

Episode 193

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SPEAKERS

Carissa Andrews



Carissa Andrews 00:03

The indie author revolution has been around for more than a decade. But we indies continue to push the boundaries of what we're capable of. From getting over initial prejudices, to staring down perfectionism and author impostor syndrome. We've become a force to reckon with. Now after years of hustling, grind, we indies are rebelling again. Gone are the days of publishing a book a month until we drop. In its place, we're sowing the seeds of a better way away with more ease, abundance and flow. Get ready to learn about indie authorship from a whole new perspective. We're about to cover everything from releasing your poverty mentality to manifesting your millionaire author destiny. I'm Carissa Andrews, and this is the Author Revolution Podcast. Well, hi there. Welcome back to the Author Revolution Podcast. Holy cow, guys, we're on the last week of July 2023. And I look back at this year and just kind of I don't even know, I'm like, seriously, do we time warp? It just feels like this year is flying by. And I was mentioning to Tammy Tyree. And to my husband this week, how it feels like the weeks are feeling what days used to feel like like, I will look out the window and go, Oh, look, the garbage people are here today. And it look, it was yesterday, too. But it's not it was last Monday. Like it's so weird. Time is just flying. So today I want to talk about something that's making my time fly by or really fast. And it's something that if you're following me on Patreon, you're kind of following the step by step processes and the things that I'm actually doing each day to create my digital store. And so here's what's happening. After all the conferences that I've gone to one of the big takeaways that I really took on was that I need to get better at my automations. And I need to have a direct store. And so after doing my research, I realized that I don't want to wait for my rom com pen name to do this. I actually want to do it with my urban fantasy pen name, which is obviously my own name, right? Carissa Andrews. And so I've been in the process of kind of like weighing the pros and cons. Do I do Shopify? Do I stay with the WooCommerce thing and just make it prettier? Like, what do I do? And after reading Morgana bests book stop making others Rich, I decided to take the plunge and really go all in with Shopify. And so on Patreon, I'm posting about like, what does this experience look like for me? What is it that I am learning? How does this process go? What's been easy? What's been hard? What's been like the bane of my existence? All the things right. And so it's been really interesting to just explore this concept of direct sales to readers. And what's been really nice for me is that it's making the part of me that is a relator, a number one relator, through the Clifton Strengths, happy because it makes me feel like I get to work one on one with my readers. And it also kind of triggers the

part of me that was a 14, 15, 16 year old kid who worked in bookstores, right that I that was my first job, I was a bookseller. And so it's kind of fun to be putting together a book store, with the idea of creating things that are going to make the experience of reading books more fun, whether it be merch, whether it be, you know, having like a birthday club, whether it be having loyalty programs, or all the things that can be, you know, created and incorporated into a Shopify store. It's all kind of being brewed and coming together at this place in time. At the time of this recording, we're sitting here on Tuesday, July 25. And my store is almost finished i The biggest problem or not the problem, the biggest time suck was really inputting all of the products and their variants, because, you know, not only do I have an ebook, but I have a paperback book, I have a signed paperback book, I have audiobooks for most of my books. So there was a lot of you no tweaking and adding and you know, different images and all the things I had to go through it. And while I have a WooCommerce store, and I could have used some sort of API to be able to import it over to Shopify. I wanted to go through the process so that I could explain on Patreon to my supporters who are following this, how it's looking, what works, what doesn't work, what do I need to know about making this thing work properly? All of those things kind of were a part of this process. And I described them all like I said, over on Patreon and what's been really cool is that once all of the products are imported into Shopify, it kind of auto populates the rest of the store. So there are aspects of the the website that are very, very easy like you input it in one place and it fixes it everywhere else, like you don't have to go through a bazillion different pieces. juices are different sites or any of those things, right. And so my thought on the process of shifting from a website idea, like this idea that our brand is, you know, out on a website, or our author platform is just a website, to shifting it to now having it be more of a bookstore, focus, it feels so good. To me. It feels like that's what it should have been all along. And I'm definitely kind of kicking myself a little bit. Back in the day when Jenny was first starting to work with me, you know, she was constantly on me about wanting to have like merch and having, you know, fun things that were tied to this and fun things that were tied to that. And my brain just wasn't there. Like I was still like, Hey, I'm, I'm trying to write the books and trying to get people notice them in that particular moment, right. 2018 is when she started, like at the end of that year. And it was just so weird, because looking back, she was kind of already there, she was in that process where that's what readers were already looking for. That's what they really want is that engagement side of things, where they can get exclusive bundles, they can get exclusive merch, they can get exclusive ways to interact with you, the author. And now I wish I would have been doing this all along, because it really is like, wow, this is incredible. And so the mindset shift has really been the most, I guess, intense of it all. Like, as I'm building this thing out, I'm seeing how I can interact differently with my readers like, I like I said, I can offer birthday rewards, I can offer different bundles of books, I could, you know, put all of my first in series for free, if I want to just on my website, I can put a pre order up for a book that I'm not even going to put up anywhere else yet, where readers can go ahead and preorder for me. And then when the books been out for a little bit, I can release it wide, or then I can release it into k u whatever. And so that's kind of the process that I've moved towards the mindset shift is different where it's like, I am now the hub first. You know, if you want to preorder midlife bond, which is book four in that accidental Alpha series, then you're going to come to me first come get it from me first preorder it from me, you'll get it before everybody else, and then K, you will get it a little bit later, right. And that shift has really taken me from feeling like I am indebted to the retailers or feeling like I am at the the back, and will and calling. I don't know all those things of the retailers to now going I am the person in charge of my career, I am the person in charge of my books and my book selling. And if people want to go ahead and get it at Amazon, or get it at Barnes and Noble, or get it at wherever more power to them, have fun, go get it. But if you come to me, we're gonna have a lot more fun, right. And having that mindset shift has been really, really powerful. Because it just, not only are you in charge of how all of your stuff is happening on your website, on your

