

How to Build to Six Figures: Strategy Summary + Action Checklist

This is an actual strategy I've personally used to help multiple authors build to six figures in revenue. (Obviously things varied slightly from author to author, but the foundation of the strategy remained consistent.)

A **strategy** is a cohesive set of **tactics** (action items) that are all pulling toward the same core objective. The core of our approach here is based on **the two lever marketing strategy**. These two levers are **launching / big promos (Lever 1)** and **backlist ads / catalog optimization (Lever 2)**.



Lever 1 helps generate sales volume and algorithmic visibility. With this strategy, we're using massive sales volume produced by launches, BookBub Featured Deals, Mega Kindle Countdown Deals (KCDs), and Prime Reading (when Amazon pays you for inclusion in Prime in either the US or UK) to build our fanbase (newsletter subscribers / readers of the series / word of mouth) and trigger the Amazon algorithms.

Lever 2 helps extend this visibility / momentum between launches, while also continuing to sell books (and thus building the email list and fanbase). Here, our Lever 2 elements are a combination of:

- **BACKLIST ADS:** \$50 - \$100/day is often the “equilibrium point” for many series that respond well to backlist ads (most series cannot be advertised profitably outside of a launch or big promo, which provide help from the algorithms). This is the point where additional advertising dollars no longer increase profit. This will vary by series—some can spend significantly more—so calibrate based on your own data.
- **CATALOG OPTIMIZATION:** blurb / cover testing is one of the cheapest and most effective ways to improve your marketing, because a better blurb and / or cover will not only increase sales from your ads, but also your newsletter, social media, and any other place you're getting traffic.

- **BABY KCDs:** smaller KCDs (with a budget of \$0 - \$250) or free runs between launches to boost visibility / sustain momentum. Can just announce these to your newsletter, don't have to do any paid promo.
- **BRIDGING:** use assets like box sets strategically along with promos to bridge earnings dips between releases without having to write more words.

Most authors are already launching and doing backlist promotion. However, they often view these two levers in isolation. But if we instead treat them as part of a continuous marketing chain, we can link them together to sustain and build upon our momentum from release to release and promo to promo. This not only helps us make more and build our career quicker, but also helps us iron out some (although hardly all) of the volatility in our month-to-month royalties.

From there, the specifics of our six-figure strategy are as such:

- **CORE OBJECTIVE:** make six figures
- **STRENGTHS:** ads, launching / promos, analysis
- **WIDE / KU:** Kindle Unlimited (only works in KU)
- **RELEASES:** 4+ 40,000+ word full-length novels in a single series per year. You generally start seeing significant scalability with the ads and series revenue rapidly increasing at Books 6 / 7 / 8. Note that if a series is dead in the water, releasing more books doesn't magically revive it; a long series only makes sense if the early books show signs of life. After you've built a series to 6 – 8 books, you can start considering spinoffs or additional series in the same genre.
 - a. There are, of course, exceptions where trilogies / standalones etc. are profitable. But having more books makes it dramatically easier to run paid ads (because you're making more with each sale due to increased readthrough value) and push more aggressively with your launches / promos (for the same reason—you have more books to sell people).
- **TRAFFIC SOURCES:** 1 – 2 main traffic sources. This will probably be promo sites / BookBub Deals + one ad platform (Facebook or Amazon), but you could throw a social media site (TikTok being the current best bet, but can be Instagram, your Facebook Author Page, or Facebook Groups) into the mix.
 - a. Submit consistently to BookBub as often as eligible.
 - b. Can submit to BookBub for 99c, then free right away if rejected w/o waiting for 28 days.
- **TACTICS:** Kindle Countdown Deals / Prime Reading
- **TESTING:** test blurbs / covers (for Book 1, don't usually test anything else since Book 1 is the main entry point + where most of the ads are usually focused) to improve packaging.
- **PRICING:** \$1 is not just \$1. \$3.99 is 33% more than \$2.99. Can usually price later books (after Book 3 or 4) in the series at \$4.99+.

- a. This is a good starting point: \$2.99 (B1) / \$3.99 (B2) / \$3.99 (B3) / \$4.99+ (B4 onward). Can adjust and potentially price later books (e.g., Books 6, 7 etc.) at \$5.99+. Can also try Book 1 at \$0.99 to increase sales volume.
- **NEWSLETTER:** build organically (novella / bonus scene or epilogue in front + back matter), send weekly or monthly
- **TRACKING:** monthly revenue and expenses (for official accounting) + organic newsletter subscribers / daily or weekly tracking (for series you're advertising)
- **FORMATS:** eBook / print (can expand to audio later, but usually a much larger payoff to invest that money in marketing / ads while initially building)

Use assets like box sets to **bridge** gaps in your promo / release schedule and sustain more momentum between launches. If you maintain more momentum, then the next launch / promo starts from a higher watermark, so you're spending less time and money regaining lost ground.

Structurally, try to organize your promos and launches so that you have one every other month. To turbocharge results, have a promo or launch every month.

Here's a sample schedule with four books per year. Note that you need to bridge fewer gaps and schedule fewer promos when you release more often, because the launches do more of the heavy marketing lifting.

You're usually keeping the backlist ads on during release / promo months (if they're effective). So any money for the launch / promo would be in addition to what you're already spending on ads. Be sure to factor this into your budgets.

- Jan: **release**
- Feb: \$50/day (backlist ads)
- Mar: **box set**
- Apr: \$75/day (backlist ads)
- May: **release**
- Jun: \$75/day (backlist ads)
- Jul: **release**
- Aug: **BookBub on box set**
- Sep: **99c KCD**
- Oct: **Prime Reading**
- Nov: scale to \$100/day (backlist ads) + **Prime Reading continues**
- Dec: **release** + **Prime Reading continues**

Note: you don't have to release anything in January or in these specific months. The only reason the releases start in January here is simply because it makes it easier to create an example. The other launch months were chosen randomly.

