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 novelists,
inc.

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President's Voice

By Celeste Barclay



We're nearly halfway through 2023, and it feels like more has happened in six months in the publishing world than usually happens in an entire year. We've watched two publishing giants fail to merge. We've seen an editor and agent exodus that's left many manuscripts languishing on both physical and virtual desks. We're heatedly contending with the increasing presence and power of AI. The paperback cost of production continues to increase with Amazon raising their fees per trim level along with paper shortages. We face ongoing and contentious conversations about book banning and limitations. What else have I missed? I'm sure there's something.

Amongst all this chaos, we continue to keep our fingers tapping away on keyboards around the world. We continue to craft stories for which our readers remain ravenous. We feed and thrive off our creative side. But we're also all our own small business owners as authorpreneurs, which means we can't go into our writing caves never to emerge again. We must juggle—I don't know that any of us truly balance—writing and business. Never has there been a more important time to understand marketing. With social and economic changes that are beyond our control, understanding how our readers behave and how they choose their books is vital if we wish to thrive where others may fail. Simply watching authors doing better than ourselves and trying to replicate their success isn't enough. What happens if they suddenly fail or no longer release? Are we going to scramble to find the next best comparable author and mirror them? Or are we going to take control and really tap into the marketing skills that we've all developed and honed to reach the level we're at? It's no small thing in our industry to achieve the status that's made all of us eligible to be NINC members.

So, what can we do?

No, I am not going to suggest AI. I'm not even wading into it. For all intents and purposes, that's a hot stove I'm not touching today. But there are plenty of other things we can improve and include in our arsenal of marketing tactics.

With nearly unfettered access to their favorite authors through the advent and ongoing addiction to social media, readers have an unprecedented connection to their favorite authors. This is a reciprocal relationship. It means we have more access to readers to study their behaviors than ever before. This is true regardless of how you publish. We can observe and draw massive amounts of data from our social media, and from that we can strategize our approach and products.

Through personalization, we can segment and better tailor our content—be it books, ads, or social media posts—to our specific audiences. This allows us to stand out and be more memorable. It's why we're seeing the growth of platforms like Kickstarter and Patreon. We even have Ream, a platform specifically for and by authors. On those types of crowdsourcing and subscription sites, we can personalize our products and tiers to our readers, giving them something the general audience can't. We can tap into the desire for inclusion and exclusivity while leveraging FOMO (fear of missing out). Those three concepts can be highly motivating for consumers, so why not use them to our advantage as authorpreneurs?

For many authors entering the industry, they believe content is the most important element to success. More than 20 years ago, Bill Gates said "content is king." This has become a motto for many. But that phrase has been expanded to "content is king, distribution is queen." I think many newer authors very quickly realized that it's more of a balance between creating content and getting it into people's hands or onto their devices. We strive to improve and hone our craft to create those rich, engaging, even informative stories that readers crave and devour.

That's the part I think that draws most authors into making this a profession rather than a hobby or something in which they dabble. While we might write things to trend, we often write them in a way that makes them evergreen. That's writing to market (which is not a set of dirty words). We can leverage the concepts of trend, unique perspective, tried-and-true, and even disruptive voices by coming across as personable and approachable. Now, this may be your physical presence at events, your virtual presence online, or simply the perception of your brand. People need to feel like your stories fit their wants and needs. They need to feel like they can approach your stories and enjoy them on an elemental and human level. Isn't that the goal? To create stories people enjoy. This balance between content and approachability nets us all the most sustainable ROI over time.

We talk all the time about diversifying our author portfolios. There's always a debate about whether an author should focus on adding audiobooks or translations first or which to prioritize marketing. I don't think there is an exact right answer across the industry. It comes down to genre (of course, because we always say that about everything) and the author's brand strategy. Both stem from understanding our readership and what they want. We can go beyond

the obvious two and diversify in other directions. Video content isn't anything new, but with the release and popularity of TikTok, we've seen reels and stories become increasingly desirable on Facebook and Instagram. Whether video is the highest priority for algorithms or not, it's not going anywhere. Whether you're in front of the camera or not isn't the argument to have with yourself. It's how can you create engaging videos that hold people's attention long enough to watch it to completion, remember it well enough to go to a retailer, and already be invested enough to buy on sight. Having your own podcast or appearing as a guest on someone else's can make you even more accessible to readers, confirming what they love or intriguing them into giving you a try. Simply hearing someone's voice, especially when they're excited about their own work, lends validity for which consumers may not realize they're searching.

One of the reasons many of us joined NINC is for the networking. The opportunity to learn from one another and collaborate. Don't underestimate the power of P2P (peer-to-peer) opportunities. As costs to run ads continue to skyrocket, relying on our peers to help us reach readers will increase in value. It can be cost efficient and reciprocal. We know this can come in the form of newsletter swaps, group drop-ins and takeovers, and multi-author projects and collections. P2P opportunities enable us to piggyback (with consent) and share the workload. After all, many hands make light work.

We know we can't do all the things all the time. Even if we have a PA/VA, we can't do all the things all the time. But we can strategize, test, and refine. We can pick one of the opportunities I mentioned and implement it. It might not be an overnight success, but it may improve your revenue over time. Whether the first dependent variable increases, decreases, or flatlines your revenue, you can test the next opportunity. Harken back to your grade school days and the Scientific Method. Only change one variable at a time, so you can authentically attribute outcomes.

This industry isn't the same as it was five years ago when I began publishing. It's definitely not the same as the heyday or golden days of indie publishing. We see rapid changes that often feel like there are more hurdles than flat stretches. But we also have opportunities that we didn't have a few years ago.

What will your strategy include? What have you already tried? Were you patient to give each dependent variable test long enough to truly render actionable results? What are you most eager to try next?

These are the questions we must ask ourselves as authorpreneurs. I encourage you to engage in self-reflection as well as conversations among our peers. Brainstorm, strategize, test, and refine as we continue to lead the way in the fiction publishing industry. As I wrote earlier, we've all attained a level of success that made us eligible to join NINC. That success most likely wasn't a fluke. It was hard work. That isn't going away, but we have a wealth of choices for how we can continue to increase our position within the marketplace, how we grow our brand, and expand the benefits, be they tangible or intangible. *Carpe diem et carpe locum*. Seize the day and seize the opportunity.

It continues to give me great satisfaction to serve as the president of the premier international organization for professional fiction authors.

~ Celeste Barclay

Celeste Barclay, a nom de plume, lives near the Southern California coast with her husband and sons. Before becoming a full-time author, she was a social studies and English teacher. She holds degrees in International Affairs (BA), Secondary Social Science (MAT), and Political Management (MPS). She channels that knowledge into creating rich historical romances that bring the heat.

About NINC

NINC is committed to welcoming a diverse and inclusive membership to our organization and serving all members. No author will ever be discriminated against on the basis of gender, race, sexual orientation, religious/spiritual beliefs if any, ability, nationality or age. It is NINC's desire and goal to make sure that every author member feels welcomed and accepted and heard.

About Nink

Nink's goal is to provide our readers with high-quality articles that offer critical business advice, marketing how-tos, advanced craft coaching, or strategy to continue building a career, all geared to established authors. All members should feel confident that *Nink* provides something for them. We welcome pitches and submissions from all members; [propose an article](#) or submit a [letter to the editor](#).

NINC Member Benefits

Don't forget to sign up for the [email loop](#), [critique/brainstorming group](#), [traditionally published group](#), and the members-only [Facebook group](#) if you haven't already. The [Pro Services Directory](#), member [discount page](#), and [sample letters](#) are also great resources.

Missing a newsletter? Past issues can be found [here](#).

Accessing the NINC Website

Not sure how to log in to the NINC website? Visit the login page here: <https://ninc.com/membership-overview/login-to-ninc/>



Registration

We've made this announcement a few times, but over the past month, the conference team has continued to receive inquiries, so ... member and assistant registration for NINC2023: ELEVATE (taking place at the TradeWinds Island Grand Resort in St. Pete Beach, Florida, September 20-24) is completely sold out!

We don't anticipate registration opening again this year. After observing the ebbs and flows of registrations and cancels over the past few years, we built in a buffer that we anticipate will allow us to accommodate the organization's desired number of attendees, even with a number of anticipated registration cancellations.

This means that even if you know twelve people who registered and then had to cancel, we still won't be re-opening registration.

We do not maintain any waiting lists for conference registration.