Shopify store. But now you're having you know, sales that are coming in, in real time, you're having money that you can access in real time, you are able to, you know, get all of the customer data from those people who purchase from you and you can retarget them through SMS texting, which you can do through Shopify, I found really interesting, you can create all sorts of flows in the back end with some certain apps like Klaviyo, and reconvert. And there's all these different ways that you can really integrate and make the Shopify experience a really interesting and engaging one for the people who are landing on your site. Now one of the things that I also find really fascinating as I'm working through this, is that, okay, so readers are starting to recognize, you know, what a Shopify store looks like, for instance. And I think the reason why Shopify is working well, for so many authors and small business entrepreneurs, is that it's far and wide being used. I mean, Taylor Swift uses it for her merch store, you know what I mean? It's huge. And, you know, big companies and brands are using it all over the place. And so when normal people purchase a product, and they're doing it through Taylor Swift store, or they're, you know, talking with Tesla, and they're doing something through through Tesla's store, they're engaging with a system that looks very familiar to them, because they've been through it with these bigger companies, right? So if they go to your small time bookstore, and when I say small time, I mean, I had to import 23 different books, and most of them had four variants. So that's a lot of variants. And there was a lot of books and stuff going on in there. So it wasn't it's not overly small, but at the same time, you're small compared to Taylor Swift, right? It's not going to have as much exposure as many products being sold at First. And obviously that's our dream, we want to be all Taylor Swift of the book world. But what's cool is that when they engage with Taylor Swift site, for instance, the way that it looks is familiar, the way that the checkout system works is familiar, the way that going through the process and getting the text messages or whatever it's familiar. So it makes it very easy for readers to trust your site when they go to something like that. Plus, when you look at the way that the younger generations have come up, I think about my, you know, my oldest son who's turning 18, or even my daughter who's turning, she'll be 15. In April, you know, they've gone through this process of following YouTubers almost their whole lives, right. And so when they have these YouTubers, who are huge influencers, who have their own merch stores, and they have their own things, and they work it through Shopify, it's now easy for them to go, hey, I want to support this person that I really love, and like and trust and want to like, support them directly. And so that generation is definitely one that is less hung up over, like, Oh, if I buy something from a small, you know, author am I going to screw myself over UI. So there's not as much of that, there's a lot more of this, I want to support the creator. Because not only am I supporting them directly, that's awesome. But I'm also getting some exclusivity, things you know, that you can't get elsewhere. Those loyalty programs, those discounts, those bonus scenes, those, whatever it is that you're going to do to make your site engaging, they're getting those things and they're feeling like they're a part of your community, which is awesome. Now, as I go through this experience, I'm still floored at how lovely the back end of Shopify is, it's actually very simple to go through. It's simple to import a different theme, it's simple to edit the themes. You know, I've worked with a lot of digital stuff that like I'm very technologically inclined person, but even this, it's been nice, because it's just, it's kind of like a one and done and it walks you through the process. Like you go in and you're entering your products, then you you know, make sure you're customizing the rest of your theme. And you're adding in the the apps that you want to add in. And the integration systems between I'm using book vault for my paperbacks, for instance, that integration from book vault over to Shopify is almost seamless. It's very nice. The only thing like there have been a couple of hangups, you know, when it comes to entering the product stuff. So that was a little bit of a pain in the backside at first. And you can learn about it if you go over to the Patreon page. But once you understand how the integration works, and how it's going to like pull everything over to Shopify, then you just work within its flow. And it's easy, right? It just it becomes an easy process. And it's not a

