

Episode 201

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SPEAKERS

Katie Cross, Carissa Andrews



Carissa Andrews 00:04

The indie author revolution has been around for more than a decade, the Wii 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 hustle and grind, we indies are rebelling again. Gone are the days of publishing a book a month until we drop, and in its place, we're sowing the seeds of a better way away with more ease, abundance and flow. Get ready to learn about in the 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. Hey, guys, welcome back to another episode of the Author Revolution Podcast. So for those of you have been listening to this podcast for a while, you already know that direct sales was really a huge component of where I was heading for this year, like there was a lot of interest coming from the conferences that I've been to over the past year and a bit, there's been a lot of consideration that's gone into it. There was obviously a little bit of Kindle Unlimited Drama, which is still not resolved. But at the end of the day, I did end up going wide and I did end up creating a direct store. And I'd like to think a lot of that mentality and a lot of the think gumption to today's podcast episode guest. So today we are talking with Katie Krause. She is a wonderful direct selling author who writes young adult fantasy, and she has been absolutely killing it in the direct sales space. But I originally met her and ran into her at inkers con this past year, and I was riveted by her story that she told well at anchors con right. She was up there talking about her experiences with, you know, trying to get her store up and running, seeing some really wild success. And then COVID happened. And she had to rethink her strategy a bit, especially being a mom. Now we're gonna get into all of this stuff. And she tells the story much more elegantly than I do. So I wanted to leave that for her. But overall, if you're an author who's thinking about what does your author career get to look like for you? And how do you want it to look like for you? Do you want it to be, you know, this huge masterminding type situation? Or do you want a simple skeleton, kind of a plan for now? Whatever it looks like to you, however, your author career, your author bookstore, however, your direct sales store gets to look for you. It's all up to you. And Katie does a really good job of explaining to us like, the mentality that we need in order to do well with our own stores and why it's actually so important that more of us are doing it now. If this is something that's calling to you, I hope you're gonna love this podcast episode as much as I as much as I loved talking

with Katie, I must have had espresso that day, guys. I was really excited. talked really fast. I know I always talk fast. But even for me, I'm listening to this thing going "Holy cow, I talk fast." So hang on to your hats. And be ready. Maybe drink some espresso yourself. And let's get into this podcast episode interview. Well, Hi, Katie. Welcome to the Revolution Podcast. I'm so excited that you're here. Now I spoke in the introduction a little bit about how you came into my sphere and like caught my attention, obviously at Inkers. Con. Well, I was just wondering if you could explain a little bit more though, to my audience about who you are, like what your authored journey has been like, and how you kind of came to that perspective of being an advocate for selling direct. I know that a lot.

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Katie Cross 03:58

I love multistep questions. Well, thanks for having me. I'm super excited to be here and chat with your audience. I love the angle that you put on things. So this will be really fun. So I'm Katie Cross. I live in Montana, and I write young adult fantasy books. And I have two kids, they're seven and four, they'll be eight and five. By the time you're hearing this, and they're amazing. They're rock stars. I have a lot of dogs, probably too many dogs. And I just really, really, really love to play in the mountains. It's like, my favorite thing. So we live up by the National Forest and we have a great time. And so I get to live in fantasy worlds. And then I get to live in an actual world that feels like fantasy, because it's just so beautiful up here, which is really cool. So yeah, I started writing cash, like when I was in first grade, I think a lot of us can relate to that. Like I just always was like it wasn't this like thing I picked up. It just always was. And eventually through series of events. I worked as a pediatric registered nurse for a long time and then I married the military and that ruined my career and I didn't have anything about writing and so I dove in into this book called Miss Mabel School for Girls led me to self publishing. And here I am almost 10 years later, with over 70 books to my name 55 ish books to my fantasy world. And absolutely loving it a couple years ago though, I was frustrated with the Amazon hamster wheel of, you know, you're constantly trying to get a BookBub deal and get it on and advertising was different than than it was now. You know, Amazon ads, were just kind of coming out and Facebook ads, people are still trying to figure out, you know, so it's just, and I just felt like I was on a hamster wheel. And from the beginning of my career, I always really focused on how can I be an entrepreneur in the publishing world? Like, how can I actually run a business? Because the advice I always got, once I started self publishing was act like this as a business. And so I said, Okay, well, how do you do that? So I followed entrepreneurs. Outside of the publishing industry, I went really far outside the industry. And then I would pull the nuggets that I found into publishing, and self publishing. Well, I didn't feel like as a business owner, I felt like I was at the whims of all these other retailers, and BookBub, which was fine until BookBub stopped loving me. And it just seemed like overnight, I stopped getting their deals when I would always get their deals. So that was like, Oh, I totally had my fate in someone else's hands. So I decided to start trying out this direct sales thing. It wasn't as popular then as it is now. But you know, it still had traction movement. And I, I had like a mastermind slash kind, of course that I started with, and I set it up, you can find a lot of those now, I set it up through Shopify. So the I had a well a WordPress site at the time, but I decided to set decided to set up a separate Shopify one. So I could just have really clean data as I ran the Facebook ads, and I could season the pixel different way. And it just seemed easier that way. So I started the Shopify store. And I started selling and in a nutshell, because this is like a three year story, I got into direct sales the January before COVID hit. And so when COVID hit, and Facebook ads, like dropped, advertisers, like it was hot, I was there. And so I just bought up all the bandwidth and was doing 1000s of dollars of ads a day and having so much fun and had my first six figure month and it was all just really cool. And all tied together. It was really fun.

Until it wasn't. And then the post COVID Drop hit and, and my the model that I had created around direct sales at the time just proved like proved it just wasn't gonna work. For me specifically, there were other people's working for but just the audience, whatever I tried, and we tried everything, my team was trying stuff, I had ad representatives at Facebook, I talked to once a week. I mean, we're doing everything, I just couldn't make it work. And basically what happened is I realized I'd become more of a marketer and less of a writer, and I wasn't happy anymore, you know, so I had to completely step back and realign and say, What do I actually want? And how can direct sales get me there. And that leads to kind of last the last year and a half where I've been focusing solely on direct sales. And like the the building the dream life that I want to lead and doing it through my own company. And that's kind of brought us to where we met it angers gone.



Carissa Andrews 08:07

Right, right. Okay, that's super interesting that you said like, you weren't happy you became more of a marketer and less of a writer. So do you think that was like the precipice of like, where you needed to kind of put that hat back on and connect with the readers from like, the, like the reader, author or even reader reader perspective, where it was like, there was just like, that disconnect. I know, I get that way, even sometimes where it's like, I'm more in the entrepreneur or marketer perspective. And then I'm like, Why is this not working the way I anticipated? But I found the same thing where it's like, you have to kind of go back to that fun and the basis of who you are as a creative. So do you think that was really the key? Yeah.



