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- Voiceover: Welcome to Author Platform Rocket. The highly acclaimed source for actionable business, marketing and mindset strategy for authors delivered in 20 minutes or less, most of the time. In other words, this is how you sell more books, while building a bigger fan base, the right way. And here's your host and author, marketing veteran, Johnny Andrews.
- Johnny: Alright, what's going on folks? It is once again, that Johnny Andrews fellow. And today we have an author guest, because this series is coming from a very rapid decision that I made where I sent an email out to everyone and said, hey tell me your story. And after getting what you might imagine to be, more than two, I have found some folks who I thought really were going to be able to bring some excellent value.
- Johnny: Today we're going to be talking about being prolific and being productive with Tracy Cooper-Posey, who, and I'm looking at this right now and I'm kind of like having a heard time wrapping my brain around it. You have over 100 books, is that, how many books do you have?
- Tracy: I have about 107 titles. By the way, hello Johnny.
- Johnny: Hello. Welcome.

Tracy: Yes. And the official list, because I'm working up to 100 fiction titles that are not short stories or box sets or stuff like that. So the official list level at the moment is 91, but if you add in all the box sets which take just as much production as everything else, and the short stories and so on and so forth, I'm about 105.

Johnny: Alright. We'll average it out and just call it 100. That's perfect.

Tracy: Yeah.

Johnny: No, that's really impressive. And I was looking at this, you are releasing a full length novel every four weeks.

Tracy: Yes. Yes, I am. And actually at the moment I am writing them every three weeks because I'm trying to get my production time up to six months between finishing the first draft and actually releasing.

Johnny: Okay.

Tracy: Which gives, once you have that very long lead time, it gives you a lot of time to do interesting things, with reviews and production and formatting and editing and stuff like that. I'm actually cranking out one every three weeks.

Johnny: Alright.

Tracy: Which I'm really looking forward to that going back up to every four weeks.

Johnny: Well, there's two points I wanna kind of hit on here. Number one, holy crap, that is amazing. You probably heard my take on folks doing what you do. That it's not that I'm against it, I'm in awe of it. That it's even humanly possible. I mean, I know that lots of things are very possible, but this just like is mind blowing to me on so many levels, with the speed with which you do this.

Johnny: Now the second piece of this, is that you said, there's a six month production time. And I wanna really drive that you've gotta just said it and then you kind of kept going. And I wanna be very clear with folks, because I know that there is a ton of folk out there on the inter-webs that kind of poo poo the whole you could do a good book in, you know, a couple of weeks kind of thing. And I just wanna point out here, what you just said, is that she doesn't. She creates ... that's between, and correct me if I'm wrong. But that's between the first draft, and had it actually spat into the world. Correct?

Tracy: The six months? Yes.

Johnny: Okay.

Tracy: The first draft, I'm doing the plotting in the first draft, one book ever four weeks.

Johnny: M'kay.

Tracy: And then once the first draft is in I consider the book to be in production and that includes every step involved in taking it from first draft to a fully published book.

Johnny: I like it. So it kind of sounds to me like you're leading up to talk about some sort of weaponized, let's just call it what it is, production process that you have in place here.

Tracy: Yeah. I don't have any secret formulas or anything like that. It's very basic stuff. I spend a lot of time in the chair writing. That's how I get them written fast. I'm writing from 6:30 in the morning until midday. And I'm getting between six and seven thousand words down a day. Six days a week.

Tracy: And once you get to that point, if you can get your writing schedule into place, it's really just a matter of mathematics after that.

Johnny: I like it.

Tracy: Yeah, if you're doing 6,000 words a day, and you're doing it six times a week, that's 36,000 words. You do that for two weeks you've got a book done.

Johnny: I like it. Now, I'm guessing on this one, that you don't pause a lot, and sort of go, you know what I could have written that sentence a little bit better.

Tracy: No. No, that's the worst thing people can do. And I'm glad you brought that point up. Because really, as soon as you slow down and let the editor in, you're focusing on the words themselves. And the process that I follow lets you tell a story. Because your speed needs to be up high enough, though, that the internal editor turns off. And then you're writing in flow.

Tracy: I'm not even going to try to pronounce that guy's name, but the guy that wrote the book about being in flow. He was very specific about that you disconnect from the analytics, you're not focusing on the process itself. You're just communing with whatever it is. And this is for any artist or artisan or anything like that. You get to the point where you've got enough skill, you're working at enough speed, that it's just you and whatever it is that you're creating. And for me it's just the story that's coming up on the screen as I type it.