We *do* recommend that you encourage your friends who are eligible for NINC membership to apply now so that they can be on the list to receive the registration link *next* year for the 2024 conference. [They can go here](#) to check out the requirements and begin the process of joining the best professional fiction author organization in the world!

Hotel and transportation

Just a reminder, our guest room block at the TradeWinds has been filled.

At this point, the hotel is still honoring our group rate at the RumFish.

As for travel between the conference hotel and the airport: in the past, we've used a reserved shuttle through the TradeWinds to help our attendees travel from the Tampa airport to the resort.

This year, we're asking that attendees *not* reserve shuttles directly with Shirley. Instead, we'll send out an email later in the year with information that will allow us to facilitate the process for our attendees.

Don't worry—we're not taking business from Shirley; we're just making sure that she is treated fairly and can manage the trips on her end.

Programming

The programming team is pleased to update our current list of speakers along with some of their confirmed workshop topics:

- Erin Wright
 - Why Wide (And how to thrive!)
 - Using Print to Diversify Your Income
- Alessandra Torre
 - Bringing Your Books (and Income!) Back from the Dead
 - How to Write Unputdownable Stories
- Leslye Penelope
 - Worldbuilding for Any Genre
 - Creating a Story or Series Bible
- Sarra Cannon
 - The Path Back to Joy
 - Elevate Your Focus with a Gameboard Strategy
- Steve Pieper
 - How to Hop Off the Amazon Hamster Wheel
 - The Secret Sauce to Direct Sales
- Erica Ridley
 - Newsletter Masterclass (2-hour masterclass)
- M.K. Williams
 - Leverage YouTube for Your Author Business
 - Triple-Threat-Author, Narrator, and Producer: Self-Publishing Audiobooks
- Margie Lawson
 - What's the Visual?
 - Making Silence BOOM!
- Melanie Harlow
 - Road Repair: How to Stay in Your Lane Without Getting Stuck in a Rut
- Ines Johnson
 - Direct From the Page
- Nicholas Erik
 - AI for Authors: How to Use AI to Supercharge Your Marketing
 - The 80/20 Plan for Building from Five to Six Figures (and Beyond)

Remember that the general schedule for the conference is available [here](#).
More details will be available as they are confirmed.

Sponsorship

Confirmed sponsors joining us this year so far are:

- Down Island Publishing
- Draft2Digital
- Kobo
- Google Play
- BookBub
- Reedsy
- Vellum
- Writer MBA
- BookFunnel
- Bookvault
- Lulu
- Plottr
- Fairy Plot-Mother
- Written Word Media
- PublishDrive
- Podium Audio
- Barnes & Noble Press

Watch for an updated sponsor list in July!

If you've looked at the general schedule page on NINC's website, you might have noticed that in response to feedback from sponsors and attendees, we've moved MOSHH (Meet Our Sponsors Happy Hour) to Thursday, which we hope will allow our members and industry guests a chance to meet earlier in the conference weekend.

In case you missed MOSHH last year, this 90-minute trade show/happy hour mash-up (or MOSHH up??) was a big hit with our attendees. Plan to join us this year on Thursday afternoon! Grab a free cocktail, enter the fabulous prize drawings, and chat with our wonderful sponsors.

Each and every day, your conference team is working hard to bring you the absolute best event experience possible. And every day, we grow a little closer to seeing you at the beach!

Your NINC2023 Conference Team:

- Conference Director: Mel Jolly
- Programming Chair/Assistant Conference Director: Tawdra Kandle
- Assistant Programming Chair: Dylann Crush

- Trad Liaison: Lou Aronica
- Sponsorship Chair: Sarah Woodbury
- Assistant Sponsorship Chair: Hallee Bridgeman
- Registrar: Lisa Hughey
- Assistant Registrar: Stephanie Julian
- Hotel Liaison: Karen Fox
- Assistant Hotel Liaison: Tegan Maher
- App Coordinator and Designer: Laura Hayden
- NINC After Dark Coordinator: Tamsin Ley
- NINC After Dark Assistant: Deann Powell



Tawdra Kandle is the USA Today bestselling author of over 130 romances that span genres from contemporary through paranormal. Her engaging and realistic characters bring readers back again and again to devour the steamy love stories she spins. She lives in central Florida with a husband, a mischievous pup, and too many cats.



Recently in the headlines

Increased printing costs at Amazon KDP

Starting June 20, for the first time since its launch in 2016, Amazon KDP will increase the pricing for print (POD) books. The only surprising thing about this move is how long it took, since IngramSpark has [raised](#) POD pricing multiple times in recent years.

Price increases will affect all titles:

- There will be an increase in the fixed cost for all paperback and hardcover books.
- There will be a new fixed and per-page cost for paperback and hardcover books with large trim sizes. A large trim size is either larger than 6.12 inches (155 mm) in width or 9 inches (229 mm) in height.

However, there will be a decrease in the per-page cost for certain color-ink print books ordered from some marketplaces. [Compare the old versus new pricing](#) at their full [FAQ](#) page. KDP authors can visit their bookshelf to run a one-time bulk list price update on all book pricing to continue earning the same royalties after the printing costs change.

Florida school district sued over book bans

PEN America—along with Penguin Random House, authors, and parents—has filed suit in federal court, asking for books to be returned to public school library shelves in Escambia County, Florida, after their “unconstitutional” removal. Of course, Escambia is but one county in a country-wide effort to ban or restrict books in schools and libraries. But Escambia has been singled out after a high school teacher challenged more than 100 titles across age groups and genres; the school board voted to remove 10 books, while others are indefinitely restricted pending review. The majority of affected titles have LGBTQ themes; they include *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison, *Push* by Sapphire, *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini, *Two Boys Kissing* by David Levithan, and *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut, among others.

The teacher who has campaigned for the books’ removal has admitted she had not even heard of some of the books prior to her efforts to ban them. Instead, she consulted a list of books frequently targeted as part of the ongoing nationwide book-banning movement. [Learn more.](#)

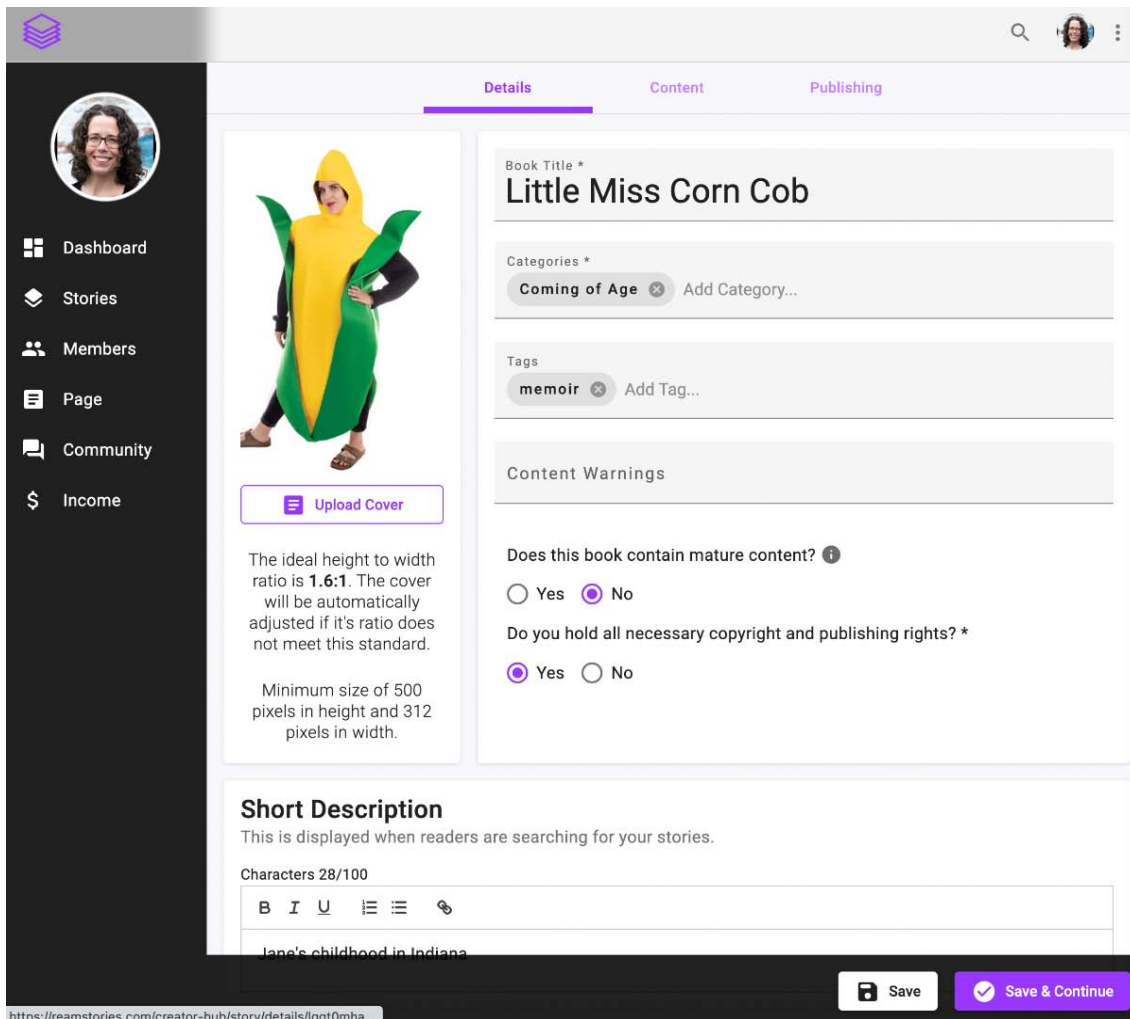
A new subscription platform designed just for authors

