

**Author Platform Rocket
-Podcast Transcription-**



The podcast cover features a man with a beard and a blue shirt (Jonny Andrews) on the left and a woman with brown hair (Megan Haskell) in a circular portrait on the right. The background is dark with white geometric shapes. The text 'Author Platform Rocket' is in the bottom left, and the episode title and guest information are on the right.

Author Platform Rocket

**Effective Priorities & The Power
Of Community With Award
Winning Author Megan Haskell**

Guest: Megan Haskell

With **Jonny Andrews**

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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. Here is your host and author, marketing veteran, Johnny Andrews.
- Johnny Andrews: All right, what's up podcast land people? I am the Johnny Andrews again. Again. You've been listening, and I haven't changed yet. It's delightful, I'm sure. Today we are still in our author interview little series here, the mini series within a bigger series that is this show, and wanted to reach out to the old community and pull forth those folks who have really good information for you, and have a really good story and can add to your benefits.
- Johnny Andrews: So, today we are going to be chattering with the wonderful Megan Haskell, who is the Award-winning author of the Sanyare Chronicles ... it sounds so spicy ... which is a dark fantasy series, and she's also, let's see here, the co-author of *Aspiring to Author: A Guide to Your Publishing Career*.
- Johnny Andrews: We're going to be leaning more into the how to balance the heck out of your life, because she is what you would call slightly involved with a lot of things and yet seems to be able to do this. So, Megan, what's going on? Welcome to the show.

Megan Haskell: Not much. Yeah, thank you. Thank you for having me. This is fun. This is great. I love doing podcasts. Awesome.

Johnny Andrews: Very good.

Megan Haskell: Yeah. Thank you so much for having me. I am ... So to ... A little ... You see I have a lot of fingers in a lot of pies, involved in a lot of things. I have a six year old and a three year old at home, and I am a stay at home mom. I am trying to pursue this writing thing as I also raise two girls.

Megan Haskell: I am also the co-director of our local writing community, OC Writers Network, and we do have an online presence that we're involved in a lot of local events. We do write-ins, and meetings, and sorts of things. I am helping to make sure that we provide good content, and provide good experiences for writers both aspiring and published. So, that's me.

Johnny Andrews: Very good. Very good. It sounds like you have a couple of members on that thing. Like what, five or six, you were saying?

Megan Haskell: Yeah, our Facebook group is over 1,000 members, and then the active people that come to a lot of our events, we probably have ... Well, we're spread out all over Orange County, California, so we have lots of ... very decentralized, but we have lots of local events, and we have a lot of people that participate in things.

Megan Haskell: We just did a Wine, Women and Words festival at a local winery, and had 17 local authors, all women, doing author panels, and all that stuff. So, my partner, Greta, and I organized all of that as well-

Johnny Andrews: Well, that's good.

Megan Haskell: We've got a lot going on.

Johnny Andrews: Yeah, so being that I have two tiny humans myself, who are very close to the ages of yours, I can absolutely say that that can be pretty cray-cray from time to time.

Megan Haskell: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Johnny Andrews: That's what we wanted to talk about today, is setting effective priorities. How do you actually balance all of these things once? Also, we'll talk about, really, the benefits of community and things like that. How is it that you manage to run the show here?

Megan Haskell: By the skin of my teeth. No, I mean really what it comes down to, and this is one of the things I teach them. I actually teach a few courses here locally, and one of the things that I talk about a lot is deciding what your goals are. That's really

your starting point. For me, I left a six figure corporate job to raise kids, and that is my first priority.

Megan Haskell: Writing does come second to that, and sort of needs to stay that way. But of course, not everybody has those same priorities. Starting out with your goals and your own expectations for your lifestyle, I think defines who you are as a professional writer. For me, for example, right now my girls are both at school.

Megan Haskell: I've got Julia, the youngest, who is at pre-school, and she's only there for a couple of hours, but I get my mornings. Then my six year old, of course, is in kindergarten. So, I get a couple of hours each morning, and I just say that's work time. What I'm actually writing, or doing marketing, or podcasts like this, that's the time that I use for my writing, and then when the girls go to bed at night.

Megan Haskell: So I usually get a couple of hours at night as well. I'm limited. I get four hours of writing a day, basically. It's just deciding where your priorities are, and then making that decision to pursue that. Yeah, I mean it starts there. And then it's scheduling and building good habits, right?

Megan Haskell: So, if you've got two hours in the morning, and that's your writing time, well you better not be doing laundry, as much as my husband might want me to. You know? It's like that's my scheduled time and so I need to make sure I'm using it efficiently. Looking to other resources if you ... I'm sure a lot of authors that listen to this podcast follow people like Monica Leonelle, and Ryan [Koran 00:05:15] and people who are experts in productivity and experts in getting work done with limited time and challenging schedules.