Tracy: So you've got to get rid of that internal editor. Stopping and editing is fatal. You can't do that. You do have to keep going. And actually, Chris Fox, in his good book out there, "6,000 Words an Hour", and he talks a lot about doing writing sprints, which are a really good way to learn how to get into flow. But that's the trick, is don't stop. Don't stop to analyze, you do the first draft as hard as you can, as quickly as you can. You can go back and edit later.

Johnny: I love it. Yeah, that's a big one. And I've, you know, not that I ever, it's one of those fun things where I kind of have, I call it my fourth wall, is I don't ever usually dip my finger, personally, like I'll let other people talk about it. But in the how do you make a book. You know, I'll teach you how to sell it, but it's up to your to go figure out your process.

Johnny: But I like that. 'Cause I'm not the expert. I am not the expert at all, you know, my writing, I have a different process.

Tracy: Well, I think there's, I think for every writer there's a different way of doing it. There are common types of ways of doing it, but I've found the writing fast enough to get into flow, lets you actually get very creative with your story telling because you're really not analyzing. You're not stopping to go, oh, that doesn't work. It gets rid of all that. You're just getting it down.

Tracy: And afterwards when you go back and read it when it's nice and cold, it's always a surprise. Sometimes I write stuff and I don't remember writing it. And I'm looking at a scene, wow, did I actually write that? And there it is on the page.

Johnny: Very nice. So now, the other thing I'd like to ask you is, are you a plotter, or a pancer?

Tracy: Oh, absolutely a plotter. Compulsively and in detail. And actually, I've found I think the first four books I wrote, I wrote as a pancer. I mean, everyone starts there I think. Everyone just sits down with a blank page and starts writing when they first start writing at all. And could never get anywhere, I was getting, you know, rejections all over the place. And actually I'm now embarrassed that I even sent some of them out at all.

Tracy: But then I started reading a book about screenwriting. And screenwriters always plot first, they have to because that's how they sell their work. They've got to do outlines and concept pictures and stuff like that, so they're so into story structure and plotting in advance and stuff like that. And it was like, lots of lights going off as I'm reading this book. So I started plotting the next book, and that next book was the first book I ever published and it won the national award.

Tracy: Now, that could be sheer coincidence, but I'll leave that up to the audience to decide.

Johnny: No, I definitely think that there's probably something to that. Just a little bit.

Tracy: Yeah.

Johnny: Do you follow that save the cat outline structure?

Tracy: I've sort of looked at it, but I'm very much, I do do the three act structure. It's kind of ingrained in me now. I don't even really think about it when I'm plotting. But I do catch myself going, oh well that will be a good thing for, you know, the turning point at the end of act one, and stuff like that. So it's kind of there, but it's really not a very formalized, okay, here's the structure, now what scenes can I put in there?

Tracy: But I have also been doing this a long time. I've been doing it for a number of years. I've also been doing it over a number of books. And I think for beginning writers, when they start out, they probably need to get more formalized about, okay here's the structure I wanna hit, what scenes are gonna fit in there.

Tracy: But yeah, I still compulsively plot everything. And whenever I think I'm locked, it's usually because I haven't plotted enough and I don't have character arcs or history or something in there. And I'm feeling a bit blank and worried about what's coming up. So yeah, plotting queue is everything.

Johnny: Very nice. I absolutely love hearing this process, this is really cool. 'Cause I think there's probably a number of prolific authors out there who are doing a similar thing to it.

Johnny: Now, don't you, if I'm reading this correctly, you teach some of this stuff. Correct?

Tracy: Oh, I was teaching romance writing at university for decades. And I finally stopped because it gets to the point where it's very repetitive. And I'm also currently running a blog for, it's call "The Productive Indy Fiction Writer", and it is literally that. It is for writers who write fiction and publish it independently, who would like to write faster, or find a better process for getting their work out there.

Johnny: Absolutely. No, I like that. And where, I mean, this is a little early, but I'm definitely gonna ask. What's a good site where folks can find out more about that?

Tracy: Well, there's "Monocle", there's quite ...

Johnny: That's the one, that's your opportunity to drop the URL and now we can, now we're gonna sell some stuff.

Tracy: Oh, sorry.

Johnny: There you go.

Tracy: Yeah. Okay, I've missed the flag there, sorry.

Johnny: That's okay, I'll throw another one soon.

Tracy: My site is just, <https://productiveindyfictionwriter.com>.

Johnny: And you do have an SSL certificate on that. I like your style.

Tracy: Yes. I do. Well I have three sites that I currently run. And it just got to the point where I had so many readers contact me saying, oh well Google's telling me I shouldn't go on your site because it's insecure and you might steal my data. And I'm like, no no, that's not true. So I did organize to get the SSL certificate in there, it just saves a lot of hassle.