Ream recently moved out of beta and is open to any author who wishes to join.

Subscriptions and memberships have become a popular business model in corporate media and the creator community alike. Substack and Patreon are two of the most popular subscription platforms for creators today. But they have limitations if you’re a working novelist. Substack has been mostly a dud for serializing and publishing fiction, despite its built-in marketing and promotion features. And Patreon can be an awkward fit for novelists delivering serialized content.

Enter [Ream](#), a bootstrapped startup launched by self-publishing authors Michael Evans and Emilia Rose. The value proposition is simple: It’s a subscription platform designed especially for the needs of authors. When you make money, it takes a 10% cut of your subscription revenue. (Substack also takes 10%; Patreon takes anywhere from 5% to 12%.)

A quick overview of Ream’s key features: Through your author dashboard, you can upload stories or chapters, then publish on whatever schedule you want. (There is an import function if you have a lot of material to upload.) Whenever something new is published, your reader-subscribers are alerted automatically via email. There’s a social component, too, where readers can comment on your stories and authors can make community posts. As with Patreon, you are free to create whatever pricing and reward tiers you like, with a minimum charge of \$3 per tier. It’s also possible to collect readers’ physical mailing addresses if you plan to mail rewards to certain tier levels. You own your reader data (email addresses) as well as payment data through Stripe, like with Substack. (PayPal is not supported.) For a limited time, Ream is offering [free migration service](#) to authors using competing subscription platforms.



A peek inside Ream's author dashboard

Worried about sales tax? Ream helps with that, too—if you wish. You can set up a Ream Managed account, where Ream remits your sales tax at no extra cost to you (U.S. only for now; international coming). In this scenario, your sub payments come from Ream. If you'd rather handle the tax obligation yourself, you should use what Ream calls "direct integration," which allows access and ownership over your payment data. Then sub payments come to you directly from Stripe, not Ream. Consider carefully which option is best for you, as you can't change it later. If you choose a Ream managed account, that means your payment data will be locked into Ream and you won't be able to migrate your subscription business elsewhere without getting people to pull out their credit card again.

So who is this best suited for? Genre fiction authors who already self-publish are the key target audience for Ream, as well as authors who've had trouble publishing adult-only content through Amazon KDP or elsewhere. (The most predominant genre right now on Ream is steamy romance.) And, of course, if you already use Patreon or Substack, it's worth considering a switch. If you reach readers directly via email newsletter, social media, or some other platform

—and you're interested in building a direct-to-reader business—then the Ream platform could help you monetize serializations, books in progress, backlist works, and much more. Because Ream is not a retailer or publisher, there aren't any exclusivity requirements. You can publish whatever you want on Ream as long as you're not breaking an agreement you have with some other partner.

Since its beta launch in January, Ream now has more than 250 author pages and 7,500+ readers. Of those authors, about one-third have paid subscribers and 25+ authors have made over \$100 on the platform. The average reader with a paid Ream membership is paying \$10 per month. The most successful author on Ream as of this writing is [K Webster](#), who currently enjoys about \$7,700 in monthly revenue. Ream's co-founder, [Emilia Rose](#), is currently in the process of migrating her audience from other subscription platforms to Ream, with 800+ paid members so far. Before Ream, Rose's average monthly revenue was just over \$3 per reader, but now that she is on Ream, her average monthly revenue per reader is 2.5 times that. It's easier for her fans to upgrade between tiers and experience more of the stories they love in a simple and streamlined way, compared to other subscription platforms.

Author [K.C. York](#), who has been self-publishing since 2017, is also trying out Ream. She has toyed with Wattpad and Patreon in the past but never used either consistently. "I was profoundly unhappy with the platforms themselves. I have a background in IT and website development and knew that such platforms could be so much better for authors." By 2020, she says she'd mostly given up on her writing career, despite making some good money, due to burnout. "I felt disconnected from my readers and more like a word-grinder than a storyteller," she says. "The stories I wanted to write came last because what the algorithm demanded came first."

However, moving to a subscription mindset requires a mindset shift, says York, because most authors are advised to focus on big launches, big output, and niche branding. "A successful subscriptions model is more about consistency, quality, and personal branding. People are launching their Ream platform like it's a book launch, and it is definitely *not* the same." York plans to make Ream the hub of her author business, which includes distributing her books widely, selling direct to reader in all formats, and crowdfunding special editions and audiobooks. (Ream offers a lot of education for authors interested in subscription models: You can join the [Facebook group](#), listen to the [podcast](#), [read the book](#), or watch [recordings](#) from their recent summit.)

Bottom line: Any new platform must be evaluated for longevity, and startups carry uncertainty and risk. However, Ream is in a better position than most in that it's author-founded and not dependent on venture-capital money. Plus, one of the co-founders, Rose, is building her business around Ream. It's also been reassuring to see Ream's founders investing in community engagement, offering education on subscription models, and appearing at writing and industry events. Their commitment to and sincerity in supporting authors is front and center.

Links of interest

- **The Sudowrite controversy:** Sudowrite is an AI-writing tool that recently launched the “Story Engine” for long-form writing, allowing authors to write a novel in just a few days. SFF writer Jason Sanford tries to interview Sudowrite’s founder, Amit Gupta, but Gupta cuts the interview short. [Read Genre Grapevine.](#)
- **What AI can teach us about copyright:** A copyright lawyer believes there’s no meaningful difference between tools like ChatGPT and other “non-consumptive” or computational uses that courts have ruled as fair use. He uses this as a jumping-off point to explain why copyright principles point to AI training as fair use. [Read Brandon Butler at Free Think.](#)
- **How BookTok has changed publishing:** This is a high-level look at how self-published and traditionally published authors alike have benefitted from the platform—and how it continues to drive book sales. [Read Marta Blino at Business Insider.](#)
- **Men confess to loving romance novels.** One guy suggests that reading the books is “almost a how-to about relationships.” [Read Jeffrey A. Trachtenberg at the Wall Street Journal](#) (subscription required).

Reprinted and condensed from [The Hot Sheet](#). Jane Friedman has 20 years of experience in the publishing industry, with expertise in business strategy for authors and publishers. She’s the co-founder and editor of [The Hot Sheet](#), a paid newsletter for authors, and has previously worked for [Writer’s Digest](#) and the [Virginia Quarterly Review](#).

Authorpreneurs

Coloring beyond the lines

By M. L. "Matt" Buchman



Entrepreneur

n. one who organizes, manages, and assumes the risks of a business or enterprise

—Merriam-Webster

Authorpreneur

n. A writer who thinks like a business person as well as a writer

My brain latched onto this term several years ago when I realized that there was a huge dichotomy here. Most authors I talk to follow the paved paths before them from craft to publication to marketing. Whether they are traditional or indie, there are standard(ish) steps.

But some take a much wider view. I wanted to find out what people were thinking, the ones who were always looking for new ideas. Who sought better ways to do ads, promotions, writing, networking, publishing, Kickstarting, and direct sales.

So, I posted a survey and received 19 responses from folks who consider themselves authorpreneurs or otherwise innovative folks in this innovative industry.

