

EPISODE 36*Carissa's Top 10 Work Smarter,
Not Harder Tips for Rapid Releasers*

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What's up, my writerly friend? Welcome back to 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.

Before we get started, I would like to mention that this episode is sponsored by my upcoming rapid release series, The Windhaven Witches. Secret Legacy, book 1, is an urban fantasy/paranormal mystery and comes out on September 15th. In addition, 50% of the royalties are being donated to the American Cancer Society.

I don't know about you, but with summer here, I'm finding it harder and harder to spend time sitting in front of a computer. The weather is beautiful here in Minnesota and since we only get about 3 minutes of nice weather, okay kind of a joke... but whatever - I like to take advantage of it by getting out into the sunshine. Of course, the pandemic is making things dramatically more difficult, but then again, things could be worse. At least I don't have COVID19, so there is that.

My husband and I have, instead, taken up kayaking as a way to escape the confines of our house and find some much needed peace. Plus, it's just a nice way to be able to reconnect to both each other, and nature.



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On the downside, however, is the fact that the more time I spend outside, the more I want to spend outside. Nature is my spirit animal. Some people think it's a bird, or a critter, but for me – it's the whole darn thing. I've always loved being outside, exploring and running wild through the trees. Or, in this case, kayaking slowly on the lake. It's very zen.

So, with this in mind, I thought maybe now would be a great time to give you my top 10 tips for working smarter and not harder as a rapid release author. Or heck, any author at all. You ready? Let's reclaim some time back in our day. Here we go.

TIP #1: Know Your Market – After all the years I've spent writing and trying to make a living with books, this shift is the one that's given the most bang for my buck – time wise. In the past, I spent a lot of time trying to understand my books after they were already written. This can cost you in terms of readership and even money if you're targeting the wrong group of readers with advertising spend. Use some analytics tools such as PublisherRocket or K-Lytics to learn your market, see the trends of the market, and act on data that makes sense. You'll find your books are far more profitable and the right readers will be reading your books. This increases your positive reviews and overall sales. What's not to love in that?

TIP #2: Understand Story Mechanics – When I first started out, I didn't know what made up a story. It was especially hard to know when I was in the beginning, middle, or end because I was a complete pantsner – so I let myself get swayed by the telling of the tale and not the overall arc. There are actually seven story archetypes and understanding which one yours fits in can not only help you craft a book that resonates, but it will also help you increase your speed when you do your outlines – yes, you heard me right. Outline your dang books. If you want to work smarter and not harder, that's part of implementing the mechanics of a good story. Everytime you do it, you'll get better and get faster.

If story mechanics and the idea of the story archetypes are new to you, I encourage you to check out my mini-course, The Story Cure. It's just \$27 and it could help you break through the confusion in writing your next breakout bestseller.

TIP #3: Write the Story – Protect your writing time. You can't make progress without writing and in a busy world, it often means scheduling it in. It's very easy to let your writing slide when you don't put it as a priority. Then, at all costs, refrain from editing while you're writing. Until you have the whole thing written out, you don't have the tools you need to edit well anyway. You waste so much time editing on the fly. Yes, waste it. Even Terry Pratchett said, "First drafts are just you telling yourself the story." Get the whole thing out and then make those sentences, plot holes, and other issues bend to your command.

TIP #4: Create a Release Schedule – When you're rapid releasing, you have to know your release schedule and have it set like concrete in your head. That information provides the entire editorial calendar structure for you, which helps you to keep track of all the little things you need to do as you publish your series. Without it, you'll flounder around and never get anywhere. When you set deadlines, and you must, it gives you much needed framework for accountability, especially if you put your books up for preorder.

TIP #5: Batch Anything/Everything – Do an audit of a typical workweek when it comes to your author-related tasks. The chances are, you'll have plenty of things you can batch together to make them go faster. Things like social media posts to your social sites, creating new ads, responding to reader comments, and even planning can be done more efficiently when you take a block of time and set it aside for the task at hand. If you haven't tried it yet, one of my favorite tools is Buffer. I can organize social media posts across all of my accounts all from the one hub and even bring on other team members who can start posts or create them for me. It's fantastic!

TIP #6: Hire an Editor – Let’s go back to that editing premise for a moment. As authors, our time is best spent writing. Most of us are far too critical of our words to effectively edit our own books. Those of us who aren’t critical might not be the best editors anyway. While I know it’s not always possible to hire an editor right off the bat, as soon as you can afford to do so, I suggest this is a team member you get on board. Find someone you can work with and develop a long-term relationship with. I found my awesome editor on Reedsy, but you can find yours in your local writer’s group, on Fiverr, or even Facebook. The key though is to vet them out and make sure they do a good job with the kind of editing you need. Don’t assume that hiring an editor means they’ll do a good job. There are different levels of edits and unless you know what level you need, you won’t know whether or not they’re doing a good job – or if they’re fixing the stuff you really need fixing. For example, if you’re just starting out and need to have a more in-depth edit, you need to have a development editor to start with and you might need to hire more than one. But if you’ve been doing this a while, and write fairly clean, then you probably need a copy editor. Know the difference and then find one who rocks.

