



EPISODE 59

# *How Do We Craft a Lifelong Indie Author Career?*

SEE THE SHOW NOTES AT: [AUTHORREVOLUTION.COM/59](http://AUTHORREVOLUTION.COM/59)

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

This episode is sponsored by my good friends at Best Page Forward. Writing a book blurb is hard, right? Particularly if you're not used to deploying copywriting. Plus, as authors, we love all the little nuances our books carry. So how do we pick just one storyline or aspect to share? It's been by experience that we authors can be our own worst enemy when it comes to selling our books because our book description can literally make or break the deal. You don't want to spend all the time working on your novels, getting the right covers, having the book edited...only to fall flat when they land on your sales page. Right? That's why my good friends at Best Page Forward are offering a special deal for my listeners. With every sale of a professional book description through Best Page Forward, they're throwing in specialized ad copy for 10 Amazon ads, plus a Facebook Ad version. And if that wasn't exciting enough, you also get a lifetime warranty with every book description. Think of it this way... if you want your sales page and ads to convert, this is an investment you can't afford not to utilize. So, if you're ready to have the professionals at Best Page Forward handle your book blurb for you, head over to [authorrevolution.org/blurb](http://authorrevolution.org/blurb) to get in on your special deal.

What if I told you the indie publishing industry has things all wrong?





On one end of the spectrum, you have indies out there who believe you should be able to make millions on your first book. And if you don't, you must be doing something wrong. Then on the other end, you have authors who are hellbent on publishing a book every waking moment of their lives until the end of time.

Now, guys, you know I'm a proponent of rapid release. Written Word Media even came out with a new study that again highlights the need to get beyond the 20 books mark in order to be making a decent living. However, if there's one thing the past few years has really brought to light for me, it's that we can't craft a lifelong author career in either of those spectrums.

You need to remember, the indie author industry is still a baby in a lot of ways. It's just a little over a decade old and as a whole, we're all still trying to find our way to uncover what works. Plus, when you add on top the way technology and various solutions have altered our workflow over these past ten years, in a lot of ways, we're in constant trial and error. Constant movement. Constant iterations in terms of our workflow. Nevermind the content creation part of our author journey. Right?

What if I told you, there was a better way?

It's my belief that we have to find a sustainable middle ground. Yes, some authors can have wild success with their first book. (They're likely romance authors, but hey... no judgement) However, most of us have to slog through the information coming at us and release many books before we ever stumble upon success. We have to test out all of our book's delivery systems, play with ads, revamp covers—basically KEEP TRYING until something clicks and typically, that means keep writing. Again this year, Written Word Media's author study found that authors making more than \$10K/ year had a whopping 42 books in their back catalogue.



**EPISODE 59: HOW DO WE CRAFT A LIFELONG INDIE AUTHOR CAREER?**

[WWW.AUTHORREVOLUTION.COM/59](http://WWW.AUTHORREVOLUTION.COM/59)



Now, for many of us – yes, even me – the desire to get to that 36-42 books is strong. Rapid release has been a big part of my journey and I know it has for many other authors, as well. And yes, some authors can have wild success releasing a book a month or faster – AND they can handle it. But for the rest of us... you know, the ones with other jobs, kids, or what I like to call... a LIFE... constantly publishing a full-length novel a month is not a sustainable strategy.

Take it from someone who knows.

I've spent the past 3 years building up my author career, hoping the next thing I did was going to be the "tipping point." Every launch "I thought – this is. This is the one that will put me on the map."

And you know what? Even though I was almost always let down... I was still partially right.

Every book has been bringing me closer to my goal of 42 books. Now, if you're wondering why 42... well, because, why not? It's the meaning of life, right? My scifi friends will get that dorky reference. Okay, I digress.

Look, let's break down some strategic pillars of the indie author industry as of right now.

According to the 2020 Written Word Media study, there are 5 stages. Now, in 2019, if you followed the study, they reported on just three – emerging authors, authors making \$60K or more, and authors making \$100K or more. This year, they've broken it down even more for those of us looking to identify and celebrate our accomplishments at closer intervals. So rather than doing it by an annual income level, they've broken it down by monthly royalties. So with that in mind, here's what they are:



**EPISODE 59: HOW DO WE CRAFT A LIFELONG INDIE AUTHOR CAREER?**

[WWW.AUTHORREVOLUTION.COM/59](http://WWW.AUTHORREVOLUTION.COM/59)



Stage one is authors making 0-\$250/mo  
Stage two is authors making \$250-999/mo  
Stage three is authors making \$1k-4999/mo  
Stage four is authors making \$5K-9999/mo  
Stage five is authors making over \$10K/mo

So, for those of you who are just starting out, I want you to perk up your ears. If you're multitasking, I see you... come back to me.