big deal. So that aspect of it was easy, getting book funnel integrated for the ebooks and the audiobooks was super easy. Had Jenny, move all of my files over to book funnel, so we had all the audiobooks done first, and we actually had that done a while back, because we were going to try to do the WooCommerce thing. And it's still in WooCommerce. And if people wanted to, you know, purchase anything from there before the site gets transferred over, it still works, I believe. But at the same time, it's integrating now with the Shopify store that I'm building. And I'm hoping that probably by the end of this week, I'll have it up and running. So the new site will be in place, you'll no longer see my old website at all, the old WordPress website. And so it's been neat to be able to figure out like, Okay, how do pre orders work? Because I want people to be able to pre order directly for me, you know, what plugins do I need for that? What aspects do I need in order to create this or that or the other thing? So one of the things when the new store goes live, that you'll probably notice, if you take a look at Carissa andrews.com, is that I used a lot of mid journey images, because I wanted the site to have a certain vibe a certain feel. And so I did a lot of mid journey playing and created images that were specific to my genre that were specific to the characters that I have specific to the series in fact, so that all of the vibes that are coming from it, we're feeling very in tune with what reader expectations are hopefully going to be right at this point. I would hope that I understand what reader expectations are. But you never know we sometimes miss the mark right? Even those of us who are doing this for a long time sometimes we can't see the forest through the trees so it does become a more difficult scenario unless you take a step back. Now as I've been going through this I've been taking that step back and I'm pretty sure I've got this locked in but it's been so fun to be able to get all of these pieces together and play around with that the mid journey aspect and you know, get some images that were just really spot on for me like that just really resonated with who the characters were What the series was like, my only issues with my journey are that I'm not adept enough with it to be able to take an image, it's created and go, Okay, this was perfect, but make the wolf white, for instance, or okay, this was perfect except put a scar down this this girl's face or you know, something along those lines. So if anybody has tips on mid journey, who could explain that part to me, without me having to dig through a mountain of text in the tutorials, I would love some insight. But beyond that, it's been fun to play around with, it's been fun to create what I have created so far. And so I hope that if you're hearing this, by the end of let's say, July, let's say July 29, or so, July 29 or 30th 2023, the new website should be up and running. I am super close, I'm just in the back end, you know, making sure all of the apps and integrations are working properly before I go live. So if you do get the chance to take a look at it, let me know what you think. Let me know how it feels to you. Like are there any parts where you're curious about how this thing works? Or why did this thing or where is something that you really want, that would help me. And as authors, I think we really need to learn from each other. When it comes to this stuff, we need to, you know, figure out how this works and play around with new concepts when things like this are coming about. And now I know Morgan has been doing this since I think 1993, if I'm remembering right, she's been in this field, doing direct sales for a very long time. And so I really recommend her books. So stop making others rich, the workbook, I am working through that as well. And I'm trying to learn everything myself at the moment. So rather than going through step by step, I know she has a wonderful course and I have so many author friends who absolutely adore it. I have not yet purchased the course. But I haven't I have a feeling that down the road, I will probably be doing that because she has some incredible flows for Klaviyo, which is the like email and SMS automations in the back end. And I'd love to be able to understand what she would do in the back end of that. And I would love to understand, you know how she does her Facebook ads. And I know all of that is part of how she does her course. And so at some point down the line, I highly anticipate I'll be purchasing that. But for right now, I'm just kind of playing along, seeing how it's gonna work, seeing if I can master this thing and get it going live and see what happens when I do. Because I'm really interested in making it better and creating