The survey was broken down into four sections: The Basics, The Last Three Years (split into two parts), Marketing, and Questions (which is where this gets seriously fun).

What did I learn? The world indie authors live in is beyond flexible. Successful business practices can be as wildly varied as the plots. There is no one path, no one way to answer *any* question.

Note: If all the numbers boggle your brain, skip down to The Questions. Seriously, don't skip those. But there's so much good information here, I wanted to include as much as I could. Also, most authors chose some byline of anonymity.

The Basics

Income:

Nine = five-figure authors; nine = low six-figure; one = seven-figure

Income sources:

- Four said less than 75% of their income was directly from writing.
- Eight said they made income from publishing others, though none over 5%.
- One listed significant income from teaching, editing, and other writing-related activities.
- Only one makes any income from merchandise (<5% of their gross).
- Six write nonfiction but none say it is a significant source of income.
- Three list income over 25% from traditional publishing. All except six list some income from traditional publishing.
- Three make >5% from traditional audio, only one over 25%. Yet 12 make significant income from indie audio, 5–25% of their income for eight of them.
- Six authors have direct sales webstores and report income, only one over 5%.
- One reported using crowdfunding (Kickstarter, Patreon, etc.).
- One listed a significant other-stream income: “TV and film” — a low six-figure author.

There were no clear patterns regarding which tier was doing what. The person making money from merchandising was a five-figure author. Direct sales stores were split between five- and six-figure folks. Even audio was split fairly evenly.

Business expenses:

Failure to control business expenses may be the number one killer of writing careers. I foolishly didn't ask for gross expense/income ratio, but reading between the lines, many are running over 50% of their income being pumped back into the business. The lowest is about 15%. Again, the data shows little distinction between the five- and six-figure author tiers.

- Writing services (editing, proofing, etc.). Everyone spends something. There were seven who spend 5–10%, and five who spend 10–25%.
- Ads definitely raised the bar. Only four reported spending less than 5%. No one reported over 25%.
- Four reported spending up to 5% of their income on a virtual assistant to run those ads; only one reported more.
- Twice that many had a VA for other tasks.
- All but one go to conferences, but only one (a six-figure author) spent more than 10% of their income on conferences and travel.

A few demographics:

- Adopting new methods and technologies: six count themselves as bleeding-edge adopters. All the rest consider themselves to be mainstream except for two late adopters.
- Years since first sale: eight = < 10 years; three = 10–20 years; eight = > 20 years
- Gross income has been over 75% writing related for: nine = < 5 years; four = five–nine years; two = 10–20; four = > 20 years
- Releases per year:
 - Articles or paid work: One releases more than four per year.
 - Short stories: Only two release more than five per year.
 - Novels: Eight release five–nine per year (everyone else = < five).
 - Audiobooks: four release five to nine per year (everyone else = < five).
 - Other (manga, games, etc.): only one reports five to nine per year.
- Releases (life-to-date):
 - Articles: six = 5–50; three = 50+
 - Short stories: eight = five to 25; two = 50+
 - Novels: One = five to nine; three = 10–24; 11 = 25–49; five = 50+
 - Audio: four = < five; seven = five to nine; seven = 10–49; one = 50+

The Last Three Years (Business)

- The last three years have been wild ones as our world—and our readership—changed.
- Half reported business was up; four said it hit breakthrough; one said it went down.
- A third report a fall-off in productivity, though over half reported being more productive.
- Eight increased their advertising, four do less, and seven stayed the same.
- Other marketing was mostly static or down, with only five reporting any increase.
- Of the folks who hit “Breakthrough,” they said:
 - *“I had a breakout series.”* – mid six-figure author
 - *“I changed genres and jumped from six figures to seven.”* – seven-figure author
 - *“I sold to TV and film and started indie writing and publishing.”* – low six-figure author
 - *“Big 5 trad deal lifted audio and indie sales.”* – six-figure hybrid author
 - *“Reorganized my titles into longer series. Moving to KU three years ago finally made Amazon ads work and doubled my income. Adding Facebook ads doubled it again.”* – Misty M. Beller

Marketing

A fun topic in any author conversation, where and how do you market?

- Six spend half or more of their marketing on ads. The three who rated this over half are all six- and seven-figure authors.

- But most six-figure authors rated newsletters as half or most of their marketing effort. Two (both six-figure) focus half of their effort on newsletter swaps.
- Social Media Classic (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest...) attracts six to expend heavy effort here, split evenly across income levels. No one reports more than minor effort on Social Media New (TikTok, Discord, Slack...); most don't do it at all.
- Direct fan outreach efforts are rated as some or none with only one noting this as a significant part of their marketing, both in-person and online.
- Podcasting (as host or visitor). Only one puts more than minor effort into this.
- One reports that part of their marketing is done with fan fiction.

The splits here were interesting. There were no particular trends by income level with everyone doing an average of six out of 10 of the various channels I asked about. Scattergun first, then chasing what works.

The Last Three Years (Business Effectiveness)

Next I asked if they were finding better or worse traction by various categories over the last three years.

- Only three found advertising became more effective, whereas eight found newsletters gaining more traction. Newsletter swaps were trending down and improved for no one.
- Only four reported any improvement in social media on any platform, Classic or New.
- Four reported improvements in fan outreach and three in-person. Most reported no notable change up or down.
- No podcast hosts responded, and only one five-figure author found being a visitor to be more effective than in the past. Most said no change.
- *"Began using paid promotion in newsletters. That was the game changer."* – author of Golden Retriever mysteries.
- Upward trends observed by authors: increasing audio sales, indie soared in pandemic but now needs ads to sustain, longer pre-orders with a consistent release cycle, reaching out to librarians, backlist responds well to promotions.

Questions

What was the *least* effective business/marketing practice over the last few years?

- Nine folks battered ads in general, with BookBub ads and small-site ads taking a particular beating.
- Trying to write more, TikTok, social media in general, and in-person events also each earned a thumbs-down.
- Two, including our seven-figure author, said falling off a regular publishing schedule was very damaging.

Most effective?

- BookBub Featured Deals ranked high; many pointed to advertising on multiple platforms; and one thumbs up for TikTok.
- Most notable, five specifically pointed to their newsletters.
- “*Not listening to what others say I should be doing.*” – six-figure hybrid author

Best advice *from* someone *above* your level?

- Several: *raise your prices.*
- Almost all of the rest were some version of: focus on the writing and hone what works, ignoring what doesn't work, and newsletters.

Best advice *to* someone *below* your level?

- Newsletters; write the next book; be yourself rather than someone else.
- Do *not* overgrow your income. Build your business one step at a time, focusing on profitability.

Recommendations to someone *at* your level?

- Revise your newsletter welcome sequence. Use newsletters to promote free books. Treat fans as friends.
- “*Translations.*”
- “*Write a bigger book—not necessarily longer but one that will appeal to a bigger audience with higher stakes, more conflict, and overall a bigger story.*” – seven-figure author

What color-beyond-the-lines thing are you going to try next?

- Several are jumping into direct sales, AI audio, and Kickstarter.
- “A birthday card club.” – romance author
- “*Sending books to Bookstagrammers and BookTokers.*” – USA Today bestselling, six-figure author
- A few simply focus on steady growth and following their own fun.

If I had to attempt to summarize the characteristics of being an authorpreneur based on this select group, I think it goes back to building your brand—with a strong emphasis on *your*.

Does that include fan outreach via newsletter? The consensus is that it should. But does your brand also include ads or social media or podcasting or fan fiction? Maybe yes, maybe no.

Does the future lie in being consistent? Most say yes in both schedule and genre. Does it lie in ads or social media? Less than a third of this small group would agree with that. But direct sales, audio, and maybe Kickstarters are at least worth testing. Is the best leverage achieved by trying *new* things? Almost everyone in this group does. Not necessarily right away, but they definitely do.

Authorpreneurs are constantly seeking innovative ways to improve their business while wearing their entrepreneur's hat, not just their writer's hat.

M. L. "Matt" Buchman, a stable, low six-figure author, is getting creative to shift that stability hopefully upward. As a typically bleeding-edge adopter—with 70+ novels, 120+ short stories, and 50+ audiobooks—his recent new projects have been:

- 2019: Switch from military romantic suspense to thriller genre.
- 2021: Create a board game based on a series (Kickstarter launch).
- 2022: Launch direct sales store.
- 2023: Launch a quarterly [genre magazine](#) to build profile and associations within the genre (Kickstarter launch).
- 2023: Building out a heavy-duty newsletter/community cultivation welcome sequence with numerous bonuses for the subscriber.
- 2023: Launched an online readers club.
- 2024: AI audio, translations, video channel.
- No ads. Almost no social media. Write the next book (striving for consistent quarterly release).