Katie Cross 08:46

It's really just digging deep and figuring out what do I really want here, because I don't want to villainize advertising or marketing, because I love the marketing hat. It's fun. It's creative in its own way. And I still do that. But at the time, I realized I didn't come into this to become a marketer and a Facebook ads expert, like, some people love that and do that. But that's not what I specifically wanted. And I realized, I don't even really read anymore, like I'm hardly writing. So I did lose, like you said that like reader connection. And so I just had to step back and ask, what do I really want here? Like, what makes me happiest? And for my answer, for me, it was writing, like, I came into this game for story. And then the second thing was, I loved the response I got from my readers when they connected with my world, like, I get life changing emails every single day from readers that are like, I was just diagnosed with cancer, or my husband was just in an accident, and I'm in the hospital and I'm just reading your books to escape or I'm a mom and I'm breastfeeding at night and they just need something happy. And you know, I just get all of that because we've all been there. And when I get those emails, I just remember like I'm here to put goodness in the world through story and That is what felt really good to me. And so that's where I decided to rebuild and structure around that ideal life.



Carissa Andrews 10:06

That is so cool. I love that so much. And it's, it's such it when you think about it's like such a different vibe to versus like, I'm here to sell the books that I've written versus I'm here to connect my readers with a place that's happy.

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Katie Cross 10:17

I mean, that's so different, right? Exact, so different. So I'm here to provide a place for you to escape and find courage again, like that's, that's the goodness I'm putting back into the world. And that's how I want to show up every day like, This is who I want to be over here. And it is really fun to make money I like making money is like my third favorite thing. But I found I wasn't as successful at making money when I was focused on the money versus when I was more focused on my readers, that's when the money came more easily more profitably.



Carissa Andrews 10:48

That's so cool. I love that. Is there anything in specific that you now that you're direct that you do in order to engage the reader so that they know? That's what you're there for? Like, that's your ethos?

K

Katie Cross 10:59

Oh, gosh, yeah. So I, I very, I form a very intentional relationship with my readers through the direct sales. And I do that because I want them to make decisions for me. So I think all of us are aware of like decision fatigue, especially as writers, we're like, trying to plot something like, I just can't decide when we're decision, right? Like, I felt that way, my company sometimes like I would throw this stuff out, like they're gonna love this, they're gonna love this. And inevitably, if I loved it, they hated it. And it was so frustrating. Like, no matter how much market research I did, behavior is very different than like what people say. So people will say they'll buy something. But behavior is always very different, right? So what I was noticing is I was making assumptions, or I wasn't like asking for behaviors, I was asking for approval, which is a very interesting difference, right? So it's very different. When you say, here's a book that I think you'll like preorder it, right, versus this is a book, I think you're like you'll like, and people be like, cool, that sounds really fun whenever they're just trying to make me happy. But like with drug sales, you can throw an idea out and say, Hey, if you want to preorder this at a special price, I'm writing this book, and you can watch the pre orders. And if you're getting a ton of pre orders, they probably want the book. And if you're not like interesting, you just refund them and do a different idea. You can't do that at Amazon, right, like showroom engine. So then, so then you let them decide what stories are coming out. And if you don't want to have to go through the hassle of refunding those pre orders, then you just like try something else, like maybe have them vote for it or just explain like, I don't care if you don't like the idea, like I just want to put out there what you're doing. And I've done that enough with my readers now that I know they're going to be honest with me, like their behavior matches more, but they'll say because I've built up trust with them. So I will, I will say to them, hey, here are five ideas that I'm willing to write for like the next book, can you vote and let me know which one you want. And usually, like they're gonna vote this, the one like, the votes are usually pretty clear which one they're the most excited about. And then that usually does really, really well, because they've made the decision for what I'm writing next. And I've already put out their books I want to write so it's not like a struggle for me to write it. And then that way, they make my decisions for my company. And then it turns out people buy when it's what they want.



Carissa Andrews 13:21



Carissa Andrews 13:11

That's so strange.



Katie Cross 13:25

In direct sales you can get super creative with how can i one of the questions I asked myself is how can I give this decision away, like to the to the buyers, because then then the behavior follows that you want. And that's one way that drug sales has really, in the nitty gritty helped me just be more creative and more successful and profitable.



Carissa Andrews 13:44

It's almost like you're you've got a crystal ball to you're kind of putting it out into the future, letting them like dictate what's coming even, like trend wise, like if they're, they're starting to all like the same thing, or like the same kind of trope or the same kind of concept. It's like, you can almost see like, Oh, this is the way the markets trending. Okay, this is cool.



Katie Cross 14:01

You can kind of anticipate I've even had, I wrote a novella that people that I was like, this is like a side plot that wasn't resolved. So I wrote a novella on it. And then at the end, because of this novella, there was like this whole story idea born and I knew my readers would probably like the story idea. And so I just add the only at the end of the book, I just so is only for people who had read it. I just said, Hey, I'm gonna do this novel. And it's gonna be a big one. And I have no idea what its title I just noticed title. I don't know what's gonna happen inside. But I know it will explain more of this novella. And I don't even know when it will launch but it's probably in like nine months. And I had 1000s of dollars of pre orders. And I was like, shut out of this novella that was really emotionally stirring for them and I knew it would be and so I was able to just capitalize on that and then get that instant feedback. And I was like, how interesting like, nine months they didn't even care they didn't even I They knew I hadn't written it. And I did not have decision on what or how it would be I couldn't even give them like, an idea of the content and they still wanted it anyway. So that was super interesting data like.



Carissa Andrews 15:12

That is really interesting. It's almost like the I follow a lot, of course, content creators, obviously. And so like they'll they've done stuff like that, where it's like you ask the question in your groups or whatever, like, Would you buy this thing? I'm thinking about creating this course, like, if I've put it up for preorder, or whatever, would you purchase it? This is kind of the vague idea I have. But other than that, I have no clue. And if they start to like, obviously come over or start to preorder, you know that there's some traction there, they do the same sort of thing. So that's really interesting. I never thought to do that with my books.



Katie Cross 15:42

On the behavior that you can have them actually do because. because like I said. like. if you

can drive behavior, instead of like approval, or just them saying they'll do it, the behavior could even be like subscribing, right? Like you sign up for this special list. And only updates for this book will go to this list. Does that make sense? Yeah, then you're not making them preorder. But they have to, like, engage something to show like they have some behavior that then shows they're interested, right? For sure. So yeah, there's a lot of there's a lot of ways to play with this. It's really fun. Yeah, that's super cool.



Carissa Andrews 16:15

Do you typically reach out to them through like a reader group or your email list? How do you get them to respond to your survey? Like, how does that part work?



Katie Cross 16:22

So both, but email is always King, because I own that, right. So I drive everything through email. And then we have a Facebook group called the witchery. It's a place in my fantasy world. So we titled the Facebook group that to kind of make them feel at home. So we post things through there. And then we post on Instagram and Facebook to like my fantasy page on Facebook. But really, most mostly, we drive through email in the Facebook group. That's super cool. I love that. And I do actually I do on Zoom calls I call and coffee with Katie. And we do it Friday at noon, Mountain Time. And then I have a live writing with Katie, where they can come watch me write for an hour every Monday night, and they vote for short stories that they want that take place in my fantasy world. And I write those short stories only on those calls, so they can watch it develop. And then we record the audiobooks together. So a lot of the times if we have new initiatives or things coming through, I use that platform to really push it to the in person people because there's something about like talking face to face about it. Yeah, that that really drives at home. So we communicate a lot through there. So I'll be like, hey, the readers request form is live, like go throw your ideas in, what do you want? And then and then they'll go do it. And I'll just drop the link in the Zoom chat or something.