Megan Haskell: But finding ways to maximize your efficiency during whatever time you have is key in setting up those habits so that you're consistently putting your butt in your chair and getting your work done.

Johnny Andrews: I really like, and it makes perfect sense. Begin with the end in mind. What is it you want to accomplish, and sort of reverse engineer that.

Megan Haskell: Well, exactly. As my girls get older, I will have more time and I'll just keep it standing, those work hours, until hopefully they're in school six hours a day and I get to work for six hours a day like a normal [inaudible 00:05:55]. Like a European. No offense to the Europeans, I know they work a lot, too.

Johnny Andrews: They do have perks, I'll give them that. Absolutely. Especially-

Megan Haskell: They do have perks.

Johnny Andrews: That maternity leave. Wow. What is that? Sweden with that year off or something like that? I mean wow.

Megan Haskell: Yes. Well, yeah. I mean they ... I used to work ... I had my corporate job. I worked in an international position for a multinational accounting firm. I actually worked with a lot of Europeans. It was interesting to see them all take basically the month of August off, you know? All of that. So, I tease, but I know they work hard, too. They actually ... they've done studies. They're more productive with the time that they have than Americans are who work longer.

Johnny Andrews: Oh, absolutely because I think there's only so much-

Megan Haskell: So, there you go.

Johnny Andrews: It kind of comes into, I think, attention and things like that, and so what I think-

Megan Haskell: Yeah.

Johnny Andrews: Also segways into your strategy of hyper focusing for these micro time segments, to say, "This is what I'm doing here. This is what I'm doing now."

Megan Haskell: Exactly.

Johnny Andrews: How do you get yourself ... I'm going to assume that you're human.

Megan Haskell: I'm not an alien.

Johnny Andrews: Okay, good. And there are days where you are like, "I absolutely do not want to do this." How do you get over that?

Megan Haskell: I choose one or two things that has to get done, and I get those done. Then I give myself permission to ... especially at night. It usually comes down to my night sessions are the ones when I'm the least excited about working, and the least motivated. The way it is, I take ... Like I said, there's one or two things.

Megan Haskell: Right now I'm editing the fourth book in my series, so I will say, "Okay, I have to get one chapter edited before I can give up for the night." So I do that. Often what I find is that once I'm in the swing of it, I want to keep going, right? If I don't, then I give myself permission to say, "Okay, now I'm going to go watch some crummy TV show and just let my brain turn off for a while." But, at least I got that one thing done, and I moved the game forward one step even if it's a little one.

Megan Haskell: If you're actively writing your first draft, and you're looking at word count, get 100 words on the page. So, these small little mini goals, and get that done. At least you're keeping the habit and you're staying consistent even if it's in a small way.

Johnny Andrews: I love that. Yeah. See folks? You hear this? It's not just me saying these things. That's what I really love. I'll bring someone on and they'll say something very

similar. I'm like, "Aha. You can no longer ignore me because someone else said it." I feel like a parent sometimes. It's like everyone ... where the kids just ignore you. You're like, "I'm pretty sure I told you to clean up your underwear, but you didn't. So, I'll say it again because it will work this time and I know it."

Megan Haskell: Yeah.

Johnny Andrews: But that's really very much the case. You have to have those ... Literally, what are the absolute, most minimum things that can get done that are easy enough to do, but also move that ball forward?

Megan Haskell: Right.

Johnny Andrews: In my bubble of whatever, I always say if you're going to be an author you have to have a daily writing ritual and a daily marketing ritual.

Megan Haskell: Yep.

Johnny Andrews: Especially for like audience building and things like that, and how do you move the needle forward. So, if you take one writing action and one marketing action, you can say, "Good. I'm done, and now I'm going to lay on the couch and just let life walk by me."

Megan Haskell: Exactly. It's finding what those minimums are. With a lot of writers starting out, they think they need to sit down for an hour and write 2,000 words and that's the only way they're going to feel satisfied. No, no, no. No, you can be perfectly satisfied and be actually more productive if you do just focus on that 100 words or whatever it is.

Johnny Andrews: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Megan Haskell: So finding that right minimum, and then that minimum goes up as you get more used to it. One thing that I found for myself, too, is when I first quit my job, and I had a newborn at home, and I was starting the series, getting even 50 words on the page was an achievement. Between taking care of the baby and changing diapers and nursing, and trying to get a little bit of sleep, sometimes 50 words was a huge achievement.

Megan Haskell: But now my absolute minimum is 750 words. It changes over time, and you have to keep adjusting as well as you go. As you develop those habits and keep challenging yourself at least a little bit to do a little more if you can.