Johnny: Oh absolutely. No, it's a, our security guy, 'cause back in 2000, what was it 15, 16. We were like brutally hacked. Not the kind of hacking where people are like taking all your data, but the kind of hacking where they put something on the site where it like re-directed everyone to travel blogs. I'm like, what? Like, what kind of lunacy is this?

Tracy: Yeah. It's astounding how some people think that sort of thing is a productive use of their time.

Johnny: I'm guessing it was like a 15 year old kid in some other country who was just bored.

Tracy: Yeah.

Johnny: It's really [crosstalk 00:10:54].

Tracy: Hopped up on energy drinks and, yeah.

Johnny: Yeah. There you go. We're just painting a good picture here. Hopped up on energy drink and crack just going for it.

Tracy: Yeah.

Johnny: So I wanna really pull the clutch on why it's important for authors to be putting out a large number of books, and having, not I'm not saying that everybody needs to be going at the level you're going at. But the key components here I think are, number one, you have a daily writing ritual. And you stick to it.

Tracy: Yeah.

Johnny: Number two, you have a formula and, I like to call it, the weaponized production process in place and you're also just putting out just a large number of books. Now, we've talked about the previous ones, but why is it that people want to be publishing a large number of books? Like, what does that do for them?

Tracy: Okay, well there's any number of things that ... One of the critical things is Amazon favors you if you're publishing more frequently than every 30 days. So by doing one every four week, I'm hitting 28 days, so I'm making Amazon like me because I'm a frequent publisher.

Tracy: And you can do that, even if you can't write, and I am at the upper end, I admit that. But if you can't sort of match that same sort of word count, if you've got a day job. Oh, and let me just drop in an aside there, the last year that I was holding down a day job, because I write full time now. The last year that I was writing full time with a day job, I still published 12 books.

Johnny: There we go.

Tracy: So, yeah, if you're really organized. If you've got very understanding family and talk to them and sort things out and explain why being so productive is important. Quite often you can organize to get a lot of writing time in, even despite the day job. So it does work.

- Tracy: But anyway, the reasons why, just okay. It's blatant self promotion moment again, there is a two part post on the productive Indy fiction writer that actually talks about why you need to be prolific, and all the advantages. So if you go and read there, you'll pick up everything that I forget to say right now.
- Tracy: But anyway, the algorithms with Amazon favor you if you publish frequently. Also, the readers love you. They're not gonna forget you. These days, because of binge reading and I write in the romance industry where binge reading is a way of life for most of the readers. They're doing one and two books a day. So if I'm publishing frequently, they're not gonna forget me.
- Tracy: If I'm publishing frequently they're not gonna lose track of storylines in a series, and they will still wanna pick up the next book. Whereas if it's a year or six months before the next book comes out, they may get to the point where it will be too much effort to read all the others just to remember what comes next. So there's that factor as well.
- Tracy: The other thing is, is just because having a really big back list, which you get when you write quickly, once you've got that back list, you can do all sorts of really creative things. And back list, and also you must be writing in series. As soon as you start writing in series, it just makes marketing so much easier because you can get people, you can do all sorts of things. It doesn't hurt writing a lot of books, to give some away. So you can give away the third book of your series to get people into your series and also onto your newsletter, which is the other critical factor as well.
- Tracy: The other thing about writing quickly, is the more you write, the better you get. So even if you're ... for genre fiction in particular, it's the story telling that is more important than the actually prose. But just the fact that you're writing more and more and more, you'd be getting more practice. So your prose gets better as well. Also, your story telling ability because you calcify the story structure and how a good story is told. And how to develop that.
- Tracy: So every time you're doing a book, every process involved in creating that book, including the production and the first draft and the editing and all that sort of stuff, it just gets quicker and faster each time. So I could go a long time on all the reasons why being prolific is useful for an Indy fiction author.
- Johnny: No, I definitely think you hit the main points. And so let's do like a fast little recap here. Number one, now I'd actually back it up even more and say, you know what, if you have more books, there's more opportunities for people to give you money. And you can then become more successful that way. So that is one absolute thing right there.
- Johnny: But you're right, from a personal development standpoint, you're going to be becoming better at your craft, absolutely. That is super huge.
- Tracy: And that's the thing too. If you're writing very quickly and you're getting them out every four weeks, if you put one out there that sinks, it doesn't matter, you have another one coming out in four weeks. It's not like your entire year's income just crashed.

Johnny: Oh, totally. Totally, yeah, that would not be fun. But you don't need to worry so much about any individual title, because you're looking at it more as like a hive collective, which is really cool.