Carissa Andrews 17:32

Was it always really popular from the get go? Or did it take time to kind of get the readers to realize that yeah, you're gonna be here, you're doing this thing like engaged with it?



Katie Cross 17:40

I think that like, the overall trust, do you mean like with us?



Carissa Andrews 17:44

Yeah. Yeah.



Carissa Andrews 17:45



Katie Cross 17:45

I mean, trust takes time, right? I'd say it probably was about six months when people started realizing, oh, Katie's, like, serious. So at the beginning of 2022, I said, we're gonna do a book a month. I'm gonna have a book a month for you. And some of those were novellas, right. And 2020 was figuring out my process, trying to figure out if I could do it, what did it look like for systems in my team? How did I set up standard operating procedures, that kind of stuff. But I produced a new novel every three months, and then a novella every month. And at about six months, when I was consistently launching the first Friday of every month, they were like, oh, okay, so I kind of noticed behaviors like stabilize where they were buying every month, they were showing up, they're responding. And then at the beginning of this year, I announced I would be doing a new novel every month. So like a 70 to 90,000 word book, the be the first Friday of every month. And by now people just know, like, the first Friday, Katy shows up in my inbox hat she has without fail for over a year. And then that like spills to other things. And what I noticed was, people were more willing to share my stuff with other people because they knew my niche, right? I was fantasy. At Well, it took me a while I hung on to both a contemporary romance series and fantasy for a while, but I didn't like being split, and it didn't feel good. And I wasn't serving my romance readers the way they deserved. And so I just cut that off, and I've moved to just full fantasy focus. So they know like my niche, they know how to share me, they know how to refer people to me, they know how to, like, who should come into my world and how and so it seems like once I built their trust, the word of mouth really started picking up because they knew that they could honestly say to people, she does a book a month, you know, like you're gonna you're gonna be able to do this.



Carissa Andrews 19:28

Now, I've got to understand your system. Like you've got the two young kids you're writing a book a month 70 to 90,000 words. How do you do it? Because I know people on here are gonna be like, how is she making?



Katie Cross 19:37

I know people that are like jaw dropping it sounds it sounds really crazy and really daunting, right? Like it seems like a big deal. But first of all, I've been I've been like published for almost 10 years so I've been slowly figuring out my process for a while I love I cannot emphasize this enough. I love writing. Like I just love being in Ankara, which is my fantasy world and I love story. He's right. So there's power in stories that supersedes all of us. And I think it's, I love tapping into that. And I love the puzzle. So I'm a big fan of actual work, which makes a huge difference when you love to write and edit, makes you want to work. And then I will sometimes write, right like, on my computer, this is not I'm on Facebook, I'm on Instagram, I'm on email, this is just I set a timer. And for one hour, that timer goes and I'm doing nothing but writing anywhere from five to six hours a day, sometimes, like yesterday, I wrote 14,000 words over the space of 12 hours. So there is a lot of just in the work time. It's, it's something I've built up the ability to do. Over time, I've, like listened to people that are smarter than me, and I've taken their advice, you know, like, it just, it has built up to what it is over time, because that's who I wanted to be like that was what I wanted to put in the world and how i That was the vision I had for my company. And so I've moved toward that vision slowly. And I have a lot of safeties built in, right. So I have a four and a seven year old at home. So I have to be really, really efficient. So I when i Mom, I mom, and when I'm working, I'm working. So I have a

babysitter over here for three hours today. Because I need to be away from them so I can actually work. And then as soon as I'm done with the three hours a babysitter gives me I close my computer and I mom. And then summer is the worst productivity, I can relate here is all over the place. And like, you know, is Solstice yesterday. So we were child running. So there's just there's a lot of so we like I have to work at night now. But during the school year, I don't work in the evenings, but I have to in the summer because I'm catching up because I want to play with my kids. So it's about flexibility and efficiency. And I just know, I have to write 10,000 words today, period, or I have to edit 15,000 words today, period, it doesn't matter how that happens. That's just what has to happen today. And I just put myself on a schedule. And I just do that goal every day, about five days a week during the school year and six days a week, during the summer. And then I always take Sunday as my my full day off.



Carissa Andrews 22:05

That's super cool. And it's it's cool that you say it the way that you just did. Because you know I teach manifestation. So to me, it's, you know, you make the decision, that's your starting point. And then you lock in the vibe, and you keep taking that inspired action until it's there, right? And so for you, you're going okay, I have to get 10,000 words done today. That's your decision, you trust that it's going to happen, you just keep going until it is. And it's it's like that's the process. That's the process every day over and over. I love that exactly



Katie Cross 22:30

The same thing, which for some people that I talked to, they're like, I would get so bored. And I'm like, really, because I'm like flying through this fantasy world. And I'm like writing with dragons. And there's nothing boring about writing these stories. You know, every day like yesterday, I had a very like, my kids were at daycare, but then I had like to go to a doctor's appointment for my daughter. So like, sometimes I just write in the car. And I'm like, you know, I just have to hit 10,000 words. So I'm gonna write wherever going, right. And then I went for a run after dinner and play with my kids and I came home and and then I just like wrote for a couple more hours, and I went to bed. So it was like I don't like it can move and breathe. Like it doesn't have to be so structured and regimented as long as you're just locking in that goal and then hitting it no matter what. And that's, that's it's so simple. And you just do it over and over and over and over and over and over and over again. Like ad nauseam. It's really not super sexy.



Carissa Andrews 23:22

But it's super cool because it's all about that trust. Of course I can make this happen. Of course it's going to be a thing of course, it's like there's no questions will happen. Yeah, for sure. That's so cool. Have you played around with like trying to speed up like either using dictation or AI or any anything like any of the tools to help you write faster? No. So I tried dictation.