Johnny Andrews: I like it. Scooch the peanut. You gotta move it up a little. Set the bar a little bit higher as you get better because that makes you-

Megan Haskell: Exactly.

Johnny Andrews: Just better in general. I like that.

Megan Haskell: Yeah.

Johnny Andrews: Look for those ... And I'm going to go out on a limb here, not to put words in your mouth, but I think that sort of an underlying big picture concept is that you have to make the time. It's not just, you know-

Megan Haskell: Yeah.

Johnny Andrews: You have to say, "This is a priority in my life, and I am going to etch out the time to do it regardless of what my life looks like."

Megan Haskell: Right. Right. Exactly. I mean, you have to make sacrifices. You can't continue ... If you are working a corporate day job and you're tired, but you want to start writing, you have to say, "Okay, well I'm going to give up video games." I gave up video games. Oh my God it was painful, but I gave up video games. I don't play video games anymore because that's my writing time. When the girls are asleep, I can choose to play ... I used to love Dragon Age. That was my go-to game, so I can go play some dragons on the screen, or I can maybe kill some trolls on my book.

Johnny Andrews: I like it.

Megan Haskell: You've got to make some choices. I did have to give up the video games, and most days I gave up the TV. I mostly don't watch TV during the week unless I'm having one of those absolute brain dead days. But, pretty much Sunday through Thursday, no TV, no video games, and it's just making [inaudible 00:11:43], making that choice to write instead.

Johnny Andrews: I like it. You're paying ... Well, the nice part about it is it's putting money in the bank so you could see the results of your effort. It's excellent.

Megan Haskell: Yeah.

Johnny Andrews: Awesome. Cool. So let's make that quick segway then, because that's definitely one element of it is prioritizing this stuff, doing your daily minimums on the things that need to happen. As you evolve, letting those minimums get maybe a little bit more and a little bit more, but then also the huge one is that fuel, that in a lot of ways, is ... I think a lot of authors are hermits for the most part. I think a lot of entrepreneurs in general have sort of this isolation kind of thing.

Johnny Andrews: What I like about this is you really stress the power and effectiveness of having the community. Why don't you kind of dig into that?

Megan Haskell: Yeah, so I mean I think everybody needs a support network and community. When I first started out, I really didn't have one. I was riding the train every day,

and just writing little short stories about the people that were riding the train with me. That was fine, because it was just a hobby. It was just for fun. As I got more serious, and then of course quit my job and stopped having interactions with grown ups, it did become more and more important to find that writing community.

Megan Haskell: I found it here first at a writer's conference where I got to meet ... It was suddenly like, "Oh my God. I found my tribe." Right? You just feel this overwhelming sense of, "I belong here." Once you find that, you find extra motivation, and you find cheerleaders. That's one thing that's so fantastic in general, I think, about most of the writing community and certainly the indie author community is this idea that ... what's the phrase? [inaudible 00:13:23] or whatever?

Johnny Andrews: Yeah, exactly.

Megan Haskell: People will cheer for you and they will help you if you simply start making connections and maybe going slightly outside your comfort zone and talking to people. It is hard, don't get me wrong. I'm an extroverted introvert, so I can be social, but I really don't always like to be social.

Johnny Andrews: Totally get it.

Megan Haskell: Yeah, and I get that it's hard especially if you're fully introverted and super shy, and putting yourself out there is challenging, I think, for everyone. Once you do you it and start making those connections ... Some of my best friends now are people I met either through the conference or through our local community. That's how I met my business partner, Greta, as well, and finding those resources and being able to ask questions, and being able to say, "I don't know if this is any good. What do you think?" and having an honest answer are critical if you want to actually be successful at this.

Johnny Andrews: Oh, 100%.

Megan Haskell: I don't think you can do it without a network.

Johnny Andrews: Yeah, I definitely agree with that. I kind of also want to put an emphasis here on the get out of your house kind of moment-

Megan Haskell: Yeah.

Johnny Andrews: Is when I was getting started in business, way back in the days of yore 2004ish, I was in this tiny little upstairs bedroom working 18 hours a day off this laptop. I barely saw the sun. As time went on, I didn't really start to ... My business started taking off when I started going to events and things like that, and meeting people who were like me, who were doing similar things, and developing business relationships and stuff like that.

Johnny Andrews: It wasn't just the opportunity there to network with people like me, it was also the fact that I got out of my bubble for a little while, and went and did something that even if you're introverted, it breathes a form of life into you that you're not going to get on a Facebook group.

Megan Haskell: Yeah. Absolutely.

Johnny Andrews: So, I would definitely recommend if you don't have a local resource why don't you go ahead and become that local resource because I can promise you that unless you're in a town of six people, you're probably going to have other folks like you who are in a similar situation, who need the same thing. I would actually classify this almost as one of the human needs, that need for connection. It fuels you in so many different ways.

