

20 Books to \$50k
Michael Anderle

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90 Days to \$10,000 in one month.



Hello,

My name is Michael Anderle and I am writing this because our good friend Stephen Campbell of The Author's Biz podcast requested two things:

- 1) Headshot
- 2) Example(s) of the ads I used on Facebook.

I figured I might add a few things we didn't get to talk about on the podcast. I am horrible about remembering names (of authors, books, etc. etc.) so I asked Stephen for the direction of the interview in advance so I could create my cheat sheets.

“I created cheat sheets for questions Stephen never asked... Gott Verdammt!”

-Michael Anderle



Not that it helped, necessarily. I still got stuff wrong. Sucked to be me on video at that moment.

Stephen says it was a great interview, I think he says that to all of his guests*, if you have been on his show before, email me and we can compare notes. Also, he looks WAY younger on Skype than the picture I've seen. The man is looking good.

**I don't really ... necessarily ... think that. But I DID think it was funny to say, so - there you go.*

Anyway, I figured I would not only share the ads, but also some of my timeline stuff we never got to... See comments in red above.

As Rick Guiltier mentions on a blog post, you can get into 'schism' arguments with authors who argue their way is the only way to write, make money yada yada yada. I don't believe that.

First, I only have the my experience to support my claims. There are WAY too many experiences for people who are making really, really good money who we don't know about and who are too shy to speak up. Why? Because a LOT of jerks come out of the wood-work to blast them because ... well, frankly I don't understand why.

My point, is that for every mid-list author making money, that is another story. Sure, group us together and you start seeing similarities. However, let's take a look at Andrew Weir (The Martian) and myself.

He is monumentally successful with one book. The Martian (yes, I'm aware of 'The Egg', but that is not my point.)

My point is he is monumentally successful by *accident*. He wasn't planning on becoming published because he had tried that before and wasn't picked up. He tells the story on The Self Publishing Podcast (an incredibly funny episode, probably my favorite). He had written the story in pieces and people were reading the story on his website in web browsers. His readers asked him if he would create a file they could use for their eBook readers so he made one and placed it for download on his website. That wasn't good enough (too hard to get on their Kindles, I guess) so they asked for something easier which led him to place the file on Amazon. He 'had' to price the file at \$0.99 because Amazon made him.

He was then approached by Podium Publishing... Then Random House called him... Then Hollywood called him. Note, all of these people *called him*.

If you can't admit he is successful, then I don't know what to say. However, if you are ready to study his method of success, be very ready for it to take you years and an incredible amount of effort and fan support. He also deserves every bit of credit for it.

My process is different. Am I a 'success'? Not to Andrew's status and I don't pretend to be. However, I'm told that making \$10k in my third month of sales is pretty rare and others might want to know what I did and possibly what my opinions are on my experience.

Keep an open mind. Take what you want from my experience and leave behind what you don't. I won't be offended.

I might crash and burn tomorrow, but that still won't take away a pretty incredible story of making it to \$10k sales in 90 days.

Well, enough of my soap-box. Here are some notes and I hope they help some of you have an incredible story yourself!