TIP #7: Ignore the Critics – One of the biggest lessons I’ve taken from this year is to ignore the critics. I’m list-aiming with *Secret Legacy*, which means going bigger than I’ve ever done before. I put *Secret Legacy* out on NetGalley to get reviews, which has been an enlightening experience. These reviewers are brutal. If you’re not prepared for it, it might catch you off guard and derail progress. I’m not gonna lie, I’ve had a few days where I’ve had to readjust my attitude because of their brutal takedown. However, just because the critics aren’t happy with something in your book doesn’t mean they don’t have a point. The key is to take heed of patterns that emerge in the tone of the reviews. For instance, my biggest push back has been the absolute hatred of anything resembling “insta-love.” Now, *Secret Legacy*, from a broad perspective, is an urban fantasy novel. Which means it’s fantasy taking place in our world. There’s a love story, but that’s not the central plot. I

wanted to develop their romance and tie them together, but I didn't want to spend all of my time there. To many readers, it felt like it was "insta-love" – but in essence, it was "insta-attraction." In my own personal experience, this happens all the time. It might not always develop into something, but it does happen. And you have to remember, I met my husband on Twitter, for crying out loud. I fell for his crazy, silly banter well before I even spoke to him in person via Skype. So, how did this translate into my writing? Well, I've taken these first few reviews and I'm working on fleshing out the characters and relationship a little more in the beginning. I'm taking out some of the thoughts my MC has, so it gives a little more wiggle room to a slower development. Who knows if it will be enough, but if not, I can't dwell on it. I need to finish out the rest of the books.

TIP #8: Have a Launch Plan – This one is really like an extension of the Release Schedule, but I felt I needed to go into a little more. In the past, I would write a book and rely on my newsletter and social media to get the word out on a book release. However, I've really found that a little more effort goes a long way. So, when you have a new book, whether it's the first in a series or the 25th, have a plan for how you want to launch it. This means developing an ARC or Street Team, maybe setting up a blog tour, and for sure create a budget for promo sites and ads and go for it.

TIP #9: Learn Ads – Which brings me to this one. Ads are crucial for us indie authors – probably all authors – but for indies in specific. One of the biggest time savers (and money savers) was to learn ads for myself. When I first started looking into ads, I thought Amazon Ads were the be-all-end-all. But as it turns out, each kind of ad does something a little different. Amazon ads are great for books that are already out. Facebook is spectacular for increasing your ranking on Amazon. And BookBub ads are killer for preorders and developing your author also boughts on Amazon. But each platform has its own quirks and takes time to master them.

My recommendation is to check out Rebecca Hamilton's Ads for Author's course. Rebecca does a stellar job at making sure you get the biggest bang for your buck, keeping your CPC low and your ads delivering with great ROI. If money is no object and learning ads is too cumbersome, the other option is to hire someone who DOES know how to do ads properly. Which brings me to...

TIP #10: Hire a PA – My last – and ultimately BIGGEST tip for working smarter and not harder – is to hire yourself a fantastic personal assistant. There's only so many hours in the day and, let's face it, there are some author tasks that you might be much happier passing over to your PA. My PA Jenny does so much for me and I wish I could send her more hours. She does everything from schedule social media posts, to create promo images, find newsletter swaps, reach out to other authors, and even join me for our Graveyard Chats Facebook live event on Sunday. I would seriously be crazy without her and I know she has the insights and business know-how to help me see things in a new light. I value her advice tremendously and any chance I have to increase her hours and give her more to do, I do it. If any of you are looking for a PA to help with group engagement, social media, newsletter creations – whatever – Jenny has a couple of spots still open. I'll make sure to include her new website in the show notes so you can go and check her out. The website is brand new, I'm actually helping her work on it this week, so if you spot anything that's not working properly, let me know. But I can highly attest to her capabilities. Another fantastic PA is Summer Graystone. She's a complete sweetheart and is an author herself, so she knows exactly what it's like to be doing what we do. I'll make sure her link is in the show notes as well.



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TRANSCRIPT

Okay so to recap-

1. Know your market
2. Understand story mechanics
3. Write - Not Edit
4. Create a Rapid Release Schedule
5. Batch anything and everything
6. Hire an Editor
7. Ignore the Critics
8. Have a Launch Plan
9. Learn Ads
10. Hire a PA

Well, my writerly friend, that wraps up my 10 tips on how to work smarter, not harder. Hopefully they were helpful and provide some insight into how you can increase your writing and publishing velocity without losing your mind. I want you to go out and enjoy your summer, after all!

Now, if you'd like to download the transcript from today's episode or grab a link to anything else we talked about, be sure to head over to authorrevolution.org/36. You'll be able to find everything you need there.

As a final reminder, this podcast episode is sponsored by my upcoming series, the Windhaven Witches. In June I fell short of my 500 preorders on Apple for Secret Legacy, so once again, I'm going to be sharing the heck out of it so I can build those preorders up. List-aiming is not for the faint of heart. It takes a lot of perseverance. So, if you'd like to help this crazy lady hit the NYT bestseller list, I would love for you to check out Secret Legacy and preorder a copy for just 99¢. As I mentioned earlier in the podcast episode, 50% of the royalties from every sale are being donated to the American Cancer Society in 2020.

Alright, get outside and soak in some sun. After you've implemented some of these tips, that is! Until next...

Go forth and start your author revolution.



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