

EPISODE 54*Carissa's 2020 Vacation Plan
& Why ~~You~~ Need One, Too*

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Welcome back to the Author Revolution Podcast! I'm your host, international bestselling indie author, Carissa Andrews - and CEO of Author Revolution, your source for all things rapid releasing.

I don't know about you, but I am so ready for 2020 to be over. It's not that I'm wishing away my life, or anything, but man... what a dumpster fire. Amiright? Between the coronavirus, school closings, election craziness, and missing my mark with Secret Legacy, I'm ready to move on to new goals and a fresh start. Are you in the same boat?

One of the things I've been doing this week is mapping out what I want 2021 to look like. This came about in two parts. For one thing, my husband Colin is literally in the process of building us a new office. Well, okay, the room was standing before, but it's had a major overhaul and he's literally building all of our office furniture and he's even created my backdrop set for when I record new course videos.

With all of this new energy comes a fresh start in its own way. So I've been going through all of my supplies, the stuff I use at my current desk, and thinking about how I can make myself more efficient when we move over - which should be by this weekend and I am SO friggin excited!

Secondly, though, I also wanted to make sure I fulfilled a promise. Back in July, I did an episode on how to avoid rapid release burnout (ep 39).



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In essence, it was all about taking a good hard look at the way we handle our author business. In that episode, also I mentioned that I'd be taking more time off in 2021. And not just "more" time off, either. More deliberate time off.

I've found that we overachievers tend to spiral off into the realm of constant doing and unfortunately, that mentality leads to only one thing – author overwhelm (ep 13) and burnout. At the time, we think the more we do, the more chances we have to be successful. But in reality, our creativity needs room to breathe. Hell, so do our stress levels, if I'm truly honest.

Over the past five years, I've been carrying the burden of being the main earner of the family. While this is something I agreed to, I've had to step back and acknowledge doing more doesn't always equate to earning more.

Now, before you ask, Colin and I have teamwork dynamic. I'm focused on income generation in the present, and he's working on the plan to eliminate most outgoing expenses in the future. Our house has been in a constant state of evolution because we're flipping it to eliminate the need for a mortgage in the future. Without going into a massive story, Colin's background is in construction in pretty much every possible way, and his job has been to work on the house so we can flip it and move into what will be our end-game home. In the meantime, when we're waiting for money for supplies or permits, etc., he does odds and end jobs for his custom furniture business.

While this is our reality, it doesn't stop the stress when money is tight or when special occasions crop up and you want to be able to splurge. It also doesn't help when you're trying to expand your businesses. Let's face it, we've been on a shoestring budget for a long time.

Originally, our goal was to flip the house within three or four years. Well, we just few past year six in August. So, naturally, the stress levels of doing this year after year have taken its toll.

I've had TMJ, cervicogenic vertigo, pretty much every cold under the sun, and even struggle getting to my goal weight, despite working out daily and eating well. That's the power of stress, my friends.

Now, would this have been so bad if I were working for someone else and just earning a wage. No, probably not. I'd be able to shut off my brain at the end of the day, take paid vacation time, paid holidays, and even weekends. But I can't take the easy way out. Instead, I have to work for myself and try to build two businesses from the ground up – all while freelancing.

In the past, freelancing was my top income generator, which meant I spent more time doing that than anything else. But I still had big goals and dreams, right? So I pushed myself to work longer hours, work weekends, holidays, you name it. All in the name of progress for my businesses. And I can say from experience, looking back, I do NOT recommend it. I mean, don't get me wrong, thankfully, my author business and Author Revolution have been picking up the slack for the past year and a half. But I feel like I've been swept up on a train I can't quite get off of.

You know those people who take vacation to a beautiful location and they can't figure out what to do with themselves? Yeah, that's me. And it's also NOT who I want to be.

I want to be someone who has a sustainable career – but who enjoys life, too.

Do you feel me?

This is part of the reason I've found myself deviating from the idea of rapid releasing in the way it's been presented pretty much everywhere. If you're a 20Booksto50K fan, you know what I'm talking about.

I'm in this for the long haul and I need to act like it. And so do you.

If you're like me, wanting to generate a fantastic income with your books, we need to work smarter, not harder. And trust me, publishing a book a month is definitely HARDER.

That's why I've been working hard at creating a course for authors to learn how to create a sustainable author career by publishing four books a year. Rapid Release Roadmap started out as a course to teach authors all of the different ways you could rapid release. And there's stills some of that. But now, it's all about creating a sustainable 4-book a year plan. It includes information in there about including vacation time into your calendar - UP FRONT.

Look, we creatives need to protect our creativity. We need so build a fence around it and set up trip alarms. I'm telling you, it's all too easy to get sucked into the daily grind and let the days slip away.

So, going back to that podcast episode (which was 39, btw), I promised I would come back here and let you know my vacation plan. As a reminder, the studies we talked about in that episode were saying that as an ideal, we should be aiming for 30-45 vacation days, with at least 2 longer ones meant for traveling.

I'm officially here to tell you, I have gone through all of 2021 and mapped out every single day I will be taking of as vacation days. I've also decided to no longer work 7-days a week. Yes, I'm guilty of that, too. I know, I have work to do.