Katie Cross 23:41

When I had my daughter and I was breastfeeding and I just could not wrap my brain around that maybe it was too distracted like trying to like help her breastfeed and like talk out this

that maybe it was too distracted, like trying to like help her breathe and like talk out this dragon story. It just wasn't working for me. So um, but I an AI like I'm curious about AI but to me the I'm I'm a plotter and a pantsner and very much middle of the road. So I have whole stories plotted out. But then I pants the scenes. Yeah, so the AI would take out the funnest part for me. You know, like, if I were to prompt it, and then get something then I would just be editing it, you know, and figuring out from there I can see the value of AI as a prompter. If I'm stuck somewhere, it could just kind of give me something to look at to move around. But for me the I get the joy and the discovery of oh, this connects over here and oh my gosh, this is what this looks like. Like there's so much joy for me in that. And then there's joy for me when I edit and polishes and it cleans up and the words are so pretty. And you find the exact phrase and there's joy in that for me too. So I have stayed pretty solid with that, but I do track so I usually when I can I set a timer and then I see how many words I wrote or edited in that hour. And then I just watch for trends and usually there's like a slow steady upward trend. I can first draft an average of 3000 words an hour, and it used to be closer to 2000 and sometimes I hit 30 700 You know, so then I kind of watch for trends just just because it's interesting to see. But no, those are the joyful parts. For me, what I found is I actually cleaned up everything else that was inefficient and just made more time for writing. So unsubscribing from only emails that are nested, like emails that are unnecessary, only, like unsubscribe from everything else, I have a different account for those. I have a timer. I'm only on Facebook for 10 minutes, and I go to the business suite so that I don't get distracted by the feed. I don't have the Facebook app on my phone, you know, like that kind of stuff where I can shave off all of these decision points, or all of this time that I don't waste. And it's amazing how many hours a day you open up when you're not opening up email yet, like Yeah, because you just if you're drafting and then you go check your email, your brain switches, and there's so much lost time in that and then trying to switch back to email. I used to think that was a bunch of crock. But now I'm like, there's so much you lose when you're like like task hopping. Yeah, so I do all of my business stuff at the beginning of the day, or sometimes at the end of the day, depending on my goals. Like today, I was like, I have to get these specific 5000 words written because I have 15,000, I have to edit. So I had a very clear goal before I went to bed what had to happen today. So I didn't even open email or anything else. I just went right to writing in my early morning hours time, and I got all that done. And then I engaged in email, and I'll have to finish it tonight after the writing is done.



Carissa Andrews 26:25

That's so cool. I love that so much. It's like the whole concept of it is just, it makes so much sense in my brain as to why it's working for you and why the whole process is so like, spot on. I mean, it's just, it's great. It's fantastic. I used to write a lot more like in those breathing moments, like you called it that when my kids were younger, and now it's more like, okay, morning time is for this, this is that. And so I will batch those times so that my brain is in that zone of doing the one thing and one thing only, and then you move to the next thing. Because it's so true. It takes I think they've done a study, they've done multiple studies on the like, the multitasking aspect of it takes 21 minutes on average for a brain to get into the flow of whatever it is it's working on. Yeah. And the second a kid interrupts so the second you check your email, or the second you go to Facebook, you've lost the momentum of it. And now you have to get back into that 21 minutes all over again. And so yeah, if you have that timeframe just to just to get yourself moving, that's the way to go. Because then you're not distracting it constantly.



Katie Cross 27:24

It's I think authors feel that so deeply too, because we'll go from like parenting or exercising or working or whatever it is we're doing. And then we're like standing like staring at a blank screen. And it's like, oh, so hard to like dredge up these words especially been like flipping through Instagram watching funny reels, like how do you like get into a fantasy world? That's medieval, right? So I think authors more than anyone can appreciate that time gap. For me, I have found that if I am mentally focused on my first draft, and then I like take a physical break, like I step away from the computer, run to the bathroom, grab a snack come back, that doesn't really that's not hard for me to switch back in. Or if I like go for a run and I come back, I can switch right back into the story. Because my it's like my brain is still engaged in the story in a specific way. But if I try to engage my brain differently, like with email, or posts or like different stuff like that, for some reason, it is really hard to get back into writing.



Carissa Andrews 28:17

I wonder if it's that decision fatigue, like you were just talking about, I don't remember if it was in the podcast episode or before we started, but we were talking about decision fatigue. And I think parents in specific have a really hard time with this. Because you're constantly dealing with questions, I'll do normal questions for normal, everyday life, and then you're doing it for your writing. And so maybe it's part of that where it's like, now all of a sudden, your brain engages in a decision or a conversation it has to have which is completely outside the world. You're writing it. And so now you're using a different part of your brain, you're using different synapses.



Katie Cross 28:46

Yeah, that makes sense to me.



Carissa Andrews 28:48

Yeah, same. Okay, now I got this is my question. So because I'm super interested in this right, so you've said that you work with Shopify? And I'm so curious as to like, what was the decision with Shopify versus like, say WooCommerce? And like, what do you see as the benefits of Shopify?



Katie Cross 29:06

So for me, it was simplicity, right, I had like k cross writing.com was my old domain. I had that for a long time. And I just didn't want to like figure out putting WooCommerce on there. I mean, I buzzed around a little bit. But once I saw Shopify, it just seemed like so no brainer to me because, you know, you could put your Facebook pixel on there, you can open up a Pinterest channel, there's there. It's such a big company, there's so many ways to access it and all the apps that funnel to it, and the dashboard was just really easy. Like it all just came really easily to me. And then you can buy the domain for like 19 bucks a year through Shopify and have access to all the DNS and back end stuff. And then that just became my website. So I eventually just phased out my old one and everything is run to the store, which I love. Because then I'm just I'm just shunting to this platform. That's really easy. All of this like SEO juice,

right? I'm not fighting with myself. They just it's all going to the store. And I like that because I had WordPress for a long time. And it was fine. But it sucked up a lot of my time just figuring out all of the like stuff behind it right and all the updates and Baba was so sucked up more attention than Shopify ever has. And you there's just so many apps now and so many app developers, you can just add on like, you can add reviews, you can add, like, frequently bought together as a really cool app. There's I mean, there's just so many that you can add and like just diversify and create new funnels and new things that was really easy on Shopify.



Carissa Andrews 30:34

Are there any apps in specific that you think all authors should utilize? Yes. Frequently bought together?



Katie Cross 30:41

Going back together? For sure. Judge me I have for my reviews, people can put reviews there's, I think it's honey comb for funnels. That's really, really good. I really like that one anchors. Yeah, honey, calm for Funnels is really good. Those three are sort of like your trifecta, just to give the people what they want, like people do want to write and see reviews. And you can train people to eventually right from your website over time to review on your website over time. I've tried some other apps that I just didn't love as well, those are the ones that really comes to mind the most, I'm just going to look really quick, because it lists some, oh, there's there's different. I also use Lulu direct for my paperbacks so that they have an actual app on there that makes it really easy to access. And then another good one is, there's a bunch of print on demand for merch, right? So like you could like just upload a design and like create T shirts. And then like you get half and the print on demand company gets half and then they dropship for you. So it's like pod paperbacks, but for merch. And well, those are that I use T launch but I'm sort of waffling I might go to someone else. But they've been okay. Some of their back. And it's like not supported on Shopify or something. I don't know if they just need to update some. There's been a few little quirks that I'm like, I use it so infrequently.



Carissa Andrews 32:01

I have one that you're looking at, then.



Katie Cross 32:03

There's a couple I haven't actually chosen one. Yeah, some people have told me about prenta phi. Yeah, I've heard I've heard good things about prenta phi. And when I first like, looked at this, I had someone else recommend tea lunch to me. When I first looked at it, I had like a shock to the app store for a bunch of them. And there were there were a lot like and they all have like reviews and like trials and all this kind of stuff. But I've heard good things about prenta phi too. So yeah, I like that. It Shopify just makes it easy to do things. And you can have blog posts or pages or videos that are embedded, you know, you can do just about anything you want to make it look really, really amazing.