Megan Haskell: Well absolutely. Not only does it fuel you as just a human being, but your creativity expands. I found myself so inspired by some of my other author friends who are maybe one step ahead of me, or even a step behind. They're doing something a little different, they're on their way up and they're doing something new and creative, and I'll go, "Oh my gosh, that's brilliant."

Megan Haskell: Or, whatever it is that getting out there in person, talking to people face to face, it's a different connection, and it's a different communication. You get way more out of it than you do typing just on a screen, for sure. Yeah, that motivation and seeing somebody else ... Like I said, if you're writing 50 words and somebody else is writing 100 words, all of a sudden you go, "Hey, I can do that too," you know?

Johnny Andrews: Totally.

Megan Haskell: Just that little bit of a step up, that little bit of a push that you need, or the inspiration to say, "Hey, this actually is working for so and so, so I know it can work. I'm going to make it work for me too," and expanding your horizons a bit and leveling up, as I like to say.

Johnny Andrews: Oh, absolutely. I like to kind of tie it in with the rising tide lifts all ships. This is one of those moments where ... and I think a good analogy of this is if you look at the history of the Olympics and what people thought was humanly possible, say in like the 40s, 50s and 60s versus the kind of-

Megan Haskell: Right.

Johnny Andrews: Achievement that they're doing now. Because what my point is here is when you witness something, it's sort of like, "Holy crap. That person did this." Now the bar's raised-

Megan Haskell: Yeah.

Johnny Andrews: And it's like everybody knows that it's possible now, and then it almost becomes the default of what the normal becomes. It was this thing that maybe a year ago was like, "What is ... No way. Did you see what she did?" And now it's like, "Oh, yeah. My toddler did that last month." You know? And you get that from the community a lot of times, is when you see that you could be like ... and you said, I think you nailed it when you were like, "Oh, I see what this author is doing, and regardless of their position in the pecking order," or whatever it is, it's like, "Wow, that's some super awesome stuff. Now that I know it exists, I'm going to try to incorporate that in with my life, also."

Megan Haskell: Yeah. Yeah. Exactly. Going back to the Olympic thing, have you ever seen the gymnastics routine from the 50s?

Johnny Andrews: Yeah, they were awful.

Megan Haskell: Like, they basically walked across the balance beam, or did a summersault on the mat, right? Now, you see them flipping and turning all over the place. Yeah, you're right. It's the exact same thing. When you make those connections, when you see somebody else doing something, you realize you can do it too, and it's totally new and exciting, and you're just raising that bar a little bit more.

Johnny Andrews: Absolutely. Yeah. I think the moral of the story is get some systems in place, get some minimum daily activity, do your rituals, and absolutely go out there and shake hands and kiss babies because even if you're an introvert, it's going to really, really, really ... it makes you feel better.

Megan Haskell: Yeah.

Johnny Andrews: And you probably could use some fresh air, let's be honest with each other.

Megan Haskell: Yeah.

Johnny Andrews: If you're an author you probably need to get out of the house more. That's just-

Megan Haskell: Absolutely.

Johnny Andrews: 90% of everybody, including myself. I am absolutely in there. So awesome.

Megan Haskell: Yeah.

Johnny Andrews: Megan, this is really ... thank you for coming on. Where can people ... what's your site, where can they hunt you down and gather intel?

Megan Haskell: Sure. My website is meganhaskell.com, it's pretty easy. M-E-G-A-N. There's no H, there's no E-A. It's just M-E-G-A-N Haskell.com. I'm on most social media as Megan P, like Paul, Haskell, which is actually my middle initial but nobody really

cares. So, it's not Phaskell. [inaudible 00:19:22]. And let's see, for our writer's community, we are ocwriters.network, and you can find us on Facebook as well.

Megan Haskell: So we have, like I said, a lot of local events. If you are in Orange County, California, we have writing events, which get you out of the house, and you don't actually have to interact all that much with people because you just write alone together. Then we have other bigger events like the Book Fair and stuff like that. So, you're welcome to join us. It's free.

Megan Haskell: Of course, the Facebook group is widely available to everybody. We have a blog on our website as well, which has a lot of fantastic information, if I do say so myself. My books are the Sanyare Chronicles. I have a box set and Book Four is coming out in July.

Johnny Andrews: Awesome. Perfect. I'll make sure I'll get all that stuff linked, so just check the show notes for that, and you can see more about here there. Awesome. Thank you so much for coming on. It's been great.

Johnny Andrews: All right, that does it for another round of AuthorPlatformRocket.com. Remember, we're here to help you with your business, marketing and mindset. 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. As always, we need your reviews and support.

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Johnny Andrews: I am Johnny Andrews, and that's it for today. I'll see you on the next show.

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