



AUTHOR
REVOLUTION

PODCAST
TRANSCRIPT

EPISODE 66

How to Leverage a 6-Week Writing Sprint

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Welcome back!

It's hard to believe we're already in February. January was a long year, if you ask me. I don't know what it is, but this month already feels lighter. Maybe it's the fact that we love celebrating Valentine's Day in this house... or the fact that my anniversary is coming up... or my husband's birthday... There's just a lot to celebrate and be happy about.

Maybe this lighter feeling could also be linked back to the fact that I've started my 6-week writing sprint. After four months of taking time off of writing fiction – in part to clear my mental palate and in part to focus on some other endeavors, I'm finally ready to take on Diana Hawthorne again.

I started writing in Amends and I can tell now's the time because it felt GOOD to write. It felt right again.

Here's the thing... if you're an author who's in this business for longer than a hot second, you know this isn't a way to get rich quick. At least, not for most of us. This means we're always testing and working harder to be better... to learn more. Add on top rapid releasing and you're in constant motion.

I've been going like this for years and if you've been following this podcast for a while, you know it's a habit I'm actively working on breaking. I've done this by taking days off and forcing myself to slow down. It's not always easy, but I could tell it was necessary for my sanity, health, and creativity.



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Yet... oddly enough, I'm actually doing more. I'm slowly earning more. Why? Because I'm giving myself the bandwidth to focus on the areas that move the needle and ignore the rest.

One of the things I teach inside of Rapid Release Roadmap is the idea of 6-week writing sprints. Similar to the concept of NaNoWriMo, the goal is to write a first draft of 60,000 words in 6-weeks. But unlike NaNo, we work in days off. Then, unlike a constant rapid release mentality, we take breaks between books, too.

If there's one thing I learned, is that we indies have to pen in our downtimes because if we don't we won't take them. But they are CRITICAL to our long-term success.

But there's magic in knowing you only have 6-weeks to write your book. First of all, you have a busy life. You want to write your book and move on with your life. That's why we add a finite number to how much time we give ourselves to write. It's why so many authors are successful with NaNo and come back to do it year after year.

Remember Parkinson's Law – work expands to fit the time allowed for it. So if you don't give it a container, it will Energizer Bunny the crap out of your time. No, we have to be smarter than that.

Sprints allow us to give a timeline we can live with, while pushing us to do the work in a tight turnaround. So, for those of you wondering how I run my sprints, here's how it looks:

First of all, we know we're aiming for 60K words in 6 weeks. That means to me, we need to write 10K per week to hit our target. That means, I know I'll be writing 2K words per day... and for those of you who know how to do math, hold tight for a minute and this number will make sense.



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Next up, I pick my start day – always a Monday because for whatever reason, that’s how I roll. So, my weeks go Monday-Sunday.

From there, I add the six weeks into my Plottr Plan for the specific book I’m working on. So, for Amends, this means week one is February 1-7. Week 2 is February 8-14, and so on. For those of you who might have missed last week’s episode on using Plottr to plan out your rapid release series, I encourage you to go back and listen to it so you know what I’m talking about.

Once I have the six weeks labeled out, I go through my actual calendar to see if there are dates I know I won’t be able to write. February is one of those kinds of months for me, like I mentioned earlier. So I know I’ll be taking off Valentine’s Day, the 19th-20th for my anniversary, and the 25th for Colin’s birthday. In addition, I know writing on Tuesdays are difficult, because Tuesdays are podcast days. I write my outline, record, master, upload, and do all the other miscellaneous stuff that goes along with it. Even my PA Jenny knows to avoid me like the plague on Tuesdays because I probably won’t answer.

With those dates picked, I then work to average it out, so I am only writing 5 days a week. Because I know the week of Feb 15-21 is only going to have 3 days I can write, I need to adjust a few days throughout the month so I average 10K per week. Notice I said AVERAGE. You have to remember life happens in the middle of all of this. So while we’re aiming for 10K a week, some weeks it won’t happen. That’s life, man. I just make up the time in a different week by only taking one day off, for example.

Once I have the days I know I will be writing mapped out, I literally take things one day at a time. Today’s Tuesday, so that means no writing in Amends for me. But tomorrow, you bet I’ll be writing chapter 2.

Now, one thing I’ve learned about myself is that I have to work within my golden hour.



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Meaning – for me, writing comes much easier first thing in the morning. I like to grab a cup of tea or coffee, sit down and read a chapter or two in the book I'm reading, then switch gears into writing. My brain is freshest first thing, so I'm most creative then. I know there are some authors out there who are the opposite. So the key here is to figure out when your golden hour is and stick with it as close as possible.

Speaking of writing... I mentioned earlier that I aim for 2K words per day. This also is pretty average to what my chapters work out to being. So when I sit down to write, my goal is to get a chapter done a day. It just feels cleaner to me. It doesn't always happen that way, but near on most of the time it does. And if for some reason I have to stop before a chapter is finished, I try to always stop mid-rant so I can pick up where I left off the day before. Meaning, I literally stop writing in the middle of a sentence.

However, the 6-week writing sprint isn't the only sprint I run. I also run a 2-hour daily writing sprint to get that chapter on the page. Now, you might be going, "Carissa, that's not a sprint. It's a marathon!" But here's the thing, on average, it takes your brain 23 minutes to fully engage into a project and enter the flow state. I talk more about this in episode 7, so I'll make sure to link to it in the show notes today. In essence, every time you're pulled away to do something else, you start that clock over. This is why writing takes so much time for those who aren't in the know. However, the human brain can stay on task for up to 2 hours on a project without degradation in its creation. So, I plan for a 2-hour block of uninterrupted writing (well, as uninterrupted as I can get) and I put the headphones in and go to town. More often than not, I complete the chapter in that 2-hour slot and sometimes, I even beat the clock. Then, I move on with the rest of my day's tasks.

This is how indie authors who work fulltime jobs can still rapid release. They don't dilly dally with their stories. They plan out their plot, then they get to work by understanding the power of the sprint.



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One of the things I'm implementing after this sprint, though, is something I've always told other people to do, but I've never done for myself. I know, I know... do as I as, not as I do. Well, until now, at least. As soon as I finish Amends in my 6-week sprint, I'm going to CELEBRATE.

What celebrating means to you could be different from what it means to me... but my plan is to treat myself to a day away from the house. I plan on day-tripping somewhere I've never been. No idea where that will be yet or what I'll do. I just know I plan to give myself an adventure away from the confines of these walls. Because let's face it, at this point, we're all starting to crawl them. And I've been working from home since 2014! HA!

After the 6-week sprint, I also have the peace of mind in knowing I get to take a break from writing. This year, because I'm working my books around my launches for Rapid Release Roadmap, my next sprint this year won't start until June 28th. That way, I'm past the new launch for Rapid Release Roadmap and if Book Bonanza is still on, I'll be back home from that – hopefully sans COVID. Right?

Alright, that's it for today. If you've got questions about the 6-week sprint or writing sprints in general, feel free to head over to the Author Revolution Facebook Community. I'm always around and ready to answer any questions if you have them.

Also, if you'd like to check out Episode 7, where I talk about multitasking and staying in the zone, you'll be able to find it all at today's show notes. Just head over to authorrevolution.org/66 and get the goods.

And it's time for you to go forth and start your author revolution.