. Makes it more playful.

First, I want you to know who the heck they are. Go onto Amazon and look in the genres you rank for (or plan to rank for). Make a list of the ones you personally resonate with in terms of covers, blurbs, and definitely make note of their author ranking, book sales ranking, and number of reviews. Next, check out their online presence... social media, website, newsletter. Find out as much about them as you can. Do a Google search with their name and fan at the end. See where people are talking about their books and what they're saying.

Second, I want you to reach out to them. Yes, to your competition. But, not the way you think. I don't want you diving headlong into a lengthy email about you and your book. I want you to remember, all marketing is about THEM. Not you.

This also goes for building author partnerships. Look, when it all comes down to it, they're an author looking to open their audience up. You're an author, looking to open yours up, too. When you partner together, it's mutually beneficial because you can now combine your shared efforts and tap into each other's list. But first, you start with them. Let them know how impressed you are with their platform and how much you enjoyed their books. If you haven't read anything by them, read something first. Chances are, you're gonna like it. I mean, you're in the same genre for a reason, right? The goal here is to build up a relationship and connection. It's not to be superficial, though. So, if your eye is only on what they can bring you, this endeavor will fall flat. We're writers and we need to be around our own tribe. You might just realize you've found a new BFF just by reaching out. And truly, what could actually be better than that? As your relationship grows, so will your collaboration ideas. Offer ways to support your new author friend and let things go from there.

In addition to your friendly author competition, you can also tap into book bloggers, podcasts, or other sites that have highlighted your competition. Chances are high that if they did so for them, they'd be willing to take you on as well.

You can also search online forums related to your genre, your competition's book, movies that are in the same market, etc. The idea here again, to add value to the conversation and be a human first and foremost. Sites like the Writing Room or WritersCafe are known to be fantastic resources for this. You can also search through Goodreads or Twitter... the sky is the limit, as long as you enjoy the medium and the conversation.

A final thought on how you can find readers has absolutely nothing to do with your competition. And that's to use what you have at your disposal. There is likely a writer's group you could attend and participate in. Maybe even volunteer your time. If you've been following me for a while, you'll know I'm the president of our local writer's group, the Lakes Area Writers Alliance. Not only do we support our local writers any way we can, but we very much appreciate it when they step up and offer their own support. Whether it be for the organization itself, or for our fellow members. You could also consider connecting with them to see if they allow guest speakers or author talks, like ours does. Finding new authors to get on the calendar can sometimes be a challenge, so it makes it far easier when someone offers to do it. This could open you up as an expert in your field and in your local arena—where people will be able to get to know and like you more than most.

Overall, the goal to finding your superfans is to find like-minded people and engage with them. Start a conversation. Ask them questions. Learn more about them. Reciprocation will follow naturally when you give more than you seek to receive.

If you only have one book, your job might be easier. However, as you grow as an author, you may find this audience changes and expands. When I first started writing, I was in the ya scifi dystopian genre. I was hunting for audiences who would like those stories. However, as the years have gone on, I've evolved as an author. I'm no longer a YA scifi author. I'm actually more of a supernatural thriller writer.

Finding that ideal reader can be an ongoing battle that changes as you do. But if done right, you can actually hold them in your mind as you're writing – which makes the marketing side of things so much easier when it comes right down to it. Remember when I asked you to dig deep and get personal on who your superfan is? There was a reason for it.

The more specific you can get on who they are – the easier it is to talk directly to them and have those meaningful conversations. Whether it be I forums, blog posts, or your story itself.

There you have it my friends, my take on how to locate, engage, and thrill your ideal reader. If you have any questions about finding your superfans, remember you can head over to Author Revolution's Facebook Page or into the open Author Community Facebook Group. I'd be more than happy to answer your questions or clarify anything you may be confused on.

Next week, we're going to be talking about why it's crucial to plan a series for Rapid Releasing. Transitioning from one book to the next can be a pain, so let's make things a little easier. If you'd like to get links or download the transcript from today's talk, head over to the show notes at authorrevolution.org/28.

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Alright, until next time...

Go forth and be awesome.