Tracy: Yeah. And then that back list starts earning your income too, it's all passive income.

Johnny: Absolutely. And the one part that, you know, before we really started this, you and I were talking about and I think we should touch on it because you are one of the people who have started doing this. But when you have this kind of, let's call it ammunition, you can really kind of get inventive, if you will, 'cause I know that you and I have, we're sort of pioneering this sell on your own site reality for authors because one of the things that I think most authors do not realize is that the algorithm inside of Amazon is no longer favorable for discovery because of the volume of authors and novels being poured in.

Johnny: And I'm not talking about just people, you know individuals like yourself who are productive, no, that's fine. It's just having like, what is it, over a million ISBNs, self published ISBNs are hitting Amazon every year now. And that's crazy. That's like what, 89,000 a month. And so back in the days, we were talking about like 2011 was probably, I think Christmas 2011 was probably the best year inside of Indy publishing because that's when the algorithm was favorable. That's when it gave you those boosts.

Johnny: And so you had mentioned when we first started talking, that you are not selling through your own site. And why don't you talk a little bit about that.

Tracy: Oh, probably one of the best things I ever did, was listen to your podcast about selling directly, and then actually going and doing it. I'm very much a control freak, I like having that control, it's one of the reasons I swapped ... I had 35 titles in traditional publishing before I came over to Indy. But my first Indy book out there and three weeks later I'm like, why on earth and I doing traditional publishing. This is crazy, I have no control.

Tracy: I love the fact that I can control everything. But as you say, the algorithms with Amazon don't favor the author. They don't give you enough information to work with. So, I mean, here it's marketers all the time. You got to test and tweak, test and tweak. Well if you can't get access to the sales numbers you can't test. There's just, you can assume and make presumptions and things like that.

Tracy: But yeah, so selling on your own site gives you 100% control, which is brilliant. Because then you can start doing really creative things which I've found, it always bothered me that I could never reward my long term subscribers on my newsletter, apart from, you know, giving them more books. But they've already got all the books. So I've always scratched my head about well how do I reward the newsletter subscribers for continuing to be newsletter subscribers and actually opening up the newsletter and reading it.

Tracy: And as soon as you start selling on your own site, you've got the perfect medium because then you can start doing discounts and deals, package deals and promotions that you only the newsletter subscribers get.

Johnny: Absolutely.

Tracy: And you talk about it on your blog and say, if you were a newsletter subscriber, you could get this 20% discount. So it's a reward for the long term subscribers. And you can do things like, exclusive content. I've got a couple of titles on my site, you can only get on my site. And that also gets around, I find that's very good so when you're boxing up sets and bundling books and stuff like that. Because you're avoiding the problem with Amazon where you can't move the price over \$10 without having to drop your royalties down to 35%.

Johnny: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tracy: But on your site you're getting 97% of the profit.

Johnny: Absolutely.

Tracy: So you could do it as an exclusive deal. So there's all these things that you can do once you've got that control.

Johnny: I love it. No, it is very cool. I just like hearing, I've been saying it for years, but I love hearing other people say it, especially as articulately as you do. And then the other piece of this which we were discussing is that everyone's talking about a marketing funnel and book funnels and things like that. Not to be confused with the website book funnel, which is a wonderful place, but hey [Damon 00:19:31] what's up man, love ya.

Johnny: The problem is, half of the funnel is missing. The fundamental half.

Tracy: Yeah.

Johnny: And that is where you, 'cause author's are wonderful at this concept of what is called prospecting, which is the act of going out there and getting that initial group of subscribers into the hopper. Now the point of heffing then the rest of the funnel, is that you want to, is not everyone's gonna buy from you. Not everyone's gonna like your stuff. In fact some of them are just gonna hang out and download and just sort of beat it like a little leech, or whatever it is.

Tracy: You hit the nail on the head. Because of one of your podcasts recently, I had this huge fundamental shift in perception about the differences between newsletters, which authors have been told for decades, have a newsletter. There's courses out there teaching you how to have a newsletter and how to get subscribers. But they all stop at the top of that funnel, and there's this whole email automation process that you can learn about and adapt and put into place that when us authors, who as you say are very good at going out there and getting prospects, drop all of those prospects in the top of

the funnel. You go through a qualification process where you wean out all the freebee seekers of which there is millions.

Johnny: Right.

Tracy: And you wean out all the people that may be interested but not just yet, or the ones that would be interested if it was a different genre. There's all different ways you can sort these people. But you qualify them. You put them through finer and finer filtering processes until you get your hardcore email list of people that you can tell about your latest book and you're gonna get enormous response for it. You'll have 80% open rates and 30% click throughs and 20% buying, in which point you just hit the number one in that particular category.