- Create a series with engaging characters / Not two dimensional. It took a few books for some of my characters to come around and I did suffer a review or two about how some people seemed more 'real' than others.
- Ask for reviews in the Author's notes. I do this EVERY TIME.
- Create Fast and be honest. Consider the MVP idea (Minimally Viable Product). I would probably use a Pseudonym for a new set of stories. If the stories aren't getting fans, kill the books fast and move on. They aren't your babies and if they are, you aren't creating fast most likely.
- Go Series from the beginning. NOT REQUIRED, merely the common wisdom because those that love to read (like myself) look for series to buy. I want to invest in a set of characters and know I get to read MORE about them. Not just one book and done. Helps with marketing as well.
- Create common branding across your book covers. The font, a common image or color that stays the same, placement of your name. Are you going Author Branding or Title Branding? I chose to make sure my title was legible at a small book cover image size. Some book covers have beautiful text, that I can't read when made small... I personally don't like it so I made sure my titles are white on a darker background and legible when tiny.
- Create on Amazon first in KU if you are an unknown writer. Kindle Unlimited allows people to try you out for FREE (yet, you get paid!) Why is this so awesome? Risk is one of the biggest issues an unknown author (me) had to overcome.
- Use Wordpress for your website, Mailchimp for email, Amazon Author webpage as a pivotal area. Facebook for your main social. Facebook because it has the best way to advertise and you connect your advertising to your Facebook page for your book(s).
- Facebook ads to get readers aware of your books - start at \$5 until you have found your demographic and message. I hit my demo and message on the first try BUT I have experience due to my consulting business. I share that info below.
- Run \$0.99 weekend with a powerful email Campaign (ILVN for me) list effort. *My \$2.99 effort was not very successful.*
- Stack the campaigns near each other in time so that your sales have a chance to stick around and you increase in rank. That moves you up in Amazon and people DO pay attention. Your Also Bought's are a pretty important piece, I believe.
- People go from Ad -> Book Cover -> Review Count -> Blurb -> Inside Look -> First book in series. See the Ad(s) I have at the end and notice the way I clipped out the review counts and put them above the books.
- Pay attention to your retention from first book to second, second to third and so on. I honestly don't know what is 'strong' for a retention rate. I'm about a 73.6% for this month as I write this for book 1 to book 2. Then about 94% from 2 to 3 and 3 to 4. Too early to know for 5 (because spiked sales show it to be 101% right now).
- Facebook Page, Pay for likes so your new fans don't think they are signing up for a ghost town. \$100 got me 225 likes from people who like Vampire Stories. Stick something on their once a day. Act as if your writing to lurkers who might see your stuff sometime. It was pretty weird to be writing on a FB page with NO activity, but I did it anyway and got my 'voice' down while no one was reading.
- When selling direct on FB, use 3d Book Covers... Brand Brand Brand your look.

- The Author's Notes is where you personally meet your fans for **every** book. Facebook, your website, your email is for more involved fans. Your Author's Notes is a way to try and capture them in a conversation RIGHT AS THEY FINISHED YOUR BOOK.
- Price Changes can take a few hours to show up. So, if you say that you will only have something 'live' for 24 hours and you go into KDP to change the price, it took me a few hours for the new price to go live so my 24 hours was open for 27 or so. Not a big deal, just something I'm passing along.
- New Covers can take a day or two to show up. I was on pins and needles when I changed my cover for Queen Bitch and the image(s) didn't change all over Amazon right away.
- The Amazon forums feel like kBoards Light. There are a few really nice people on them, but there seem to be more individuals interested in negative energy than I was comfortable with.
- kBoards lurking was wonderful. If I had read some of the 'wisdom' before I just dropped my books and taken some of their points as gospel, I wouldn't have the series I do right now. There are a great number of really supportive people that tell you their story. and back it up. People whose books I had read already included Rick Guiltier and Anne Bellet. Some of your authors could be under pseudonyms. My opinion is that it is an extremely valuable place to find out info. Just remember there are true believers there who seem hell bent on making sure you believe whatever their story is. *WE ALL HAVE OUR OWN STORY.*
- Locate the funds for at least a minimum editing effort. I was considerably worse with my editing than I thought I was.
- Be honest with your fans, tell them right up front if you are doing something 'out of the norm'.
- Don't reply to reviews on Amazon. I selectively ignore this if I get a comment that someone could help me do something right, or I think that answering the review let's potential customers know what is coming. I've switched to moving my response into the blurb or review area.
- GetBookReport.com to get your data for multiple books easily
- Ask for help from fans in your Author Notes. Keep the group small. David Down Under helped immeasurably for book 4, Stephen Russell was a God send on book 5 and now 6. I've asked him to work with me back on the first books.
- Not sure about your efforts? Go Pen Name if your scared of getting slammed. I've listened to Stephen's interviewees who talk about having to start another name due to bad sales.
- My writing seems in the slower side of pretty fast. There are multiple books on how to write faster. My story is my speed comes from years and years of coding. Coding is often a logical effort and generally supports fast typing skills. I've dragon dictated and it wasn't too bad. My clean up was worse and for my personality it might not be worth it. However, it feels good to know if my hands were damaged, I could still create a story.
- My sales chart looks like a stock chart. Peaks and valleys. Each new book brought a slightly higher average daily income. First it peaked as existing readers who are anxious for your book grab it, then a few days of 'bleh' and then a steady growth and

climb back up as you get through the Tues-Thurs morass and finally Friday through Monday 'woohoo'.