For those five stages, they also delivered some powerful insights on just how many books on average it took authors to reach those monetary milestones. What's important to note here, is that this is an indie author study in general. So the averages cross genre-lines. This is industry average based on the people who were polled (and yes, I was one of them). So there are romance authors in there, urban fantasy, literary fiction, horror, mystery, non-fiction, you name it. The reason this is good is because it gives us an average that's going to be closer to reality.

Here's where it gets interesting.

1. For stage one authors, remember, they're making 0-\$250/mo - they have on average 6 books.
2. For stage two authors making 250-999, they have 17.
3. Stage three authors making \$1K-4999 have 29.
4. Stage four authors making \$5k to 9999 have 36.
5. And the holy grail of authorhood - stage five and making over \$10k/mo... those authors have, you guessed it, 42 books on average.

See, 42... it's the meaning of life, my friends.

Okay, so we have a goal, great. But how do we get to 42 books without losing our minds? Proponents of most rapid release strategies would tell you to ramp up, buckle down and deliver a book a month. Hell, I even thought that would be a good strategy until I got in the trenches with it.



**EPISODE 59: HOW DO WE CRAFT A LIFELONG INDIE AUTHOR CAREER?**

[WWW.AUTHORREVOLUTION.COM/59](http://WWW.AUTHORREVOLUTION.COM/59)



Obviously, releasing a book a year will keep you in writing and deliver a lifelong author career. And if the writing and publishing is all you're aiming for... then maybe this is where the magic is for you. I mean, most of us authors don't start writing and think - "Hey, once I make \$100K, I'm going to stop writing." HELL NO.

We write because our stories drive the bus. We write because we can't NOT write.

Okay, so on that other end of the spectrum, writing 12 books a year (released once a month) can get you there in 3 ½ years. Sounds super sexy, right?

Here's where things get tricky. On paper, 3 ½ years doesn't sound long. But when you're in constant go, go go... stress levels rise. Your relationships suffer. And creativity goes out the window.

Time and time again I've spoken with authors who have "lost their mojo" because they got on the hamster wheel of rapid release and didn't know how to step off. They felt that unless they continued with this book a month production, they were failing. Or they were going to lose their income. In essence, they were rapid releasing out of fear.

Fear that they'd lose sales. Fear that their income would take a nosedive. Fear that they'd upset readers. See what I'm saying?

Instead, what if we set ourselves up for success? What if we choose to craft an intentional lifelong indie author career over short-term income boosting? Over pushing ourselves to the extreme, just to make a few extra dollars...? Sounds good, right?

Well, if you're like me and in this author lifestyle for the long haul, this is essentially what I'm teaching in Rapid Release Roadmap. I don't want you to kill yourself over chasing royalties.



**EPISODE 59: HOW DO WE CRAFT A LIFELONG INDIE AUTHOR CAREER?**

[WWW.AUTHORREVOLUTION.COM/59](http://WWW.AUTHORREVOLUTION.COM/59)

I don't want you being dazzled by flashy Book Report screenshots by authors who have more money upfront to invest in ads than you do. I don't want you to ignore and neglect your family, your health, and your life because you're so focused on a writing and publishing schedule that's unrealistic in the long-term.

Here's what I want you to do instead. I want you to narrow your focus - and here's what I mean. In Rapid Release Roadmap, I'm going to be teaching you how to plan, write, publish, and promote four books a year - minimum.

Now, before we go any further, think about that for a moment. Seriously, close your eyes and mentally compare writing and launching a book a month to writing four books a year. Which one feels better? Which one gives you room to breathe? Which one feels sustainable?

If you answered four books a year, you are in the right place, my friend. Four books a year on a 6-week sprint works out roughly to 2K words per day, with room for down days, uncreative days, and plain old life. So, we're talking 50K-70K books fit comfortably into this timeframe - with as high as 80K word books, but in my opinion, that would be pushing things to their extreme. Of course, if you're writing novellas or novelettes, you could increase your output of books, but that's a personal choice you have to make, but the launch schedule alone can drive you a bit crazy.

Let's look at it this way. Rather than setting ourselves up for burn out and overwhelm, by writing and publishing only four books a year (she says ONLY with a grain of salt) we're gifting ourselves the ability to refine and repeat our process with enough room to enjoy the process, right along with it.

I don't know about you, but when I launched the Windhaven Witches a month apart this past year, what I noticed most about it was how LITTLE I was able to focus on the new release and celebrate its creation. Instead, I had to immediately move on to the promotion of the next one.