a home for my books for my author platform for me as an individual that I feel connected and tied to like my website always felt like it was just a set it and forget it and walk away from thing. And it there wasn't that feeling of connectedness even for myself from it, it was felt it felt just like here's this website. And then every week when I was doing my newsletter, instead of blogging, I just put my newsletter on as the blog, right. So that if people got on there, and they wanted to know what was happening in our lives, or whatever, they could see what that looked like for at least some of the information. It wasn't the full newsletter, but it was a good part of it. And now I was just I feel like I've outgrown it, I feel like I am ready to take on this role of indie bookstore in a sense. And when I get the rom com pen name up and running, which obviously I'm still in the process of so I'm creating this book, one in the rom com, I'm hoping to be done by mid August. And so as I create this aspect of it, and as I am, you know, working through the urban fantasy pen name, I think it's gonna be really easy to just create a new store to get the theme up and running that I want for that one, whether it be the same theme, I did end up purchasing a theme instead of using one of the free themes. But I don't know if I'll have to do that for the romcom pen name right away, maybe I will maybe I won't, I don't know. But I know that in this process, as I go forward, it's going to be so much easier for the rom com name, because I'll have experience under my belt on how this stuff is working right. Originally, I thought it'd be better the other way around. But in my research, I found that it actually works a lot better having these big stores like this works better when you have multiple books to be able to sell with multiple variants, for instance. So I figured why not? Let's just I needed to update my website. Anyway, I knew that was coming down the road. And so it just kind of all clump together. And in this process, it fits both of those two things that I came away with right, the automations and the website, the the switching over to direct sales and having a Shopify store. So both of them are merging into one. And so while they seem like two separate takeaways that I knew I needed to work on, it's kind of become one because it's all happening within this ecosystem of direct sales. So it's really cool. At any rate, that's been my experience so far, and like I said, the store itself is awesome. Almost ready, it's like, it's going to be you know, carissaandrews.com, v1, right version one. And I'm sure I'll be tweaking it and making adjustments as time goes on. But at the same time, I want you guys to remember, like, if you're putting stuff up there, and you're getting it out into the world, take that imperfect action, don't wait for it to be absolutely 100%. Perfect before you hit publish, right? Whether that be your books, or your Shopify store, or your website or whatever, take the action, do as much of it as you can. And then go ahead and allow it to be a part of the world allow it to evolve in real time, it's okay, if that happens, like you can make changes and adjustments and tweaks and whatever. But if the main functionality of it like all the products are there, for instance, all the variants are working properly, then it's just about putting it up. It's just about the gravy underneath it, right? It's about making those integrations work properly. It's about having the apps that support your website to make it more functional. It's about having, you know, the flows for your SMS, texting or the flows for your email, marketing, whatever. All those things come together. And that stuff can be worked on in process like it. Yes, it would be great to have everything 100% ready to go the second you launch your store. But sometimes it's not always about that. Sometimes it's about you don't know what you don't know, until something comes up and you're like, Oh, I wish I would have done that thing. Right? Oh, I wish I would have created a birthday flow. Oh, I wish I would have created a cart abandonment flow. Oh, I wish I would have created you know, put your own thing in here. Right? Insert your own mysterious Oh, I didn't know thing. So sometimes it's just about getting it out there and continuing to work on the process until it is complete to your liking. And so that's my goal. My job right now is to finish up the website to get it up and running so that by the weekend, I can switch gears from this website build scenario, right? And then go back into the writing. So people who are following me for the rom com pen name are probably like, Hey, I thought we were going to start seeing new chapters. And I'm like, I went down the rabbit hole of Shopify. So there you go,