- Perspective - Learn how bad it is in trad pubs and bless our lucky stars to be able to be alive during Indie Times.
- Realize you can be world-wide. When I saw I had Canadian fans, then Great Britain, Australia, France, Germany, Netherlands and Mexico I did a little dance for each one and *I can't dance*.
- Get and Use the Keywords to place yourself in multiple sub niche's. Pay attention to the niche count and choose some without as much competition if you can. Easier for you to break up to the top.
- You know this is a business, right? For every author who is working hard to make it a success there are probably a hundred who load it up to KDP and sit on their hands, wondering why no one is buying their book in a sea of 4+ million. If you aren't willing to go on the (digital) street corner and shout out your book is for sale, who will?
- Scrivener was a god-send for me. Once I hit 20k words, it was a pain to try to write in Pages or Word.

STEPHEN'S QUESTIONS

Here are some of my answers to the questions Stephen emailed me before the podcast:
First - we'll set up your initial plan - 20 books to 50k

1. Writing the books - How did plan and execute your production schedule?

First book was a 'test' to see what it took to get a fiction book online. Then I was looking at the beginning of NaNoWriMo... so I was like, 'What the h#ll? How fast can I get to 3?'.

2. Selling the books - Walk through the release dates of the 5 books, what did you do with each new book to gain maximum sales, etc.

Death Becomes Her - Nov 2nd, 2015 \$7.17 Daily Average

Queen Bitch - Nov 11th, 2015 (\$7.21) average per book (APB)

Love Lost - Nov 25th, 2015 (\$12.35) APB

Bite This - Dec 14th, 2015 (\$16.36 - through 12/18) FB ADS STARTED 12/18 (\$66.07 APB up to ILVN campaign (Jan 15) - Includes release book 5).

Never Forsaken - Jan 11th, 2015 (\$126.31 APB since ILVN - Facebook since Monday).

Under my Heel - Feb 8th but I'm hoping to swing it in January because I think it would be cool to have 6 books in 3 months. But, we will see. I've got a huge project for my consulting business due this month.

NOTE: If you ONLY include books 1-4, right now the APB is \$83.39 per day. Book 5 is at \$148.24 Average sales per day.

3. Marketing the books - What did you try, when did you try it, and how did you adjust along the way. What worked and what hasn't worked.

AMS (Amazon Marketing Services) from 11/23/2015 to 12/18 or 19th. Pretty much returned my money since I had a series, I feel. However, it got the momentum started I think.

I had a bump from BargainBooksey.com Spent \$35 received about \$55 in revenue. For me, that was a big deal and a jump to my highest amount (\$77) in revenue for the day of the campaign. I would switch to make it a \$0.99 effort had I been able to tell my younger self anything now.

I had planned on no advertising until right before the 3rd book was released. I used Amazon Marketing Services and broke out the ads by Author so I could see if certain authors worked better.

I chose to go strictly Amazon - First because I didn't have the bandwidth to go wide and I needed to keep my focus as tight as I could. When I released the first book, I had nothing. No Facebook, No website, no mail list... nothing.

I feel that going Amazon only helped because Kindle Select gets you those first people who are willing to try you. I didn't do a \$0.99 until this last weekend. Otherwise, I've always been \$2.99.

4. Wrap up - Compare where you are now with what you expected. Have the goals of 20 books and 50k changed? What parts of your plan can be replicated by other authors, perhaps writing in different genres?

Please see bullet points above.

Want to test your idea? Try this:

Write down your titles. Write down your 1, maybe 2 sentence overview of the action. Write the first 2k words of book 1. Give it to someone and ask them if they want more.

If you haven't hooked them? Try again. Maybe it is only your start, but something needs to give because if you haven't hooked me as a voracious reader, I'M GOING TO THE NEXT BOOK. There are thousands available on KU, I won't waste my time hoping you will get to a story unless the reviews really, really encourage it.

That is why I kill off a main character right away. I want to jolt the reader who thinks that the first guy is important... then 'boom', up in a fiery explosion.

Here are my original story ideas for 1-5 and all of my story titles I started out with

DEATH BECOMES HER - Bethany Dies and Resurrects - When you care about results, your humanity becomes second place.

QUEEN BITCH - Bethany takes control of the UnknownWorld. Tentatively leaving some groups 'out in the cold' as too much trouble and not enough resources.

LOVE LOST - Others loose love, Bethany exacts revenge - Some splinter groups go after Bethany's former friends. Martin is killed - his family is saved. Bethany goes rabid in rage.

BITE THIS - Bethany becomes known by military powers - The attacks get M.I. to realize that Bethany is the common connection and decide to take her down. Michael's mansion in the city is enflamed.

NEVER FORSAKEN - Bethany licks her wounds, fights all across the globe, acquires close support. Goes back and gets Michael.