Resting the Right Way

By Trish Milburn



With a title like *Rest: Why You Get More Done When You Work Less*, how could I not be intrigued? This book by Alex Soojung-Kim Pang explores how counterproductive overwork is, how we think about rest and how we *should* think about it.

What is rest?

When you hear the word “rest,” what comes to mind? A nap? Eight hours of sleep a night? A nice vacation? All of those are indeed rest, but according to Pang it goes well beyond that. In some countries, including the United States, overwork has been normalized. We think of rest as something we do after everything else is done.

But are we ever done? Writers certainly aren’t. Since most of us work at home, it’s even more difficult to separate our work and rest. There are always books to write, pages to edit, ads to create, classes to watch, and Facebook groups full of useful information to read. All of this can be overwhelming. We feel as if we’re getting buried under a larger and larger mountain of to-do lists with no opportunity for rest in sight.

Even the answers I received to the “What is rest?” question, while not wrong, reveal that rest often only means a day or two off after making a deadline or taking time for a cup of coffee with a family member. Short breaks can be restorative, but sometimes our minds and bodies need more.

“It took going through massive burnout for me to learn to recognize the differences in physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion,” [Jillian Neal](#) says. “I had to learn what triggers all forms of exhaustion for me.”

Pang’s book is filled with stories of how successful people deliberately made time for rest so that they could do their jobs more effectively. Charles Darwin went on hours-long walks that were good for his body and mind as well as subconsciously working out problems. Even during

World War II, Winston Churchill was adamant about taking restorative daily naps. These are what Pang calls “deliberate rest,” as are weeks away from all connection to news, or even electronics, and longer sabbaticals.

[Barbara Meyers](#) takes daily walks but doesn’t listen to music or podcasts during them. Rather, she allows her mind to wander.

“I have so many thoughts and ideas and mental lists of things to do, it all gets very jumbled in my brain,” Meyers says. “If I add more information (from listening to a podcast), it isn’t rest for me and makes me concentrate more instead of resting my mind.”

Work smarter, not longer

Rest also details scientific studies that show that working fewer hours a day, allowing for significant rest after the work period is over, is the path to better productivity.

A survey of scientists in the 1950s, conducted by psychology professors Raymond Van Zelst and William Kerr, asked about numbers of hours in the office vs. number of articles produced. The resulting data showed an initial steep rise, but this peaked at 10–20 hours per week, then turned downward. Scientists working 35 hours a week were half as productive as those working 20 hours a week.

Clear divisions

In Pang’s book, Cambridge mathematician John Littlewood was cited as saying there needs to be clear boundaries between the work part of our days and the rest parts so we can get more from each.

“It is too easy, when rather tired, to fritter a whole day away with the intention of working but never getting properly down to it. This is pure waste, nothing is done, and you have had no rest or relaxation.”

Keeping to a set schedule helps our brains become accustomed to what they should be doing when. [Katherine Garbera](#) is a big proponent of set schedules. She keeps to a 9–11 a.m. schedule for writing; a walk while leaving her phone behind, 1–1:30 p.m.; editing, 2–5 p.m.; and sleep from 9:30 or 10 p.m. until 6 a.m. She also takes evenings and weekends off and two weeks off after finishing a book.

For [Jean Oram](#), taking off time between books is important.

“I chose a writing career because it is a joyful and fun thing for me,” Oram says. “If I start to feel resentful, I know I need a break.”

Oram says that in the past year and a half, rest has become a bigger part of her schedule out of necessity as she’s dealing with Long COVID symptoms.

Though Pang’s book focuses on more significant rest periods, even being mindful of smaller rest breaks can be beneficial.

“I’ve been experimenting with Pomodoro-style writing where I write for 50 minutes and rest for 10 minutes,” [Sylvie Kurtz](#) says. “I go out of the office, walk around the kitchen to get

water and do a few yoga poses. It seems to help with the brain drain that comes from writing and spending hours in front of a computer.”

“Deep play”

Rest does not always mean sleep, watching TV, or even reading a book. It can actually be quite active, perhaps even physically tiring, but in a good way. Taking part in sports is a good example. You can be a bestselling author at the same time you’re running 10K races. Maybe quilting is your thing. Or cosplay. Any hobby to which you devote a significant amount of time is what Pang calls “deep play.”

Exercise of some sort is not only good for your physical health but also your mental health. Kurtz says that walking outside every day prevents depression from creeping in. [Sally Kilpatrick](#) agrees.

“I am physically active, and I always feel worse for wear if I get out of the habit,” Kilpatrick says. “In Emily and Amelia Nagoski’s book *Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle*, they argue repeatedly that ‘physical activity is the single most effective strategy for completing the stress response cycle,’ and I have found that to be very true. Reading that book helped me realize why I took a walk every day during quarantine. Running was even better for clearing the mind and tiring the body enough to get a good night’s sleep. I’ve also noticed that if I’m irritated or depressed, I can put on some up-tempo music and dance my way to a better mood.”

Extended breaks

Only you can know if you need a longer break than a weekend off or even a week’s vacation can provide. Sometimes you can plan an extended break in a proactive way to prevent deeper burnout, but sometimes these breaks are unplanned even if they are necessary.

“I’m just now emerging from an extended break, having not written in almost two years,” [Tracy Brogan](#) says. “That wasn’t the plan but after writing a couple of contracted romantic comedies during the darkest days of a post-divorce haze, I felt I had nothing unique left to offer. Like most writers, I *feel* what my characters feel and I didn’t have the emotional bandwidth to put someone (even a fictional someone) through any drama because I had enough of that in my real life. I felt like a failure during most of that time, thinking I was just lazy or that I’d faked my way through all my previous success. Now, with a little distance, some closure, and the determination to create a healthy co-parenting relationship with my ex-husband, sunshine has finally burned away that fog and I’m writing again. I’m re-energized by my decision to write a few historical romances rather than contemporary rom com.”

Kilpatrick took a good five to six months off after her pandemic novel didn’t sell.

“I needed that time so I wouldn’t come back to the laptop frustrated and bitter,” she says.

Refilling the well

Time off gives our brains time to recover and replenishes our creativity and the energy needed to create.

“Sometimes I think the whole ‘write every day’ is a rather dangerous adage,” Kilpatrick says. “One part of Julia Cameron’s *The Artist’s Way* that really stuck out to me was the concept of a writer’s date. At first, I thought it was counterintuitive to take time off from what desperately needed to be written, but there’s a lot of truth in refilling the well. Sometimes I’ll go on a writer’s date, usually to a historical place where I can learn something. You gotta prime the curiosity pump from time to time.”

[Denise Agnew](#) undertook a combination of refilling the well and what she calls “a break without a real break” when she shifted to writing screenplays rather than the number of novels she was before.

“I feel like this has helped my creativity considerably,” she says.

Planning your rest

We’ve all heard stories of authors who were giving 110% until they completely burned out. Overwork and the stress that comes from it should not be seen as badges of honor.

“Rest is not something that the world gives us,” Pang writes. “It’s never been a gift. It’s never been something you do when you’ve finished everything else. If you want rest, you have to take it. You have to resist the lure of busyness, make time for rest, take it seriously, and protect it from a world that is intent on stealing it.”

[Trish Milburn](#) always has a lot of writing, editing, and business irons in the fire, but when she takes Sundays off to read for fun, go for walks, and watch K-dramas, she’s always more productive on Mondays than when she doesn’t.

Using Names to Develop Characters

By Michele Dunaway



*“What’s in a name? That which we call a rose,
By any other word would smell as sweet.”*
—Juliet

The naming of our characters runs the gamut. Our characters are “ours” and character names provide opportunities for authors to expand the emotion, impact, and resonance of their stories.

Or as [Elizabeth Ann West](#), author of 25 books and a digital publishing professional for over a decade said, “A name is a shorthand code readers have to talk about the character. That code is a big factor determining if readers remember characters long after the book is put down or forget them entirely.”

Character names can allow for deeper characterization and conflict. [Piper Huguley](#), author of historical fiction featuring African American characters and Hallmark’s *Sweet Tea*, teaches a [course on character names](#). Huguley spends time researching her character names in order to create greater emotional impact.