The timing of some of these items (Prime, BookBub) is outside your direct control. But if you're consistent with your BookBub submissions and Prime Reading nominations, then these

opportunities present themselves with far greater frequency. Most people disqualify themselves from powerful marketing opportunities by simply failing to show up.

One-size fits all timelines are impossible, since results vary based on genre, release pace, promo frequency, marketing skill, craft, and so forth. But with consistency and a few books already out (e.g., your craft is already at a level that's on par with the full-time authors in your sub-genre), this strategy has the potential to build to six figures annually in between 1.5 – 3 years.

Adapting (Universal Principles / Ideas)

If you're a wide author or not using a ton of paid advertising / large promos + launches aren't one of your strengths (or you don't have the budget to do them now), there are still many principles and ideas that you can take from this and apply to your own strategy.

- **PRINCIPLES**
 - A **strategy** will help focus your actions toward the same core objective.
 - Be **consistent** with your releases (production) and the marketing tactics you use. Consistent releases are the backbone of your strategy and most important thing, regardless of what marketing tactics you employ.
 - Once you have a good product (books), find ways to get them in as many people's hands as possible. This helps you build your newsletter, fanbase, and generate word of mouth. For the strategy outlined in the rest of this document, we're using KCDs / Prime Reading to generate sales volume, but you can use other tactics that might be a better fit for your objective, strengths, and current budget. If you're wide, look for ways to leverage retailer-specific marketing tools and promotions. Also reach out to the retailer about potential merchandising opportunities (special editorial curated promotions / marketing slots).
- **RELEASES:** write 4+ full-length (40k+ word books) a year in a series; focus on one series (so long as it's showing signs of life), often start to see royalties accelerate around Books 6 / 7 / 8. Also, make sure you write in the same genre: this will massively increase the cross-sell between your series / backlist.
- **TWO LEVER STRATEGY:** push launches / promos strategically (Lever 1), then sustain momentum via backlist ads + catalog optimization and using smaller promos / box sets to bridge royalty / momentum dips (Lever 2). Note that you get less of a push from the Amazon algorithms when you're wide, so you're generally not as aggressive with the budgets for the launches / big promos here unless your existing fanbase is substantial (and can thus carry a lot of the marketing load).
- **SCHEDULE:** Aim for a promo or launch every other month. Turbocharge by doing a promo or launch every month.
- **TRAFFIC:** focus on 1 – 2 main sources to start. Promo sites / BookBub + either Facebook or Amazon (learn one ad platform at a time). If you don't have the budget for paid ads or don't want to focus on them, consider newsletter swaps and social media (TikTok, Instagram, Facebook Pages, Facebook Groups) as alternatives.
- **TESTING:** test blurbs / covers (for Book 1)

- **PRICING:** This is a good starting point: \$2.99 (B1) / \$3.99 (B2) / \$3.99 (B3) / \$4.99+ (B4 onward). Can adjust and potentially price later books at \$5.99+. Wide readers are less price sensitive, so possible to price higher than in KU (potentially \$6.99 - \$7.99).
 - a. **KU:** Can try Book 1 at \$0.99 to increase sales volume.
 - b. **WIDE:** Can try Book 1 permafrees to increase download volume. This has a lot more upside than 99c when wide.
- **NEWSLETTER:** send weekly or monthly, build list with a novella / epilogue or bonus scene sign-up link in front + back matter.
- **BOOKBUB:** submit consistently (more likely to get a BookBub Deal when wide)
- **TRACKING:** monthly royalties and expenses (accounting) + organic newsletter subscribers / weekly or daily (for series you're actively advertising)
- **FORMATS:** eBook / print. Note that you can go "wide" with your audio instead of publishing via ACX; this gives you pricing control and allows you to use the skills you've built to market eBooks (ads / social media / newsletter etc.) much more effectively.

80/20 Action Checklist

1. Set up a tracking sheet for your ads (weekly) and official accounting (monthly).
2. Adjust your prices if they're too low. A good general starting point for many genres is \$2.99 (B1) / \$3.99 (B2) / \$3.99 (B3) / \$4.99+ (B4 onward).
3. Write a 1,500 – 2,500 word bonus scene or epilogue for Book 1 in your most popular series if you don't have a novella / epilogue / bonus scene for it yet.
4. List potential assets like box sets, audiobooks, paperbacks, and so forth that you have on hand / can assemble cheaply to bridge gaps. Some of these are only helpful for giving a bump in revenue (audio / print), while the box sets can increase revenue and also help you sustain momentum.
5. Map out a tentative release / promo schedule for the next 12 months. Make this realistic based on your budget (e.g., don't plan a bunch of high spend promos if cash is currently tight) and output (e.g., don't plan to write 12 books a year if the most you've ever written is 4). Growth takes time; you can build your cash reserves and productivity capacity *if* you give them enough space to do so.

80/20 Long Term Implementation Plan

1. Submit to BookBub consistently.
2. Nominate Book 1 in your most popular series for Prime Reading.
3. Nominate Book 1s and / or box sets for Kindle Deals.
4. Focus on one ad platform to really learn its nuances and be able to use it well. Either Amazon or Facebook tends to be the best option; which depends on the genre, book, and your own personal preference. Once you get good at one, you can add in another for diversification + additional marketing firepower.

5. Focus on building a single series to 6 – 8 books before releasing a new series. The more books you have in a series, the greater the readthrough value, which thus opens up more marketing opportunities for you.
6. Write in the same genre. One pen name = one genre. This maximizes cross-sellthrough *between* your different series and dramatically increases the value of your backlist. As you build a career, more and more of the revenue comes from your backlist—but only if the books are in the same genre.