UNDER MY HEEL

KNEEL OR DIE

END OF FIRST ARC (1-7)

WE WILL BUILD

ITS HELL TO CHOSE

RELEASE THE DOGS

SUED FOR PEACE

WE HAVE CONTACT

MY RIDES A BITCH

More Musings (because I couldn't write a coherent whitepaper...)

Have a single protagonist, or very small group but fill in with a significant amount of new people each book which is a challenge to manage. Every book needs to have something new your readers are learning, but give them a solid foundation. Something has to stay the same in your series. You don't have to do it, but you are going to make it more challenging on yourself if you don't have fresh relationships for readers to get to know.

Many of Stephen's guests have mentioned this, but as a reader I concur, read the books in the genre. I have not taken any classes or read any books on writing and unfortunately my reviews can attest to that. However; what I did was soak up the genre's and get cool ideas I liked, for example the protagonist has someone which they can speak to in their mind.

I wouldn't suggest you merge genre's like I've done unless you are incredibly lucky, which is the camp I fall into, or really good. I don't know how a really good person would merge genre's on purpose, so that is another podcast that has probably been recording by someone some where.

Hit publish. Maybe not so quick as I did give yourself a little time to edit, but get yourself on a path. My goal of 20 books to \$50k was clearly possible from day 2. We aren't in a horrible situation here with all of the new books. Yes, many authors are getting savvy, but we are just competing with the Trad pubs and from my experience, I'm not worried about them at the moment.

Annie Bellet (Twenty Sided Sorceress Series) broke out her 2015 numbers. It took her until her fourth year to make more than \$50k - I think she reports she pulled in \$67k in 2014 and \$263k in 2015.

Anne Bellet has 17 books she is charging for and 7 books free she states. I've read on kBoards where she had books out that she took off the market because they weren't selling and didn't represent her brand well. It hurt, but most of her money came after she did that and built her series.

Want to know if something is going to work? I suggest writing a one or two sentence layout of the first xx books and then write the first few chapters of book one. Give that

to people to read and find out if anyone is asking for more or what i did was closed the file, walked away for a couple of weeks and then read it again. If it kept my interest, I was happy. If you get crickets, stick that in the drawer and try again. I'm interested in writing to tell story's and earn an income. If you are wanting to write to have your name out there, you don't even need to be listening to this podcast. You can write something in Word, save it as a PDF and use Amazon's PDF>textbook program to get it up and online. I did that for marketing reasons myself.

Be honest and open with your readers. A lot of us are introverts, which is fine. However, people will help you become the most outgoing introvert if you are honest with your foibles. Don't expect; however, to explain your needs and beg for help. When I put out my first book, I wrote an Author's Notes section at the back that just laid it all out. Everything from why I read so much as a child (I was grounded all of the time) to what's going on in the story and admitted I didn't have a clue myself. Heck, one of the characters, Ecaterina, just tagged along in the story and she has grown over the course of the five books.

I think I remember reading something that J.K. Rowling said about the characters writing themselves. Now I don't only hear what she said, I understand what she means.

Plan on a series. I heard a discussion about making your series trilogies where if you want to continue the characters use them in another trilogy. The justification was that it allows new readers the option of multiple entry points into the books. I'm bad about names, but the author in this interview had fantasy stories and I believe those are usually 100k word books. I average 70k words so. I figure it takes at least 4, maybe 5 of my books to equal just 1 Fantasy trilogy size!

Study your niche covers. There are certain fonts in Science Fiction that are used effectively and my opinion was that the book titles needed to be consistent. When you line up my series, they will have the same font, a portion of each cover is remarkably similar. The slight difference will be the color behind the author name. The first arc of 7 will be red, the next arc will be another color, probably blue and then the final 7 will be yet another color.

Learn Scrivener

Concentrate, you can't learn everything at one time. If you want to do this as a business, then you pick and choose your areas. Your writing comes first, without new product you will die as an indie author.

Ads

First ad, notice I missed putting in the \$2.99 price on this one.



I decided I wanted to do something 'Christmassy'. It got my KurthorianBooks Facebook page banned for bad language. I STILL can't do any ads on that page. I've had multiple ads 're-approved' manually by Facebook admins only to have the computer ban-hammer b#tch slap me again THE VERY NEXT SECOND... I've almost stopped trying to do ads on that page.



After the whole 'bad words' issue from the previous ad, I skipped making an ad for 'Queen Bitch'. Because, what are the odds?