So did I hit that mark of 30-45 days? I can tell you right now, the answer is an astounding YES. In fact, I have a whopping 61 days I will be taking off that will be counted as vacation.

Now, before you get too excited, 8 of those days are for Book Bonanza (both the event and travel time), and 8 are for Panned Con (also the event and travel). So in essence, I have 45 days that are planned just for me and my family and are NOT a working vacation.

Also, going forward, Saturdays are my day off – starting this week. I will no longer be working at all those days. A few of the vacation days in the 45 did include Saturdays, so with those calculated, I am now down to 32 vacation days. So, I'm still above the 30 mark, but it's not as sexy as 61. But it's a start, right?

Now, I have a confession to make about Saturdays. My nonprofit meets Saturdays – so once a month I will have an engagement I can't quite get away from. Particularly if I'm teaching. But the good news is, this feels more like fun to me than work. It's a way to connect to my local tribe of authors, as well as talk about one of the things I love to talk about – indie publishing! And when I'm not teaching, I'm just there for writerly support. So, bonus!

Now, is vacation the only thing I mapped out for 2021? Nope. I truly believe that in order to be powerful, efficient indie authors, we need an editorial calendar (ep 17). Winging our releases is not an option.

This past week, Jenny and I sat down and mapped out the next 15 months of releases, promotions, and book signings (that we're aware of, anyway.) This helps us prep for promo images, newsletter swaps, social media scheduling, and so much more. Plus, it helps with scheduling those vacation times so you're not butting up against releases.

I will be releasing three new books next year and a box set as my fourth release. Plus, I'll be working on something big for January 2022. But I can't quite talk about it yet... And that's just my book side.

I also mapped out my launches for Rapid Release Roadmap in 2021, so I know when and where they will take place. For this first year, it will launch three times, but the cart is only open for a week each time. The first launch will be in January, then May, and September. Depending on how those go, I might keep three a year, or I'll drop the May one and focus on September and January. Eventually, I will even cut back the January one and go down to just the September/October launch. But whether or not that will happen in 2022 or not will depend on how much work everything is and how comfortable I feel with it. The great thing about being your own boss is that you get to decide. Right?

So, now that I've convinced you about the incredible power of scheduling your time in advance... how do you go about creating your own vacation calendar? Let's go over the steps I took to map out 2021.

1. Buy a desk calendar. I just got a standing desk calendar that I could write on. I'll link to the one I used in the show notes so you can take a look and see if would work for you. (<https://amzn.to/2lh35fs>) The reason I go with a traditional, sit on your desk calendar, is for two reasons. One, it provides an analog way to quickly and easily see your month at a glance. Let's face it, it's all too easy to ignore your digital calendar and the little alarms that pop up. Amiright? Second, when you have to handwrite something, your days off, your vacation time, birthdays, it sends a more concrete signal to your brain about the big dates coming up.

2. Map off your "boulders." Here's what I mean by this: go through, month by month, and mark off any of the big, immovable dates where you know you have something going on OR that you know you'll want off. For example - map out your book launch dates for 2021 so they're set in stone for next year. Having those dates mapped out gives you a host of benefits from being able to connect with your editor and cover designer, to knowing what dates you DON'T want to have vacation on. Next, figure out which birthdays, holidays, or other special occasions for SURE you know you'll want time off for.

3. Pick 1 consistent day off (at least!). Whether you work a day job, or writing is your #1 gig – make sure you are taking time off consistently. I can't stress this one enough because this was my life for far too long. My day is Saturday. What's yours going to be? Head over to the Author Revolution Online Community and let me know!

4. Plan two vacation weeks. Remember, you should have two longer vacation times (minimum) a year. Plan when those are going to be right now. Talk with your spouse, your kids, whoever needs to be consulted, and map down the days. You don't have to know where you're going necessarily, just that you know those are the days you want off. Mark them in the calendar.

5. Plan Getaways. If I don't put them on the calendar, they don't happen. Mark off a number of 1, 2, and 3-day getaways. Whether it be to go camping, shopping in a bigger city, or even spend a night away without kids – put those days on the calendar and make some magic happen that doesn't involve writing, publishing, and deadlines.

6. Figure out promo days. Now that the big deals are on the calendar, you can see where there's some wiggle room for promotions. Stop scrambling with your KDP promotion days. Plan them out and get everything organized in advance. The goal is to create a system that's consistent, measurable, and repeatable.

Alright, I hope this helps as you start to think about what 2021 might bring. There's so many ways we can create value for our readers, but we have to remember to protect the one thing that makes our books the most valuable – our creativity. And that starts with allowing ourselves to have time to breathe and enjoy life. Otherwise, what's the point of any of this?

Now, if you're listening to all of this and feeling like maybe you're still kind of a Hot Mess... don't worry. I got your back.



Head over to authorrevolution.org/54 and grab the Hot Mess Rapid Release Checklist. It will help you get a clear picture on your process while you focus on creating an author life you love. You'll also be able to find links to all of the stuff we talked about today, like that desk calendar and some of the additional podcast episodes.

Next week, we're diving back into talks about NaNoWriMo. Specifically, what to do when you reach the midway point and you haven't even written a single word. Yeah, don't worry. I gotcha covered.

Alright my writerly friend, until next week... Go forth and start your author revolution.



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