“In my book, *American Daughters*, out next year, Alice Lee Roosevelt was given the exact same name as her mother who died two days after she was born,” Huguley said. “How do you live with the same name as a ghost? Who was your mother? With a name her own father refused to call her? These things matter to how someone develops.”

Huguley uses names to convey things to her readers, such as how her characters fit into society.

“In the U.S., where we are under the illusion that we are able to completely create ourselves, that marginalized people have decisions to make regarding naming their children to

'fit in' or to not fit in. For example, since the 1980s many people have given girls names traditionally given to boys. This is not a new thing (Beverly, Shirley, Joyce, and Leslie were all boys' names in the early 1900s) but the increase of what onomastic scholars call 'crossing over' means that parents saw hope and potential in the lives of their baby girls that didn't exist before. When your character is not in a societal position of power, as many of mine are not, how does their family manage to still have hope and aspiration for that child?"

This is the power authors have when choosing names—they create emotion and impact. Names have connotations. I currently have a student who has changed her name to Katherine because she's "Not a Karen." And Dick, so noble on Dick Van Dyke, can be degraded to "Don't be a Dick." Ouch. If a character is named Sunny or Rose, we get positive thoughts immediately, even before we read on. So to create conflict, a character's name might not even be something they themselves want.

Huguley said, "In my novel *Sweet Tea*, my heroine is named Althea. She considers that name 'too Black,' so when she leaves her small Southern town for New York City, she changes it to 'Allie.' This practice of 'fitting in' is part of how she manages to forget her Southern roots, and herself. Only when she is called back to being Althea again, and most especially to the nickname that her grandmother gave her, which is 'Tea,' does she find home for herself once more. It was the first time in my book that I used a character's name as a reflection of their character growth. It also broke a rule in terms of character names—that of being consistent with names, but readers really seemed to tap into witnessing her character growth and how she changes from being Northern-based IP lawyer Allie back to small town Southern woman with a new vocation in life—Tea."

West, who writes Jane Austen fan fiction, also considers each name as to its emotional impact.

"The biggest way a character's name can create emotion and impact is how the name connects to other characters. In my Seasons of Serendipity series, the baby Lydia has out of wedlock, and who barely survives his birth, is named for Mr. Bennet, who is deceased at the beginning of the story. By making the orphan baby named after Mr. Bennet, the child no one wanted to be born is suddenly named in a manner that reminds them of another they loved deeply. The other characters develop a desire to protect the boy, and this carries over to the readers."

First names and last names can be equally as important.

"In *By Her Own Design*, I didn't spend as much time with Ann Lowe's first name, because it was a popular name," Huguley said. "How she changes her last names as she gains fame in her designing career is very meaningful. She goes back to being Ann Lowe at the end, the name that she was born with, which to me was an important reclamation for her in terms of who she is. Women at that time didn't keep their maiden names. But throwing off Cone, from her pedo first husband, and West, from her unsuccessful second marriage, made meaning for her as a design legend. Then, there is also the way the name Lee chases her throughout her life—something that

I did not make up, but made use of as she kept encountering the name of her abuser again and again.”

Some authors will use the names of real people. For instance, many such as David Baldacci auction off character names for charity. But authors slip in names for other reasons. Shelby, in my *What Happens in the Air*, is my best friend’s daughter’s first name. The Bien came from my co-worker whose husband pilots a hot air balloon and won one of the races mentioned in the book. I’m not the only one who does this.

West said, “Many times I name side characters either as anagrams of real life people I do not care for or to honor people I love and care about. Sometimes, if a friend is having a particularly tough time, I will sneak an Easter egg in there for them where a character has the same initials.”

[Ernest Dempsey](#), *USA Today* bestselling author of archeological thrillers, did this for his best-selling Sean Wyatt books. The first name Sean is for one of his soccer buddies with whom Dempsey coached for a year. The Wyatt comes from the German teacher Dempsey worked with. As for the rest, he said, “I think I’m the only one who does this as far as villains and side characters go, but I look at soccer rosters from around the world and combine names.”

[Boyd Craven](#) writes postapocalyptic fiction relevant to current events. He says that he always teases people that he’s going to put them in his book “when they annoy me.” However, he often doesn’t because while “most are happy, I don’t want to be sued if they die horribly or do something a real person would never do,” he said.

To keep names straight, Craven keeps a story bible. “I have to consider if I’ve used the same name before because, let’s be honest, if you’ve written a dozen or more books in different series or worlds, you can’t avoid reusing names without some planning,” he said. “If I have, where and when? Will it confuse the reader if I use the same first name in the next book? Another consideration is the impact of the name. Can I use a last name of somebody who is in the news? Is there a general of an invading army who it’d be fun to clown on and make a character after him that is nothing like him for comedic value?”

To generate names, there are bookshelves worth of “name-your-baby” books and using online sources. Huguley uses [Behindthename.com](#) and [nameberry.com](#). Others are at the end of this article.

West uses AI for her names. “I love the brainstorm feature on Sudowrite. If I am working outside of my main genre where most of my characters are predetermined (Jane Austen fan fiction), then Sudowrite helps me quickly generate a bunch of ideas at once. I like writing ‘ensemble cast’ stories, so I put down my ideas and parameters, and then AI tools assist in fleshing out an entire village’s worth of characters, ideas for backstories, and any flaws or emotional wounds for the main characters.”

Whatever choices you make as to your names, as Huguley said, “I think there is a lot of reward in spending time with this aspect of writing stories. It’s not as arduous as you might think.”

Online resources

- [Behindthename.com](https://behindthename.com)
- nameberry.com
- <https://www.ssa.gov/oact/babynames/decades/>
- <https://www.ssa.gov/oact/babynames/top5names.html>
- <https://www.babycenter.com/baby-names/most-popular/top-baby-names-by-year>
- <https://babynames.com>

Michele Dunaway writes happily-ever-afters in small towns with wineries and hot air balloon races. *All's Fair in Love and Wine*, a second-chance romance, is book two of the *Love in the Valley* series, and marks the milestone of being her 25th book for Harlequin Enterprises, a division of Harper Collins.

Taming the Fear of Missing Out

Surviving and mastering FOMO

By Jacqueline Diamond



Recently, I watched a Netflix series called *High Water*, based on a real event that occurred a few decades ago. In each episode, bureaucrats ignored an expert's warning while the waters in nearby rivers rose higher and higher.

Eventually, as she predicted, a flood inundated the entire city of Wroclaw, Poland. The archival footage shocked me, especially since I had once visited this city.

In addition to stirring sympathy for the residents, the visuals expressed how I feel after attending conferences, checking social media, and reading newsletters for writers: like I'm drowning.

Most of us experience something similar: the fear of missing out, abbreviated as FOMO. Are we writing enough? Are we promoting enough? Should we invest more time and money even though we're stretched thin?

A sense of urgency

For anyone who isn't sure what I'm referring to, here's a partial summary of the pressures.

Publicity: We must (so we're told) build a website, preferably one with a blog or direct book sales. We must put out a newsletter and snare subscribers through publicity, newsletter swaps, and onboarding. We must buy ads, both on newsletters and pay-per-clicks on Amazon, Facebook, etc.

Social media: Successful writers must cultivate a platform! Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, Goodreads. Create a video channel on YouTube, host a podcast or a Substack, bring in income via Patreon and Kickstarter.

The writing itself: Are we hitting popular themes? Writing fast enough?

There's pressure to *spend, spend, spend* on covers, editing, formatting, writing-related programs, and classes. Which print-on-demand service will get our work into bookstores and libraries? And we have to be in audio (we're told), at a potential cost of thousands of dollars per book.

When I was first published four decades ago, hardly any of these options existed. Expectations and "advice" have risen like floodwaters from year to year.

How do we get a grip on this?

Don't believe everything you hear

Ads, speakers, and websites imply that we have only to follow their formula to succeed. Here's a cautionary note from bestselling author [Grace Burrowes](#): "I published a book and it did really well, but my big success had nothing to do with me. It was due to circumstances. Don't be too impressed with somebody else's apparent success. They might have mortgaged the castle to buy ads; they might have spent 20 years working up to that one shining moment."

We can't do it all; we have to set priorities. However, each of us is coming from a different place.