that's what you get instead. So I haven't, I haven't had any time to write, I probably should have put it as a priority. But I was just following like, what my inspired action has been right. I've been doing the thing that I felt most called to do the thing that felt fun to do. And so I've just kind of been playing around with it. And it's, it's been a joy to kind of see and visualize a new home for my books and new home for my readers. And so it's it's been a lot of fun to play around with. So if you're thinking about doing direct sales, I highly recommend Shopify, the experience has been wonderful. Don't be afraid of all the apps. Yes, there are apps you have to integrate. Yes, some of them are paid. But a lot of them have free versions. At first, a lot of them have free versions to kind of stick with and you just don't get as many bells and whistles. So while there are a couple of things, even Morgana Best talks in her books about how less is more like don't burden your site with a bunch of apps because it will slow your website down. You want to make sure everything is running fast, and you want to make sure it's all working properly. So at any rate, that's my two cents. That's been my experience with Shopify so far. I obviously don't know what it's going to look like when it comes to sales just yet. And so once I have some more data for that, I'll definitely come back on and give you some insights into how that's all working. I'm hoping that it's going to be going like gangbusters. Obviously, my goal is to pull my Amazon ad budgets with the exception of any of my defensive ads, you know, the ones that are targeting me and my own books where my my ads are showing on my site, or they're showing for people who are searching my name or my books, those ones are gonna stay up. But the rest of the ad budget is going to shift over to Facebook and all the Facebook ads are going to start pointing to my site. And I need to go back through like the the back matter of my books and make sure that all of the links back there are pointing to my site. So it's going to be a process. It's not something that's going to be completely done. By the time this weekend comes. I'm not going to you know, stress myself over having to get all of the back mentors of all the books for ebooks anyway done. So that the links are all going to the right places. I'm just going to focus on one little bit at a time once the store has been loaded. But these are all things that I'm thinking about right there things that you're you're going to need to think about as you move forward. But one thing that this latest launch for accidental Alpha has taught me is that had I been able to capture all of the pre orders that happened for that particular book. So midlife wolf mate, had been able to capture them all through my own site instead of going all through Amazon. Not only what I have close to \$2,000 myself right now today, so that's active money that I could be using and incorporating into more ads adds, right my ad spend, I could be increasing ad spend right now today because of that. But I could also be having customers that many customers now in my database, I wouldn't have their birthdays, I would be able to upsell them or down sell them, I would be able to give them, you know, loyalty discounts, I would be able to bundle books for them, there's all sorts of things that I wish the store would have been ready to go prior to that particular launch. And even though it's not, maybe it'll feed into it, maybe it would be even better so that this next book is getting more and more pre orders through my site, because it's all exclusive now through my site until the book launches in May of next year. So it's going to launch directly on my site, they're going to get access to it right away. And based off of how it's going through my website will determine when I go wide for a little bit. If I go wide, I might just go into KU because that's where most of my I mean, the rest of that series is KU only. So they wouldn't, it wouldn't really make a whole lot of sense, I suppose to go, why would that particular book, but I'm gonna go through my website first, and then eventually go KU, for instance. And so they'll get access to the KU version of it later on down the line, and I get the pre orders, I get the things coming to myself and over here. And that would be wonderful to be able to have that extra amount that I wasn't able to keep, because it went to Amazon instead, right? So I just, I love this idea. I love this notion of reclaiming the way that we do business reclaiming the way that we are functioning as indie authors, the way that we are treating this more as like an indie bookstore and making sure that our readers know it's us that it's our community, it's our place to be, it's our

bookstore. Right? So I love it, it's been a lot of fun, I highly recommend it. And if you want to follow along, because I'm still going to be talking about the experience, through the Patreon page, I'm gonna talk about, you know, when I go live, I'm going to talk about how things are going when the first sale hits, how the sales are going to talk about all of that on my Patreon at the \$20 level. So if you're interested, definitely check that out, I'll make sure that there's a link in the show notes, which by the way, you can get by going over to authorrevolution.org/193. And I'll have links over to everything right there. And of course, if you'd like to download the transcript to today's podcast episode, you can also do it from that location. So there you have it, that has been my experience so far with direct sales with using and utilizing Shopify as my new website. I will be shutting down my WordPress website. So only the Shopify site exists. And it'll be pointing carissaandrews.com to the new Shopify store instead, which is something that just feels right to me at this point in time, I've had this website up and running for a long time. There's a lot of stuff that goes on in the back end of it, and I just don't feel like I really need it anymore. And I'm cool with that. I'm cool with letting it go and starting something new. And I think you should be too if that's something that's calling to you. Now's the time, it's a good time to become an indie author, big time. Alright guys, I am off to finish obviously getting this podcast episode ready for you so that it goes out in the world tomorrow. But at the same time, I would love to get some more stuff done on the Shopify site. So I'm gonna let you go. Have a wonderful rest of your week and we'll see you next time. Go forth and start your author revolution.