Carissa Andrews 32:39

I love that. Is there a way to be able to pull? Like, if you have, let's say you're in, you know, all ends right now into Amazon? Can you pull reviews from Amazon over to the store? Or do they have to, like come over to your store and specifically...



Katie Cross 32:53

Yeah, you can scrape it off Amazon that's legal. And then we I had my IT guy that works for me the time he scrapes reviews on Amazon and then pulled them over to judge me and put them on, I have no idea how he did it. Like, I was like trying to get him to do a standard operating procedure over it. But it just fell through the cracks. So that we could do it later. But I think it just says I think maybe it says on the reviews that they're from Amazon or something. I'm not sure how that works. But yeah, you can scrape reviews from Amazon and put them over at least through the judge me app. When I first started using it a couple years ago, I haven't tried updating it since.



Carissa Andrews 33:25

That's awesome, though, that at least gives like readers and the obviously the authors another way to be able to get people to see that look, this isn't just like just to like a book that someone just randomly puts out there. This is got reviews, it's got some, you know, reader reader interest already. And so now we're moving over to our own store. We're doing our own thing. But it's the same book.



Katie Cross 33:45

That social proof is really powerful. Yeah, sure. Yeah.



Carissa Andrews 33:48

That is super cool. So how do you I mean, you mentioned it a little bit, but how do you encourage readers to find you and your books, and then purchased directly from your author store? Like what? What is it that you do then?



Katie Cross 33:58

So the main thing is that I don't ever share any other retailer link. The only time that lately we have done that as sometimes when we have a new book on Audible, we'll put it on Facebook, and we're just kind of testing to see Do people actually click on this, like, what's going on here? Do people go to Audible? Like if we don't have advertising dollars behind it, it's more of a test than anything other than that. There's no other option. I'll say to people like this is available on all retailers like the back of the ebook, like where I have a list of books, that kind of thing. But on my newsletters, my social media, it always goes just to my website. And if people ask for

link, it just goes to my website and you know, people say are you on Amazon? Like yeah, I'm on Amazon, you can find me there. And I'm there and I'm easy to find there and it's organized there. I just don't provide that sort of juice to them. And there are some people that probably do Leave and don't buy from me. But most of the people that really matter are buying straight from me because they get a discount because I can add value really easy And it's a much more fun shopping experience than like Amazon where you're just getting blasted with ads everywhere. Right. The other thing that I do is I figured out the really highly valued stories that readers want. Because at the end of the day, they just want more books, right? Like most people aren't going to really care as long as they can open it up and read the book in a in a good manner. So I just figured out, if that's what they want, that's what our readers want, and their behavior shows that they're gonna buy it. How do we add value in a way that they can't say no, right? That's really like the secret behind driving sales? Like how do you add value in such a way? They can't say no. So I just write more stories, but I write the ones they really want. So I'll sculpt my novel in a way that there's a subplot that does resolve, but maybe it resolves in a way that isn't super clearly seen, that the readers would be like, I want to know what happened, like exactly what happened, right? So then I have that story written. And at the end of the book on the retailer, I'll say if you want to hear how this went, just click right here, and it goes right to my store. And I'll say this is the only place you can buy this is right here. It's only 99 cents, or \$1.99, or 299, or whatever it is. And I get those first time purchasers all the time. And then what happens is, they'll be like, hey, oh, my gosh, there's all these other stories. I didn't know we're here, because they just found me on Amazon. And then I will see, like high orders like at \$250 orders where people just go through and get all of the books that are only on my website and buy them all at once. Wow. So then I've made a customer of them and they'll stay with me. Yeah. And then I do awesome customer support. So for awhile, I had someone I had a customer support VA that that's all she did. I just I do my own customer support now because we have honed it and like perfected it's such an art that it's very rarely I have a problem with customers. And most of the time, they've just used the wrong email address when they order. Like autofill puts a different email and they don't see and they don't get their book and they're upset. And I'm like, well, there's no order. What other emails do you have? And it takes like two minutes, right? So I don't even have to pay for customer support VA these days, because we've just honed it and perfected it. But that awesome customer support and emailing directly with me also gets people really excited. Like I get readers all the time. They're like, this isn't actually Katie, right? Like yeah, no, it's me. And then it gets. So they like fan girl over email, right? Like, really excited. And that's where they really start understanding. Oh, like she's here talking to us. Oh, like, I can talk to her on Zoom. Like, that's so cool. You know, and then we become friends. And that's where that relationship really starts.



Carissa Andrews 37:36

That's so cool. Now you I'm gonna have to go back to that in a second. But you mentioned Lulu for your paperback books. But do you use like BookFunnel or some other place to be able to deliver the ebooks?



Katie Cross 37:48

Bookfunnel and Lulu are my two delivery services. So book funnel delivers the eBooks and audiobooks and I cannot sing their praises high enough. And then Lulu does my print on demand paperbacks, and I absolutely love everything about them. So they make it so easy for

me to run this honestly, without them I'd be lost.



Carissa Andrews 38:03

I love it. I love it. I know Lulu was at inkers con as well. And she would have gotten the chance to sit down and speak with them. We'll have to reach out to them. Hey, guys,



Katie Cross 38:12

Sara would love it. You should reach out to her she'd love it.



Carissa Andrews 38:14

I will definitely do that. So when it comes to like that engagement and all the all the ways that now the readers understand it's you and oh my gosh, I can talk to her like, did the traction build? Like? Did it start kind of slow and trickle or was it pretty? Pretty instantaneous? Because you were only sending them directly to your your store and getting that going? Like, how did that low? It's a trickle?



Katie Cross 38:36

Yeah, for sure. I mean, I had established audience like I had an email list that were motivated to buy, but it still took a while to start seeing those orders come in on those back titles where they all of a sudden understood Oh, there's a lot of these right? Like, hey, it's because when you have as many titles as I do, then it's a question of, well, how do I communicate these to the reader in a non overwhelming way? My fantasy world is all car there's over 55 titles there. How do you put those in front of people, you know, so we've, we've experimented with like reading order lists and like certain segmentation and email follow up and that kind of stuff. So I think the process of like pulling them in and doing that built the trust and then it just slowly started rolling because once they came into my website and they saw I had all this other stuff for them. And and that they loved it then they wanted to stay. But it is hard data to track right? Like I don't go through every single order and figure out was this your fifth order your 10th order, but what I have noticed is that names pop up over time. If I just kind of skim my orders list, I start recognizing people and I'll kind of click and be like, Oh, this is their 25th order, or I'll have like \$150 Order land and I'm like well sweet who bought from me right? And so I'll go look and it'll be first time order and then I can look at their titles and be like Oh interesting. Audiobooks are big for binges. Like I had an almost \$300 order the other day come through and it was all audio someone just like just gets through and got all the audiobooks. So that was really cool. So you know, you can kind of pull the data in and get an idea that way.