"My advice is observe everything, but only do what feels comfortable for you," mystery and women's fiction author [S.W. Hubbard](#) says. "If you hate doing it, you won't be good at it and you will fail. However, I do see some authors who hate everything. That's not an option. You've gotta do something. Pick the things that have the greatest return not only for your money, but also for your time."

Don't try to do a lot of new things at once. Choose the most appealing and try them out.

"I keep a marketing list," paranormal romance author [Marie Claude-Bouque](#) says. "New ideas go under the To-Try heading and I only keep a handful of things I am trying every quarter, which I choose based on my strengths or inclination. Then I either keep them as part of my overall strategy if they move the needle, or put under Nope if they don't help or stress me out."

Don't expect instant results. Understand that there are learning curves. Once you decide to tackle something—whether it's a new genre, a website, or a type of advertising—give it a chance.

Pace yourself

Maintaining a killer pace can lead to burnout. Some of the most successful authors at any given time are gone a few years later. There can be many reasons, but one is exhaustion. That is true when the pressure comes from publishers wanting more books in a hurry, and it's true when we put the pressure on ourselves.

"From personal experience, don't try to take it all on at once," book coach Cheri Merz advises. "Get an accountability partner to help you resist if it isn't the right time or you already

have too much on your plate.”

That doesn't mean we should ignore trends and opportunities. New tech usually has a Gold Rush phase. Early in digital publishing, huge ebook sales were typical because there was so little material available to readers. The same was true with audiobooks.

If something feels right, don't be afraid to jump in. On the other hand, the pressure continues long after that initial golden period has passed. The “results” being trumpeted may no longer reflect publishing reality.

Criteria for prioritizing

Your priorities will depend in part on your personality and vision. It's fine to push for something that's important or rewarding to you personally.

If you've always dreamed of seeing your book in a bookstore or library, then go for it, regardless of whether it's profitable. If you love performing and creating videos, then YouTube channels and TikTok videos will be fun for you. Do you enjoy public speaking or do you want to shrink into the woodwork at the thought?

Respect your instincts.

Many people hate Twitter. In my opinion, it rarely sells books, but I've made connections with book reviewers, book bloggers, and other authors. So I enjoy Twitter.

Some people hate Facebook. I don't do the ads, because they're click-to-pay, and to evaluate what's working, you have to use a spreadsheet, which I hate. But I find many of the writing and publishing groups valuable.

Your priorities will also depend on your time and energy. Bestselling authors usually have assistants to handle a lot of the work. Some authors have spouses or partners who can assist.

Others of us have to plow through this on our own. Don't beat yourself up if you can't do it all.

Watch the bottom line

A financial investment in our careers is unavoidable. We buy computers, we subscribe to services such as website hosting, and we invest in publicity.

But don't be bullied by pressure to fork out more than you can afford. “You have to spend money to make money” has landed quite a few people in bankruptcy court (I just made that up, but I'm sure it's true).

Be careful of ongoing expenses, even if they seem minor. Monthly charges add up.

On one loop, an author wrote, “Do you know how many books I have to sell each month just to break even?” Ouch!

While there's no substitute for professional editing, especially as we learn our craft, critique groups and partners can be helpful and free. Some authors design their own covers, and that's fine as long as the result suits the genre and looks professional.

There are also free tactics that can help with marketing, from choosing appropriate keywords to adding subtitles. You can combine books into anthologies and series, by yourself or with other authors.

Amazon doesn't require that series be in any particular order or involve the same characters. You can set up a series in which the books are related only by subgenre or setting. The series name you choose (such as Authurname Romantic Suspense) shows up on the product page for each book, so a reader interested in one title can click on that link and see them all. And it costs nothing.

We're part of a proud tradition

The public, the media, and new authors often assume that all published writers get rich or at least earn a full-time living. Unfortunately, writing and publishing have never been like that.

There are always a few bestselling authors who strike it big, and there's nothing wrong with aiming for that. The problem comes when we lose heart because we don't achieve that status.

Although I'm the author of more than 100 books, both from traditional publishers and self-published, I've augmented my income through part-time teaching as well as writing nonfiction articles and columns. Most midlist authors I know are in the same boat.

We're part of a tradition in the arts that goes back thousands of years, a tradition of pursuing our dreams and honing our craft without necessarily getting rich. Shakespeare didn't get rich. Austen didn't get rich. But they wrote wonderful stories that resonate to this day.

A short take:

- Start where you are. Set reasonable short-term goals. Move ahead one step at a time.
- Gradually explore possibilities that suit you. Pick a few; don't try to do too much.
- Don't compare yourself to others.
- Stay aware of trends and new tech. Don't automatically reject them, but don't feel that you must adopt them either.

USA Today bestselling author [Jacqueline Diamond](#) has sold medical romances, romantic comedies, mysteries, and Regency romances—more than 100 titles. A former *Associated Press* reporter and TV columnist, Diamond is best known for her *Safe Harbor Medical* romances and mysteries, and has been honored with a *Romantic Times Career Achievement Award*. She currently writes the *Sisters, Lovers & Second Chances* series featuring couples over age 50.

Smart Marketing for Savvy Authors

By Tawdra Kandle



*This year of Smart Marketing
is all reinventing our businesses.
For the second quarter, we'll talk details:
What starting over looks like;
Why business structure matters;
But what about the readers?*

Over the past year or so, I've shared my reinvention process progress with a few different author groups or individual author acquaintances. I know that the idea of re-publishing existing books under another pen name did not originate with me, but as it happens, I'm one of the few in my circle of authors who have done it recently and thus can provide accurate data and anecdotal experience.

Almost without fail, when I chat with other authors on this topic, they ask me questions—and some I've become used to answering quite often. If you've been reading along with the column over this year, you might be curious about the same things.

So—for our final marketing column of the second quarter, we're going to do a little question-and-answer session, except that since this isn't a live event, I'm going to provide both sides of the equation.

Question: *What about the readers?*

Answer: This is usually the first thing authors want to know, although everyone means something a little different by the question, so let's break it down.

What do you do about people who already read the books you're re-releasing under a different author name? Aren't they mad when they buy the same book under a different title by a new author?

I have to admit that this occurred to me—and worried me—at the very start of this journey. But over a year into the process, not one reader has messaged or emailed me to let me know that some upstart author is pirating my books.

There are a few explanations for why this isn't an issue. The most appealing and my current favorite is that I'm doing a really amazing job at keeping my targeting for Author X separate from Tawdra. That may be at least partially true. But it's also probably due to the fact that my reader audience has always been fairly small, and since most of them originated as paranormal readers, they wouldn't necessarily go out of their way to read angsty, steamy contemporary romance written by an author they didn't know.

Something else that's important to remember? There are more readers in the world than you and I have dreamt of, Horatio! Even if we've run multiple BookBub Featured Deals on a title or if it's hit a bestsellers list, that book has only reached a small percentage of an enormous possible audience.

The only time I encountered even the slightest bit of this type of reader consternation was when I mistakenly ran a Facebook ad for the first book in the series using a vanity page that I've used as Tawdra. (Author X cannot run Facebook ads under her own profile because she cannot prove her identity to Meta via a driver's license in her name, so she relies on me to run ads via vanity pages.) In this case, the reader commented on the ad that the book being promoted sounded quite a bit like one she'd read by another author. I took down that advertisement immediately and tucked away that nugget of knowledge—be careful about which vanity pages I use.

Another related but slightly different question about readers ...

Don't your readers wonder where those books previously published under your name have gone once they've been removed from your vendor sales pages?

Yes! Yes, they do. And because books are such a weird commodity in that sometimes people buy them and read right away and other times, they buy them but don't read them for weeks, months, even years. I did receive messages from those who said they'd read book one in a series that I'd moved over to Author X but couldn't find the subsequent books.

I have two remedies for this. First, ahead of removing any series, I have very clearly let my current Tawdra readers know what I'm doing. I haven't shared the name of Author X because I don't want to pollute her reader base, but I warn them that the books as they know them will not be available after a certain date. Sometimes, I run sales on the whole series or just the first in series and/or box sets since the readers now have an incentive to act quickly.

Second, when I receive the messages from confused readers wanting to find the rest of the books, I do break my own rule and tell them the name of Author X, swearing them to secrecy. So far, I haven't had any issues with them outing me. If I'm a little unsure about letting them in on the secret, I'll simply send them old e-copies of the books as a gift. After all, if they're

invested in the story enough to message me, I feel that they are strong, core Tawdra readers, ones I'd like to keep in my camp.

And finally . . .

