

STRATEGY

HOW to BUILD TO 6-FIGURES (and
BEYOND) in 2026

OVERVIEW

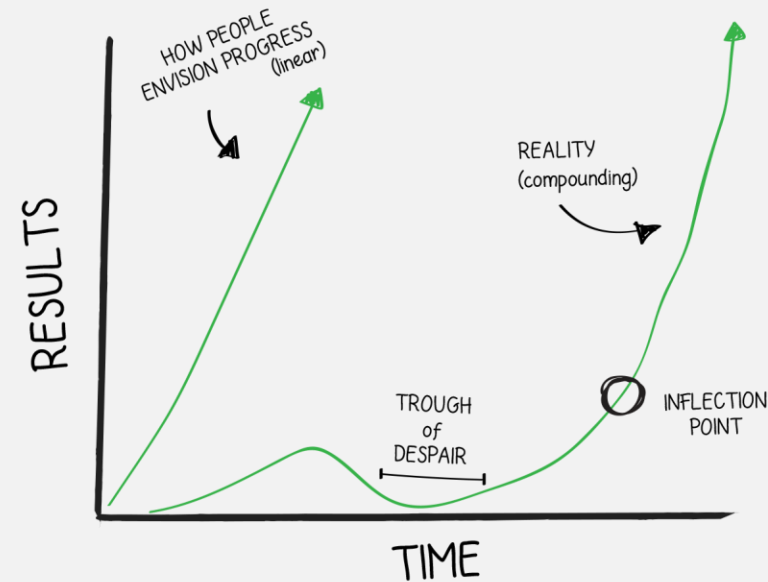
- **The Inflection Point:** why the next 3 years are an amazing opportunity to grow your career much faster than normal (if you know what to focus on)
- **80/20**
- **Filtering Questions**
- **THE STRATEGY**
- **GOING BEYOND SIX FIGURES**

THE INFLECTION POINT

THE INFLECTION POINT

The publishing industry in general is currently at an inflection point. This is a point of **exponential growth** where you can level up much faster.

Normally this occurs individually as a result of compound interest over time. (you may be at an inflection point in your career, but I may not be).

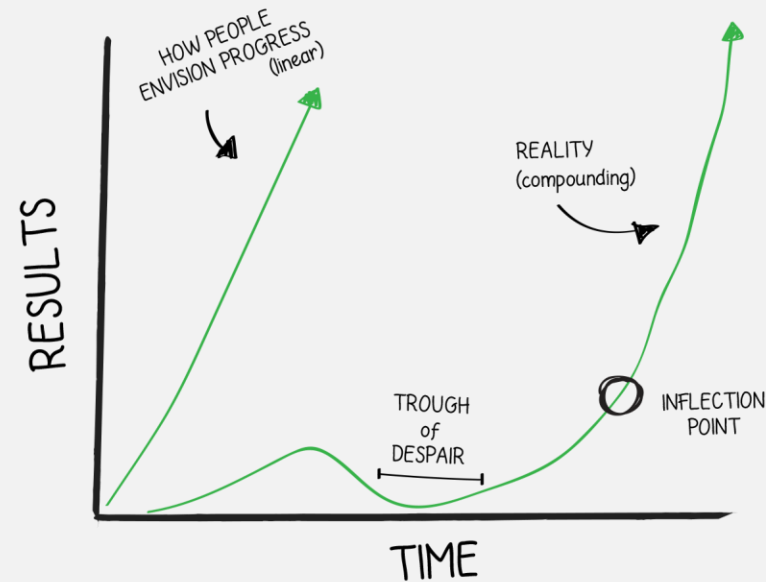


THE INFLECTION POINT

Right now, there's a huge amount of money flowing into tech because of the AI boom. This has spillovers to other areas of tech, where features and new software is being rapidly released.

Examples:

- Amazon has invested \$8 billion into Anthropic (the makers of Claude).
- In Summer 2025, Meta bought Scale.AI for \$14.3 billion, and was reportedly offering \$100m+ compensation packages to certain OpenAI employees to leave (reportedly no one took them up on this offer).



THE KEY

- Whether you use AI or not, to design an author business that can thrive in the coming years **you need to be willing to test, adapt, and narrow your focus.**

CORE PRINCIPLE I: 80/20

- **80/20:** 20% of your actions produce 80% of your results
 - Numbers are useful, but concept more important: a few actions move the needle, most don't matter.

CORE PRINCIPLE 2: ITERATIVE TRIAL AND ERROR

You identify the 80/20 through a process called **iterative trial and error**. It's akin to evolution, except you can learn from the past to guide the process and improve much faster.