Carissa Andrews 40:06

That's so cool. I just had to make a note because I'm like, I don't want to forget this. Is it easy for like, when new people are coming to your store? Is it easy for them to buy all like, you know how Amazon has like the series, and you could be like, Oh, by all four of the books from this

series, or you know, whatever is it easy on Shopify to buy all.

K

Katie Cross 40:21

The frequently bought together is great for, then you can just they can hit buy all for that, or, you know, they're just adding stuff to cart, I've actually found that a lot of my readers like to browse, and they like to study and like, make sure they want this. They're very like, as consumers, their behaviors are more targeted than I expected. Because I'm like, I fly by the seat of my pants and everything. I'm like, that book looks awesome by like, Chirp is my best friend. I'm just always like, urge buying like \$3 audiobooks off of them. So a lot of them are a little more targeted, they like that browsing, taking their time ability. And then other people who are just show the people that are showing up for the monthly launch, they're just automatically buying whatever is on the frequently bought together button, then it's usually the book that's on sale. And then the next two for preorder, and then miracle kind of buy that way.



Carissa Andrews 41:07

So I'm curious too, about I think you mentioned like the automations, behind the scene with your emails, right, that you have like literally come into your world. At a certain point, do you have a lot of different automations in the background to keep people engaged in the world.

K

Katie Cross 41:20

I have tons of automations I don't have as many marketing automations like marketing geared. So I have like a free eBook, a free audiobook, I have like variants of those that we've tested over the over the years, I used to do a ton of AV testing on like my opening sequence and testing it out and stuff. But you know, that always changes the market changes, you kind of have to roll with it and stuff. So I have some of those. We've tried, like tried segmenting based on tagging, like if they have these tags, and they would go to this, they would get these other recommendations. So they've read if they have these tags, that means they've they've bought this series, so we can recommend this next series. Right? Yeah, like we have that kind of stuff. But right now, I just was driving like I wanted to very simple clean business models. While I was like getting my kids into full time school, like, right, what I have very specific life I want to lead right now. And while my kids are not in full time school, this is how I can do that. And so I just made a really clean business model. So I don't have a lot of marketing funnels that I have to support right now I have enough to grab the people that are interested like an ebook or audio. And from like, in the fall, when my daughter will be in school full time, then I'll have a couple more hours every day, I plan to take those extra hours I have and start building out more robust marketing systems and testing those out. So nothing too complex right now. Because my life just support it.



Carissa Andrews 42:42

That's really cool. I love that. For me, it's the same kind of situation where, well, a little bit of like sideways stuff went down to like I had automations in the back end. I use mailer light, and so I had all that. And then when mailer light kind of shifted to a different business model and

moved everything over and integrated. And then all of my automations broke. And so like, so I had to figure out how to get them all back up and running. So it's always very interesting to see, like, who's using them? How are they using it? What's the best way to engage? I'll be talking with Holly darling as well soon, and so I'm gonna be definitely picking her brain. But it's just, it's super interesting. And it's something that I'm going, Okay, I'm gonna have to rebuild these and get them back out. But I feel like I want to do something different and just have more fun with it, for sure. So that's cool. Yeah. Now, I think I know the answer to this question, but I'm gonna ask it anyway. But what do you think your key to success has been with direct sales?

K

Katie Cross 43:31

Oh, my relationship with the readers? Yeah. I mean, it's all I'm building the business that they want, right, like in the fantasy world that they want. And so I think, like moving them to be the decision makers. And, you know, like, they don't know, like, they don't know that necessarily. I mean, they wouldn't be surprised to hear me say that, but, and they're obviously decisions I make, but letting them really dictate, like, what do you want? And when do you want it and what feels good. I think that relationship and building that trust is the absolute key. I mean, I know tons of people that are making millions of dollars in direct sales in a different model. And they love it. And they're not as connected because that just doesn't work for them. I think for me with such a simple skeleton model. So that's, that's the key here is I have a very skeleton model. So that I have time to write because remember, it was all about the life I wanted to lead. And the life I wanted to leave was outside in the mountains. Right. And I want to know trails. Yes, I have trails to run, thank you. I had a very specific goal for my life. And that require that necessitated a very clean, simple business model, which to me is a delight because I don't have to think that much about it, where I have run a very complex, like bigger model that made a lot more money but required a lot more of my time and attention and I got a lot less time outside. So having such a clean streamlined model built on my audience doing a lot of the marketing for me, that necessitates this sort of relationship with readers. But that I do want to be clear, like, that's not going to resonate with everyone, there's gonna be people who are like, I don't want to hop on Zoom, there was an author, I spoke to Inkers Con, she's like, I write under a pen name. And I don't want them to know that I'm a woman of color. Like, they think I'm probably just this white woman, and it would break my entire brand. If I were to reveal that. And I was like, that's tough, right? Like, right? When you aren't sure what they're going to do. So there's, like, she wouldn't want a model like mine in the same way. Like, I'm very like, face forward, people see me. So it's gonna be a different model for everybody. But for me, the connection to the reader was required for me to run this clean business model, build trust, and be able to have those recurring sales every month to drive the cash flow.



Carissa Andrews 45:42

I love that. So know, were they the ones that also kind of helped you make the decision about doing a book a month? Like were they the ones that were requesting that? Or was that your decision upfront, just to like, build that consistency?

K

Katie Cross 45:53

That was my decision to build the consistency because that's what my cash flow required. But I

have asked them since like, Is this too fast? Would you want faster, and of course, they're like, we would read your grocery list, Katie, like he would read. So like if I, because sometimes I launch a short story about every three months, I launched a short story on the third Friday, or whenever it's available. So sometimes I do two launches per month. Those are like, more subdued. And they're just like a fun cash flow injection. They're not anything I tried to build stability off of. So I made that decision. But I did that decision based on their behavior, because they were showing these behaviors that when I launched books, I made money, right? Well, I want that money every month. And so that's what I started doing. Super cool.



Carissa Andrews 46:35

What is your launch look like? How does that? Obviously, you have like the zooms in and everything your emails go out. But what does a launch look like to you?



Katie Cross 46:42

Oh, my gosh, my launches are the best. So I scheduled and automate almost every bit of it. Like I go on vacation during lunches, because I do it so much. That like it's pretty and, and part of the building trust thing that I did was I just made everything easy for my reader, because none of us like to make decisions, right? So they are like, I use the same subject line in the email for every launch says new book available today. So every time I have a new book, it's gonna be the same subject line. And they know exactly what that means. And I get like a 40% open rate on it. Right, right. So I make it really easy for them. And then I just have emails that go out, I sometimes offer a discount, I don't offer sales a lot, because I want to reserve those for when I need them and so that they're special. So I have like a banner that I put up on the website, I changed I have like, up towards the top below my subscribe, like offer, I'll have a picture of the latest release and a little description, I change that. And then we have social media posts, and then I do a coffee with Katie Cole that day. But really, my launch is like the like a week or two before when all of the final files for everything comes through. I schedule and finalize the launch a week or two before. So launch day is like a super, like, cool, we're launching. And then I just spend a little more time on social media, like I'll do real like a real for Instagram. I'm not really that good at it. Like I just like do a video where I talk. And I'll spend a little more time in the groups and that kind of stuff. But other than that I have writing to do you know, like, and I would really it's normally we launch on Fridays, and normally by then it's like I kind of want to go play at night. So Right? So my launches are subdued.