Do you ever feel icky about deceiving readers in this way? As Author X, you're not informing them that you are actually another author publishing under a different name—you're pretending to be someone who doesn't really exist.

This is a tough one, and I'm going to address this more fully next month. But for now, let me just say that to a certain extent, most of us as authors present a certain persona to our readers. There are some authors who never publish under their real names—the names given to them at birth or adopted after marriage, their legal names—and some who never share photos of themselves—they use avatars instead.

There are authors who write as a duo but publish under one single name.

I don't think what I'm doing is deceptive or wrong. Still, there are certain lines I won't cross. For example, early in my career as Author X, I created a TikTok account and put up a video of Author X introducing herself. To do that, I spent a great deal of time donning a wig, changing my make-up and wearing different glasses, and even using a face-changing app that rendered me virtually unrecognizable.

I only did this once, for two reasons. First, it was far too much work and effort for a very limited return. Second, it *did* feel icky. It felt deceptive. While I can easily create an Author X profile with a different birthday (I used my mother's so I would remember it!), family situation, and home state, presenting myself physically in a disguise was the line I don't feel comfortable crossing.

Question: *Aren't you violating Amazon's terms of service by maintaining two separate Kindle Direct Press accounts?*

Answer: I did address this in an earlier column, but I think it bears repeating. No, what I'm doing and how I'm doing it is not in violation of KDP terms of service because I established the new account under a separate LLC. The new LLC is an entirely different tax entity from my existing Tawdra account. All of the anticipated new author names (Author X, Author Z) will be published under this new LLC and within this KDP account.

Question: *Why did you publish these books in Kindle Unlimited instead of going wide?*

Answer: When I made the decision to reinvent my publishing career under a different name, I found a freedom to be and do anything I wanted. I adopted a sort of George Costanza mentality: if you're old enough to have enjoyed the sitcom *Seinfeld*, you might remember that in one season, George decided to change his life by doing the exact opposite of whatever he might have done before. So as an author who has been gloriously wide her entire career, I chose to try an all-in Kindle Unlimited plan.

Also, as you might imagine, maintaining two separate entities is extremely time-consuming. Publishing books in one vendor platform saves me an enormous amount of time when I put up pre-order links, update covers after reveals, and upload final files.

It is entirely possible that at some point, once I have all of the existing re-published and have begun to release new books under Author X, I may try to move a few series wide for a cycle. But that's a decision that I'll make in a few years.

Question: *Speaking of time and constraints on it, how are you balancing being two different people, with at least two websites, two newsletters, two of every social media account?*

Answer: Very carefully. And maybe not that well.

I'm going to be honest, as I try to be transparent in this column. I'm not great at the balancing act required by this strategy. As you could guess, it's far easier to be Tawdra, an author who has been publishing for over a decade and has an established reader base, Facebook group, and newsletter subscriber list than it is to be Author X, a newbie struggling to build all of those things listed above. My readers know Tawdra. They know that I live in Florida, that my husband is an Anglican priest, that I have four grown children and two granddaughters. They know that I have a sweet pup and lots of cats. They know that I used to live in New Jersey, and they know my closest author friends, the ones with whom I'm frequently doing cross-promo and shared worlds.

Author X is still a little bit of a nebulous entity. While I was strategic and careful to invent her personality along with her persona before I launched her brand, I'm still not completely comfortable with being a different person. I've spent over 10 years being deeply organic and transparent to my readership—perhaps too much so. Being the same way as Author X isn't as natural.

Because of that, it's much easier to "forget" to send a newsletter, even when I have it on my schedule and to-do list. It's not difficult to avoid posting in Author X's social media accounts. I'm trying to be better about it, but it's definitely a work in progress.

These are just a sampling of questions I'm asked on a regular basis. If you have others not covered here, please don't hesitate to email me (tawdra@tawdrakandle.com) or reach out via social media. I'd be happy to cover those answers in a future column.

The third quarter begins next month! The topics I'll address during July, August, and September include a longer explanation of the trials and benefits of being someone else; a deeper dive into what really prompted me to make this career move and an update on how it's going; and my plans for the next new author persona, known as Author Z—how I'll do things differently when I launch her brand.

Tawdra Kandle is the USA Today bestselling author of over 130 romances that span genres from contemporary through paranormal. Her engaging and realistic characters bring readers back again and again to devour the steamy love stories she spins. She lives in central Florida with a husband, a mischievous pup, and too many cats.

NINC Member Discounts

By Abigail Drake

MY HOUSE *of* DESIGN

Shaila Abdullah of **My House of Design** has over a decade of experience designing websites for authors. Being an award-winning author herself, she understands the industry, and will provide you with a content management website that reflects your unique style, genre, and personality.

Other design services such as book covers and interiors, marketing materials, and email campaigns (newsletters, announcements, etc.) are also available.

Check out her [website](#) for samples of her work, and look on our [Freebies and Discounts page](#) for more information about this and all other discounts.



Abigail Drake, who writes contemporary romance and women's fiction, is the award-winning author of 19 novels. She majored in Japanese and economics in college and spent years living abroad, collecting stories wherever she visited. She and her husband, who she met in Istanbul, have three adult sons.

Membership Benefits

Need industry intel, software, or legal help? We've got you covered.

Are you taking advantage of all your member benefits?

As a NINC member, your benefits include industry discounts, newsletter and website articles, professional services directory, networking opportunities, and more.

We've compiled all of these—which you can also find on our website—into this list as a helpful reminder.

Networking (these groups are for NINC members only):

- Email list for all NINC members: <https://groups.io/g/ninlink>
- NINC Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/NovelistsInc/>
- Follow NINC on Twitter: https://twitter.com/Novelists_Inc
- NINC on [Clubhouse](#): Novelists, Inc. Virtual Tiki Bar
- Critique/brainstorming group: <https://groups.io/g/NINKcritique>
- Traditionally published authors: <https://groups.io/g/NINCTradPubbedAuthors>
- SF/F & speculative fiction writers: <https://groups.io/g/NINCswordsandrayguns>
- Authors of thriller/crime/suspense: <https://groups.io/g/NINC suspense-thriller-crime>
- Discuss creating book covers: <https://groups.io/g/NINCcovercreators/>

Conference:

Conference information: <https://ninc.com/conferences/about-the-ninc-conference/>

Newsletter

- Propose an article: <https://ninc.com/newsletter/propose-an-article/>
- Submit a letter to the editor: <https://ninc.com/newsletter/submit-letter-to-editor/>
- Newsletter archives: <https://ninc.com/newsletter/news-archive/>

Website (You must be logged in to access these services.)

- Legal Fund: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/legal-fund/>
- Sample Letters: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/sample-letters/>
- Articles & Links: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/articles-and-links/>

Member discounts

NINC members are eligible for certain professional discounts. A complete listing of these can be found at <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/member-freebies-discounts/> along with other member discounts.

Volunteer

One of the greatest benefits of NINC is the opportunity to volunteer your talents to benefit other members—which pays incredible and unexpected dividends in networking and knowledge. Learn more about volunteer opportunities here: <https://ninc.com/members-only/open-positions/>

Open positions include:

- Social Media Committee
- Tweet Team
- Recruiting New Members
- Anything!



Founded in 1989

NINC Statement of Principle

Novelists, Inc., in acknowledgment of the crucial creative contributions novelists make to society, asserts the right of novelists to be treated with dignity and in good faith; to be recognized as the sole owners of their literary creations; to be fairly compensated for their creations when other entities are profiting from those creations; and to be accorded the respect and support of the society they serve.

NINC is committed to welcoming a diverse and inclusive membership to our organization and serving all members. No author will ever be discriminated against on the basis of gender, race, sexual orientation, religious/spiritual beliefs if any, ability, nationality or age. It is NINC's desire and goal to make sure that every author member feels welcomed and accepted and heard.

Founders

- Rebecca Brandewyne
- Janice Young Brooks
- Jasmine Cresswell
- Maggie Osborne
- Marianne Shock

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If you have questions regarding Novelists, Inc., please contact a member of the Board of Directors.

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Complete committee member listings are available on the website. Many committee positions are open and looking for new volunteers.

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Central Coordinator

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Address changes may be made on the website.

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Nink's goal is to provide our readers with high-quality articles that offer critical business advice, marketing how-tos, advanced craft coaching, or strategy to continue building a career, all geared to established authors. All members should feel confident that *Nink* provides something for them. We welcome pitches and submissions from all members.

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