So, here is book 3's ad.



Book Four... Note I had \$3.99, but never priced the books at that price.



Promo for Book 5:



I never really advertised the ad above, I decided to go for the 'coming soon' idea below.



I've tried to capture the verbiage used on the very first ad. It took two (2) screenshots, but it provides the idea of what I used for heading and titles.



The Kurtherian Gambit

Sponsored · 🌐

👍 Like Page

"Lose Yourself In Bethany Anne's World" Four books out in the series NOW!



Just Released #4 in the Series!

Read the first in the series, then keep reading on the roller coaster ride that is Bethany Anne to the latest, BITE THIS - TKG04!

WWW.AMAZON.COM

Shop Now

Here are the audience settings for the first ad:

SAVED AUDIENCE: Vampire Books ▼

AUDIENCE DETAILS

Location: United States

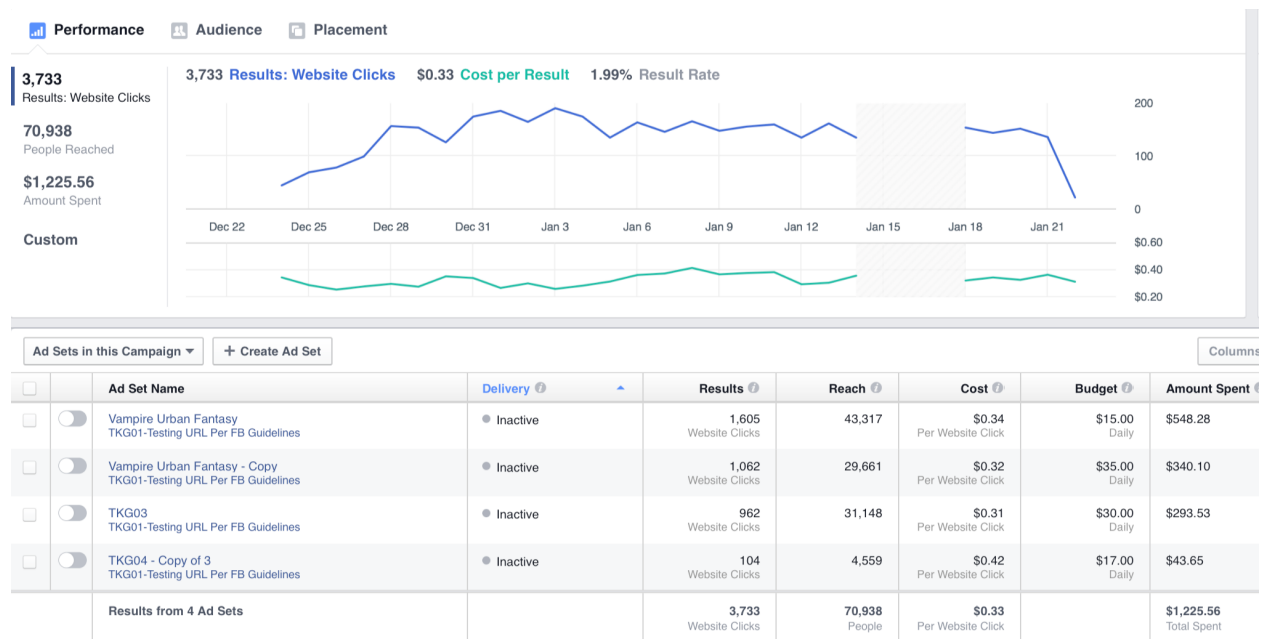
Age: 18 - 65+

Language: English (UK) or English (US)

People Who Match: Interests: Urban fantasy, Fantasy Paranormal book group!, Paranormal Books, Reading Vampire Books, Just Kindle Books or vampire films

Here are the latest ad cost(s). These are the ads I've had to run AFTER the ban-hammer from 'Ho Ho Uh Oh'.

Note the skipped days for Jan 15th - Jan 17th when I ran ILVN and TheFussyLibrarian.



I hope this have provided more detail. Hopefully, this weekend won't go up in flames and I'll have enough people who enjoyed the first podcast with Stephen email him, provide him amazing iTune reviews and rise up as a LOUD VOICE and ask him to have me back on for an update?

(At least I'll be out in the street in Florida, waving my little "I Love Author Biz Podcast" flag.... Swish swish, swish swish.... swish, swish. Anyone joining me?)

Good writing everyone!

Michael Anderle

<http://kurtherianbooks.com>