Johnny: Yup.

Tracy: So, yeah, it's very exciting. And just getting into this right now, but I think this is the thing. This is the area where fiction authors, Indy fiction authors can really establish themselves and pull back control because Amazon Kindle Unlimited has made millions for some authors, but it's getting scarier every day. This is one way to combat that. And it's also another very good way to combat the necessity of having to advertise all the time just to keep up.

Tracy: I mean, are you constantly spending, you know, hundreds of dollars ever month on AMS advertising and Facebook advertising. But when you've got people coming in to your funnel for you, you can back off on that. You're not so dependent on that working for you.

Tracy: And I'm sorry, I just completely overturned ...

Johnny: No, you are, I love it. This is what, I've been saying it for a while, but I would rather have you say it because I think in a lot of ways you say it better than I do. You're just a very articulate person. But also, I think it's good for everyone to hear the reality of the situation from someone who's not me. You know, because it's like, after a while they're like oh, look at the guy on the corner he's still wearing that sandwich board that says the end is near.

Johnny: And so it's like okay fine, listen, I'm gonna had this to you and now Tracy could say the end is near. Like, it's perfect. We'll just [crosstalk 00:22:39] that's exactly. So I wanted to, I know we've gone a little bit over here, but I absolutely had to touch on that.

Johnny: So, your process is phenomenal. I think people should seek you out to get more information. You had said it's a productiveindycfictionwriter.com.

Tracy: Yes.

Johnny: And also, you, if I'm not mistaken, you're tracycooperposey.com. It's all three names right?

Tracy: Yeah, that's the reader site. That's where all my books are.

Johnny: Excellent. Well I'll put links in the show notes to all of that.

Tracy: If anyone wants to see how an author sells directly there's the perfect example, just go on. And I've got some free books that'll work them through the whole downloading and pay for process if they want to check it out.

Johnny: There you go. That's the best way. In fact she just said, go buy her stuff and learn the process.

Tracy: Yeah.

Johnny: Excellent. Well ...

Tracy: And tell me what doesn't work if there's anything [crosstalk 00:23:25] that's another thing, is the feedback is always great.

Johnny: Exactly. Well, I do, before we sign off, I do have to ask you a question. Are you using a shopping cart for that process?

Tracy: I'm using cells at the moment, which is, I've discovered ... I mean, you've got to get into the preface. The other thing, I'm really a big fan of the ready fire aim process. So I jumped in using cells because that was recommended to me by another author, and it works. It does what you want it to, but it's extremely limited and I've already come to the end of the functions that are useful to me. No I want to do interesting things with discounting and I want to [inaudible 00:24:01] my receipts and a lot of other stuff I keep learning more about the process. Cells doesn't do that.

Tracy: So I will be moving over to Woo Commerce as I figure out how to [inaudible 00:24:11] the pages and stuff like that. I'll transfer everything over. And that's another thing, you get 100 books, suddenly moving shopping carts becomes a major major process.

Johnny: [inaudible 00:24:21].

Tracy: But yeah, so I take a long weekend and me and my husband sit there and just crank it out for the entire weekend. So I'll be moving over to Woo Commerce because that gives me complete control over ever aspect of the process and I'll also be moving my email list over to Drip because they will let me do far more with the automation processes than the one I'm currently with.

Johnny: Very nice. Awesome. Well, I mean, honestly thank you so much again for coming on. This has been absolutely fantastic.

Johnny: I just love talking to people who are at this level of professionalism that you've been able to pull off. So, nice work, seriously.

Tracy: Oh, thank you.

Johnny: No, and thank you. Alright, so I'll put the links there in the show notes. Make sure you head on over there to podcast.authorplatformrocket.com and you can check out more about Tracy there, she's got some really awesome stuff. And there's some pretty epic stuff there on her blog for you author folks.

Johnny: So, there we have it. Show's all done. You folks have a nice time and I'll see you next week.

Johnny: Alright that does it for another round of Author Platform Rocket.com. Remember, we're here to help you with your business, marketing and mindset. So if you have a question, want us to cover a topic or interview a special guest, just shoot over an email to show@authorplatformrocket.com. And as always, we need your reviews and support. If you like what you're hearing, please, leave us a glowing review on iTunes and forward this show to an author friend who might need the love and assistance. But most importantly, if you're an author who needs help with marketing, why not let us do it for you. Check us out at authorplatformrocket.com.

Johnny: Always affordable, effective, done for you author marketing, so you can get back to writing your books. I'm Johnny Andrews and that's it for today. I'll see you on the next show.

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