Idea → Test → Track → Review / Analyze Result → Next Step (double down / iterate or test another idea)

PRINCIPLE 3: CONSISTENCY

- Consistency is **relative** to the task. It does not necessarily mean daily.
 - You can write daily, or 5 days a week etc.
 - OR you can write in bursts (all in 1 week), then rest for 2 months
 - This is because books are **assets** (e.g., you can store your work).
 - Key is the **publication schedule** is consistent.
 - If you're working out or eating, then that requires daily consistency; you can't workout for 8 hours in a day and "bank" that time.
- **Threshold of Consistency:** to make progress, generally have to show up 80%+ of the time (e.g., hit 80%+ of publication dates, show up for 80%+ of workouts etc.) (this is why automation is so powerful)
- Assets help with consistency: (1) books, (2) skills, (3) newsletter, (4) data

IN SUMMARY

- AI is just an amplifier for a solid foundation.
- You can choose to use it or not. But it's not going to change a business with poor fundamentals.
- Narrow your focus and execute on the high-leverage items (the key 20% that produce most of the results) by building assets, that align with your strengths (what you're good at / where you have a competitive advantage) and the life / business you want to run (because there's no point spending all your time doing things you hate).

FILTERING QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1: WHAT DO YOU ACTUALLY WANT?

- **5 minutes. What life and career do I actually want (e.g., how do I want to spend my time)?** Here are a few key items to consider:
 - How much you want to make?
 - How much you want to work?
 - Your lifestyle / schedule
 - The type / genre of books you want to write
 - The marketing and business-related things you want to do

STRENGTHS

- Strengths are competitive advantages you have over other authors
 - Skills: things you've learned that aren't common knowledge or that you pick up faster than other people (WordPress, Excel, Photoshop, direct marketing, accounting)
 - Personality traits: outgoing, kind, funny, reliable, etc.
- You will have to learn new things and hone certain weaknesses. But often you're better focusing your time + attention on building your strengths further.
- For example, you might be 10x better at social media than another author because your personality tends toward open + inviting. Or you may have been a social media manager at your old job.
- Or you might not like social media at all, but be good with spreadsheets or analysis.

EXTERNAL STRENGTHS

- External strengths
 - Finances: money from a day job or other source
 - Time: ability to work longer or for uninterrupted blocks of time
 - Resources: friends, family, colleagues
 - These are important, but your personal strengths are far more critical

EXERCISE 2: WHAT AM I GOOD AT (STRENGTHS)?

- Take 5 minutes. Call / text / email a close friend, family member, or colleague; or talk with an author friend now or later.
- Ask them for their honest feedback on “what am I good at?”
- Make your own list as well.
- Can also use AI (ChatGPT or Claude) if you’ve talked with it a lot and have memory enabled.

DESIGNING A STRATEGY

STRATEGY

- **STRATEGY:** a set of cohesive tactics (**action items**) all pulling toward the same core objective (**what you actually want**). A good strategy is built around your **strengths** (areas where you excel and have a competitive advantage versus other authors).
 - Gives you structure (North Star) for when things get rocky.
 - I use the analogy of a sled dog team.
 - If half the dogs are distracted / not pulling their weight, progress slows.
 - If half the dogs are pulling in the wrong direction, you stall out and die of exposure (give up).
 - This isn't about having *more* dogs (doing more stuff), it's about having as many of your dogs (the stuff you're doing) pulling toward the same destination (what you actually want).
 - An “optimal” strategy you cannot execute is fictional.

THE THREE MAIN TRAITS OF SIX- AND SEVEN-FIGURE AUTHORS (80/20)

1. **Consistently publishing books that deliver what readers want in your chosen sub-genre.** Finding the crossover between a commercially resonant concept (what the market wants) and what you like to write (and what you're good at writing) is key.
2. **Good packaging** (blurbs / covers) that appeals strongly to readers of the sub-genre.
3. Building the **newsletter** to have a direct communication channel w/ readers.

Once you have #1 and #2, main focus is driving traffic to get the books in as many readers' hands as possible (word of mouth, algorithms, etc.)