Carissa Andrews 48:21

Do you write ahead of yourself to the point where you're like a couple of books ahead? Or do you like write it and then launch it?



Katie Cross 48:26

So I'm two months ahead. So I am writing the book that will come out in I believe in September? Yeah, I think so. I'm about two months ahead. Got it. That makes sense. Look, I should be getting a book back today or tomorrow from both my title manager and my audio

guy for the first of July. And then the book that launches in August will be going to my editors in a couple of days or at the end of the month, and then I'll get that but yeah, so I'm about two months out.



Carissa Andrews 48:56

That's great. Yeah, I think that helps to or you're not feeling quite so stressed like oh my gosh, I need to like do all the things and and get this stuff out and create all the things and I'm not quite finished. And it's like, oh, that creates a lot more



Katie Cross 49:08

undue stress. And I couldn't do it. I couldn't do it if I didn't have so much leeway. Like it's it's a very stress free cycle. And I again built it that way on purpose. For sure. Yeah.



Carissa Andrews 49:20

So do you have any advice for new roles? Not necessarily new authors, but for authors who are new to direct sales to kind of like put their toes in or where they should start? I mean, obviously you do but like what what would your advice be?



Katie Cross 49:32

I think really the most important thing is to understand that it's going to start slow. Like it takes a while to build trust and to train your readers to buy from you. You have to train to buy from you. So you know, get your store set up whatever but consider offering higher value, not the same. So if they can get it on Amazon and they're used to getting on Amazon, why wouldn't they just go to Amazon, right? But if there's something of high value that they can't get On Amazon and that you're really want it is there like a scene that you can't cover or like a short story or novella, anything that you can at least put on your website and say the only place you can get it is here. And just be really confident and say, this is going to give like I'm moving. I'm doing this because this is a better experience for you. Which is true, right? This is totally true. We're doing this because you can give them more this way. And I've been really honest, like, I don't like necessarily bash Amazon, but my readers understand that Amazon is not in it for me, and I'm not in it for them. And that's fine, right? Like, we don't have to be buddies. So my readers understand that and they're very supportive. They're like we want to buy popsicles for your kids is money. So I would start by consider adding value instead of just cheaper versions of what you already have. It's good to have your books for less than they are in the retailers, but you want to draw them in with something they can't get anywhere else. Maybe for your audience, that's t shirts, or coffee mugs. Or maybe there's some joke you can make between your books and what you offer, right? Like I have, oh my gosh, I have these readers that are convinced that one of these this dragon of mine, they're like, he didn't die. I was like, you guys, he died. Like he was in a death spiral. He was like, plummeting from the air. And there was a fire around him. Like, his name is E list. I was like, I'm sorry, you guys, he was died. And they were like, You don't know that. Because I always say, I'm not in charge. Like, I'm always like, Look, I'm not in charge all cars in charge, it'll come to me. I'm just the person that gets out of

the way. And then the stories come right. So I always say, oh, Cara is all of ours. So then that so they've like taken that to the next level. And like, you know, like you're not in charge all cars in charge and all cars gonna reveal to you in the next Bianca series that you This is alive. So they've started this Aeolus lives petition like every copy with Katie, this cut up and I wrote this book like last fall like it's been like six months, we're onto this whole new series. And they're still talking about Ullis. So I finally as a joke, made these T shirts that says E list lives. And then I made another one said E list dies. So that like real competing sides can choose what t shirt they want. So they buy these T shirts and wear them to the coffee with Kanoko. I can't even make this up. Like that so much. Right? So that's high value. Like I get that on Amazon, they can't get that anywhere but my store. So that's the way to think about this, right? So think what can you do that makes your readers part of your world. Because if your goal is like mine, you're really just trying to create a better like a place for people to go when they need to find their courage again, right? You want to build that escapism, because that's why we all go to books. I think at the heart of us, we're all writing books for this purpose. So you want to find ways to make your store connects them to your world, so that they always want to come back. So now I have ILAs lives, the list is T shirts, I take their favorite quotes and put them on T shirts, or coffee mugs or whatever, like I'll do that. But mostly, they're here for the stories, right? So find stories that are high value that you can start offering from your store, nowhere else and then let that trust slowly build right and charge money for it like charge money for those stories. I know some drug sales authors are like, Well, I'm not going to charge anything, I'm just going to make them go through the buying process for them to get used to it like you can do that. But like, let's train them that you're worth the money to write. It's like \$1.99, like, behavior doesn't change all that much between 99 cents and \$1.99. In my experience, when I test price points, the behavior of purchasing is almost exactly the same between the two except in one you get \$1 More which doubles your profit. So like go for \$1.99. Right? What are you training them to believe about your store and then go that way.



Carissa Andrews 53:42

I love that I just had a conversation with only James and she talks very similarly. We're like for her. She's, she's more Patreon in March. And so she does it from kind of that perspective. But it's the same kind of concept where it's like think of all the way like think like the creative entrepreneur or the fan girl and like what would you want, you know, from your world? How would you like to immerse people in it? And like, what ways can you get them excited about being a part of this, like situation and it's just your concretizing that in my brain that it's really it truly is it's about creating that safe place where readers can come fangirl or fanboy out and like just have a really good time. And I think that's just so key. That's so neat.



Katie Cross 54:20

Yes, I think that's really everything. That's that's what drives this whole train.



Carissa Andrews 54:24

Yeah, for sure. Love it so much. Okay, so do you have any resources available that might help new authors if they're looking to go direct or like want to exit KU and want to start doing the you know, like the wide and direct sales thing?



Katie Cross 54:39

So I don't offer any author services right now. I don't have any plans to because I'm, you know, just reading books and running in the mountains, but I really highly recommend Morgana best. She has a really cool course. She has a lot of different parts to it. She's been doing direct sales for a really long time. I've talked to her gone. I really like what she's doing. I work with Joe Solari. and his book advantage is a really cool like, if you want to read or like get the audiobook for advantage that just that book helped me understand how to think differently about my audience like in terms of I'm, I'm trying to make a family for them, right. And so that's a really good book to start thinking differently about your marketing. Bonnie Paulson is really good too. Like if you're looking for advertising help, I really like her with your if you're doing direct sales, because you get so much more data with advertising when you do direct sales, like, Oh, for sure, you can do purchase conversion instead of just traffic, which is a game changer. I love to purchase conversion. So there's a lot of things that way you can do there's a lot of people out there talking about this right now, which is really cool. There's no shortage of resources for people talking about direct sales. Those are just the ones that I personally know and would recommend.



Carissa Andrews 55:47

Awesome. I love it. Well, Katie, thank you so much for being on the show. Today. We've talked so much, and I know that my audience is going to be like, they're exploding right now. It's gonna be amazing. I love it. I can't wait to get the emails from everybody, because they're gonna be like, Oh, my gosh, that was amazing.