**EPISODE 59: HOW DO WE CRAFT A LIFELONG INDIE AUTHOR CAREER?**

[WWW.AUTHORREVOLUTION.COM/59](http://WWW.AUTHORREVOLUTION.COM/59)



While the launches did build on one another and make for incremental growth revenue wise, it lost some of the magic in the release part of it for me. Each book, in my humble opinion, deserves to be celebrated.

Now, here's the breakdown, for those of you who are keeping track. Pretend for a moment you're starting 100% from scratch. I know most of you are not, but stick with me a moment.

.  
For authors wanting to be firmly planted in stage one, writing four books a year, it will take you 1 ½ year to get to the 6 books average.

.  
Then, if you want to level up to stage two, it will take just over 4 years total to get to the average of 17 books.

.  
From ground zero to stage three, it will take you roughly 7 years to get to 29 books.

.  
To make a comfortable living at stage 4, you're going to be consistently writing four books a year for 9 years to get to 36 books. That's it. Less than a decade in your author career.

.  
Now, to make it to the big kahuna, the granddaddy of them all, that average of 42 books and making more than \$10k per month means just an additional 1 ½ year. So, basically, 10 ½ years writing and publishing four books a year consistently to get to 42.

It's math, guys. And math that we can live with when we break it down like that.

So let me throw this out there. If you're going to write for the sake of writing for the rest of your life, why not slow down just a tad? I challenge you to be more intentional about crafting a lifelong indie author career. A decade to become proficient at your craft and build an audience who will support you beyond your wildest dreams is a small price to pay.



**EPISODE 59: HOW DO WE CRAFT A LIFELONG INDIE AUTHOR CAREER?**

[WWW.AUTHORREVOLUTION.COM/59](http://WWW.AUTHORREVOLUTION.COM/59)



I mean, in your current job, can they offer you that kind of future potential?

Now, if you're struggling financially and it doesn't feel like you can take the time to slow down or take the time to only write four books a year, (I know some of you overachievers are out there) I want you to know, I hear you - trust me, I hear you.

I started my indie author career on the cusp of a divorce with barely enough money to put together for a single \$25 promo. I have never had credit cards to charge ad spend to and I have literally had to scrape every dime together to get to where I am now. But here's what I know for sure - hustling to the point of exhaustion would not have been the answer. I mean, I was hustling to the point of exhaustion in other ways, but had I been trying to do it with my writing too, I probably would be in a mental institution right now. Not even gonna lie.

Hustle alone will not get you to where you need to be. If you don't take care of your mental health, none of this is worth it. Not even if you're making the money.

The good news is, writing four books a year can be a consistent strategy whether you're working another job, a stay-at-home parent, or even doing it as your full-time gig. Did you know Stephen King aims for 2K words a day, too? He's obviously got a lifelong career locked and loaded, so if it works for him, I'm pretty sure, it can work for us, too.

Don't buy into the mentality that you have to be in rapid release a book a month mode for eternity. You'll get trapped there without an emergency exits.

Look, 2020 has hit us like a freight train. COVID 19 threw us for a loop and made many of us question our direction and outlook. However, one thing is for sure - writing and publishing indie style can be done literally anywhere.



**EPISODE 59: HOW DO WE CRAFT A LIFELONG INDIE AUTHOR CAREER?**

[WWW.AUTHORREVOLUTION.COM/59](http://WWW.AUTHORREVOLUTION.COM/59)





So, whether you're locked down at home or working in another office, or having a 9-5 away from your desk, we can continue to make this progress in the undercurrent of our day or allow it to be our main focus. Readers aren't going anywhere. If anything, they are becoming more voracious with the time they have now.

So, let's take advantage of that? Let's craft a lifelong indie author career that includes rapid releasing four books a year, but supports our life and our mental health, too. That way, we can ultimately get to our end game with some sanity intact. Deal?

Alright, guys, I will make sure to include links to Written Word Media's survey results in today's show notes at [authorrevolution.org/59](http://authorrevolution.org/59), so be sure to go over there and check it out. The report truly has some invaluable insights for us.

Now, if what I've talked about with you today sparked any nerves or excited you a bit. I'd love for you to hop over and join the Rapid Release Roadmap waiting list. Doors for the course will be opening up January 12th and closing January 21st. This first session will begin January 25th. So, if you're ready to cement yourself as an indie author with a lifelong career, I encourage you to check it out and consider investing in your future. The link to the waiting list will also be in the show notes.

So there you have it, my writerly friend. We're done for this week. Thanks so much for joining me.

Time to go forth and start your author revolution.



**EPISODE 59: HOW DO WE CRAFT A LIFELONG INDIE AUTHOR CAREER?**

[WWW.AUTHORREVOLUTION.COM/59](http://WWW.AUTHORREVOLUTION.COM/59)