STRATEGY COMPONENTS

1. **CORE OBJECTIVE:** make six figures
2. **WIDE / KU:** either
3. **RELEASES:** 4+ 40,000+ word full-length novels in a single series. Start seeing scalability with the ads / revenue going up at Books 6 / 7 / 8. If releasing fewer books, can compensate with more promos, stronger blurbs / covers, stronger on-genre books, or deeper backlist. 1 pen name.
4. **BLURBS / COVERS:** strong / on brand. Study the Top 100 in your genre.
5. **TRAFFIC SOURCES:** explore, then narrow down to 1 – 2 main traffic sources.
 - One ad platform (Facebook or Amazon) + a social media site (TikTok, Facebook, Instagram).
 - Can do two ad platforms if you don't like social media.
 - Learn 1 ad platform at a time then layer another on top (~1 yr to get good)
 - Submit consistently to BookBub as often as eligible.
 - Can submit for 99c, then free right away w/o waiting a month to resubmit.
6. **PROMO:** aim to do a promo or launch every other month; can turbocharge results by doing 1+ per month. Can be a large or small promo.
7. **PRICING:** \$1 is not \$1. \$3.99 is 33% more than \$2.99. Can usually price later books (after Book 3 / Book 4) in the series at \$4.99+.
 - \$2.99 (B1) / \$3.99 (B2) / \$3.99 (B3) / \$4.99+ (B4 onward)
8. **NEWSLETTER:**
 - **Build:** build organically (novella / bonus scene or epilogue in front + back matter) (look up my books: DN Erikson)
 - **Engage:** send a monthly newsletter [can be weekly]
9. **TRACKING:**
 - **Monthly:** royalties and expenses (taxes / accounting) + organic newsletter subscribers
 - **Weekly:** ads [can be daily, not recommended if tracking manually]
10. **FORMATS:** eBook / print / box sets

OVER 3 YEARS...

1. You'd have 12 books in a commercial genre (backlist)
2. Be able to use 2 – 3 traffic sources effectively to actually sell books
3. Have your marketing foundation (website, newsletter etc.) firmly in place

SIX-FIGURE AUTHORS: THREE PROBLEMS

1. Tracking (not using Amazon Attribution links for ads, not tracking ad spend)—this needs to be addressed immediately if it's a problem, can kill your business
2. Going on writing side quests and killing momentum by releasing books your fanbase isn't interested in
3. Going on marketing side quests and adding too many things at once that are being done poorly (translations, direct sales, special editions, multiple new ad platforms / social media sites)

SIX-FIGURE AUTHORS (ALSO APPLIES TO PEOPLE BUILDING TO SIX-FIGURES)

1. Testing covers
2. Testing blurbs
3. Testing concepts
4. Getting good at Facebook Ads, Amazon Ads, or TikTok

GOING BEYOND SIX-FIGURES

- **Traffic:** add a traffic source (for 2 - 3 total main ones)—Amazon + Facebook Ads tend to be a good combo for scaling
- **Avoid Distraction:** look for opportunities to expand reader base, but not chasing every shiny object
- **Branding:** sharpen and hone brand (Apple)
- **Packaging:** blurbs and covers (main difference) (test covers / blurbs to elevate your game)
- **More and / or larger marketing events:** promos, spending more on launches
- **More books:** increase release pace
- **Formats:** audio, translations (can add these before hitting six figures but can be challenging cash flow wise)
- **Bigger audience:** some genres have a ceiling (e.g., cozy mysteries are probably 10x harder to make \$1m in than regular mysteries)
- **Advanced learning:** fewer resources, not a ton of money in courses because market is much smaller—I on I consulting is your best bet
 - Can learn I on I skills like Photoshop or spreadsheets etc. relatively cheap (~\$50/hr)
- **Outsourcing:** PA, ads management / marketing (hard to do)
- **Automation** (underrated): AI, spreadsheet templates, tools like Zapier

EXERCISE 3: RULE OF ONE

- 5 minutes. Reverse engineer from your core objective.
- What's 1 high leverage skill that you can focus on over the next 90 days that helps me achieve my core objective?
 - 15 minutes – 1 hour a day
 - This should be able to transform your business (not necessarily in 90 days).
 - **Traffic:** Facebook, Amazon, TikTok
 - **Publishing:** concepts, publishing consistency
 - **Testing:** covers, blurbs, concepts (requires that you know how to use Facebook / Amazon first)
 - **Email**
 - **Selling direct**
 - **AI / automation**
- What's 1 project you can focus on currently that helps you achieve my core objective?
 - 30 minutes – 4 hour a day
 - Then move on to the next project

EXERCISE 4: ONE HABIT

- 3 Minutes. Think of one habit / change you can make in your publishing business that helps you get what you want.
 - Examples
 - Reading 15 minutes a day
 - Checking your Amazon or Facebook Ads first thing instead of email

END