Katie Cross 56:01

Thank you for having me. It was it's a fun discussion. And you asked all the right questions. It's been really fun.



Carissa Andrews 56:07

And you have so many great answers. And it just, it makes me want to keep digging more and more. And so I'm definitely, definitely looking into direct sales. And I'm going to test out Shopify, if not with my fantasy of pen name, I'm going to definitely do it with a rom com that I'm starting up and just start as I mean to go on and see Yeah, yeah, like so I'm, I'm going to definitely gonna play around with it and go find all the apps that you're talking about. It's gonna be great.



Katie Cross 56:28

It's fun, too. Because more people are doing it, the more trained everyone is in general, so then it just creates more success, right? Like, especially for romance. We need to train romance authors and get off KU. So the more we have people building these stores and training people and building trust, it helps everyone across the board,



Carissa Andrews 56:44

For sure. Okay, so where can everybody find you? Obviously, in your awesome books when they're going? Oh, my gosh, I need to go check out this woman and Alkarra.



Katie Cross 56:52

Yeah, so go to Katiecrossbooks.com. You'll see all of them listed there, you can get my first book flame. It's a dragon rider book in a medieval secondary fantasy world for free both in ebook and audio. And if you have any questions, you can just email me It's Katie@kcrosswriting.com.



Carissa Andrews 57:08

I love it. Thank you, Katie, so much for being here.



Katie Cross 57:10

Thank you so much for having me.



Carissa Andrews 57:14

Isn't Katie Cross amazing. I loved listening to her story. I mean, we both are fantasy authors. I started in ya. So to me, it's like I totally vibe with where she's at and what she's trying to do. Plus, being a mom is something that I'm also doing. And I do a lot of things. I'm not writing a book a month. But I do an awful lot of things, you know, from all sorts of different perspectives. But Katie takes it to such a beautiful place. And I think the lesson that I really learned from her deep dive into what she wants and how she wants her author career to look for her. Really what settled with me was that she created enough space to live the life that she wants right now. And that to her means getting outside and exploring and trail running and being in nature in Montana, and having time with her two kids and her family, because that's important too. But in order to do that, she knows what she wants to do for her readers. And so she created a plan, she sticks to her plan. And she just enjoys every moment of it. Now, when you have that plan, and you just allow yourself to enjoy the process to enjoy the writing. That's really powerful. And the fact that she cuts out a lot of the extra distractions also stuck with me, because sometimes I even wonder, is all the things that I'm doing, really just distracting me from the one thing I really need to put more focus in on. And I don't know what that is just yet. I'm still asking myself those questions. But it's important to know that it doesn't matter what phase of your author career you're in, you're always going to ask those questions like, Is this really where I want to be? Is this how I really want my career to look? Am I meant for something different? Am I meant for something bigger? Am I meant for something that can look different? Always be questioning that because sometimes, we start things off their careers included with a certain idea in mind. And then it kind of takes a life of its own and we get drug along for the ride instead of us taking the reins and actually determining the direction of our careers. So that was

definitely something I took from it in addition to obviously going ahead and doing the direct store. And I was a lot more impatient than apparently I let on in this podcast episode because I thought for sure I'd be waiting to do it until 2024. I'm like no, I've got other things other plans to do and then I ended up doing it anyway because that's that activator part of me. I like to you know, once I've gotten that inspired action, I just run with it and I see what happens. And I'm so glad that I did because so far my direct store, even though I am looking at it from like a bigger perspective, my income is slightly down from where it would be when I was in KU, at least so far this month, but a third of my income is coming from direct sales, a third of my income, that means a third of my income has been available to me right now, like not two months from now. But a third of my income is available right now, which is amazing to me. And I know it's only going to get better and more expansive as time goes on. Because it's up. And I've only right guys, we have this mantra that we hold ourselves to up and up only. So as we choose to do things differently, as we choose to expand as we choose to create that new expansive version of ourselves, we can trust that the next step is going to be the right step, and that it's going to expand for us. And so that's where I'm at, for sure. And I'm looking into, you know, more ways of being able to be inclusive and my direct store, I'm looking for more ways to be able to add value to my readers, I am looking at the way all authors that I know of who are doing direct sales are doing certain things like what apps are they using? How are they motivating their readers? How are they engaging with their readers, I'm asking my own readers questions, trying to figure out what it is that they really want from me. And that is really powerful stuff. Because as we give our readers what they want, they'll reward us with not only their loyalty, but their readership as well. And we want both of those things, right? It's pretty powerful. And Katie is just such a shining example of what is possible of the mindset that we need to take. And then utilize and trust that this all gets to work out for us in the way that we want it to work out. Like we can recreate, we can, you know, be the Phoenix that rises up from the ashes and reinvent ourselves. Taylor Swift, is that you? Right? We can do whatever we want to be. And no one else has to put us into a box. It's up to us to just reinvent every time we feel like we are getting stuck or feeling like we are not quite living up to the potential that we have inside of us. So that's kind of the overall lesson, the vibe that I took away from this conversation with Katie, she's going to be coming onto the podcast again, we're gonna actually be having a conversation, a little bit of a deeper conversation about what it's like being a mom, and being a powerhouse, right, a publishing powerhouse, and trying to do all the things and making sure that not only is our publishing heart, and our publishing drive being met, but also our family life, and making sure that we have that balance. So stay tuned for that. It'll be coming later on this year. And yeah, so hopefully, you enjoy this podcast episode as much as I did, recording it and having the conversation with Katie, even though I was hopped up on some caffeine or something holy man, how she kept up with me, I don't know. But it's great. Hopefully, you kept up with me. I talk fast when I get excited. It's just who I am. It's by now 201 episodes, I would hope that you know that. So you have episode 201. If you'd like to download today's transcript, go ahead and head over to authorrevolution.org/201. And you can grab it there. I will also have all of the links to the things that Katie was talking about, like we'll obviously have a link to her website, we'll have a link to Shopify and a bunch of the apps that she described, as well as Joseph Laurie's book and some other things. So just head over there, if you want to be able to click on them and go easily over to those places. So again, that's authorrevolution.org/201. Now, don't forget, we still have our 200th Episode giveaway that is happening right now. So if you want to enter for a chance to win, you can go over to that same page, authorrevolution.org, forward slash 201. Or you can head over to authorrevolution.org/200th. And you can enter to win at the landing page right there. Oh, my goodness, guys, it's been an interesting year. So far, if I do say so myself, there is so much cool stuff on the horizon for authors. We are truly taking back our platforms are. Our names are everything, honestly. It's like a brand new author revolution is how it feels. It really is cool and exciting. And I'm so glad

to be a part of this part of the community. This part of the expansion of it is just really fascinating and wonderful be included in it and it's great. So thank you for listening. Thank you for being here. And being a participant of the author Revolution podcast. I couldn't do what I do. Without you. I appreciate you so much. Have a wonderful rest of the week. Get some words on the page. Think about going into Shopify and selling direct. But of course, no matter what you do, no matter how you do it, go forth and start your author revolution.