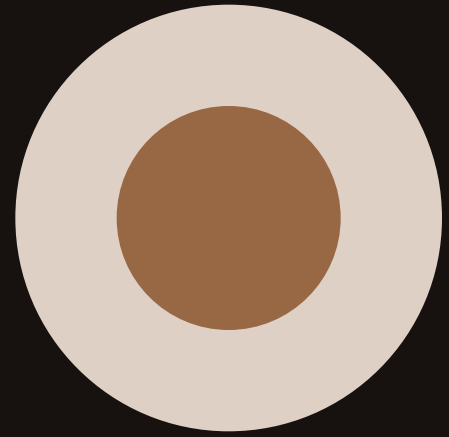




HALCYON
LITERARY HOUSE



A PRACTICAL 90-DAY FIELD GUIDE FOR INDEPENDENT AUTHORS

The Indie Author Growth Roadmap

Find what is actually stopping your book from growing,
then choose the next move with confidence.

REVIEW DRAFT | SEPTEMBER 2026

A NOTE FROM HALCYON

Before you spend again

Most independent authors do not have an effort problem. They have already posted, asked for reviews, changed keywords, joined groups, watched marketing videos, tried discounts, or paid for a promotion that created movement for a few days and then disappeared.

The real problem is usually order. A book with unclear positioning is pushed into advertising. A retailer page that does not convert is sent more traffic. A launch is planned before the author has a reliable way to keep the readers who show interest. More activity is added, but the earliest problem in the chain is never fixed.

This roadmap is designed to slow that cycle down. It will help you look at the book as a reader sees it, find the constraint that is limiting everything after it, and build a focused ninety-day plan. You may discover that you need marketing. You may also discover that marketing is not the first thing you need.

THE RULE THAT GUIDES THIS ROADMAP

Your next move should solve the earliest real problem, not the loudest anxiety.

START HERE

How to use this roadmap

Do not rush through this in one sitting. Begin with the scorecard and answer from the evidence you have, not from what you hope is true. Open your retailer page on your phone. Look at your website as if you were a stranger. Search for your book without using your name. Ask whether every step makes the next step easier.

01 Score the current book

Rate each area from one to five. A low score is not a failure. It is a clue.

02 Find the earliest constraint

If the cover and positioning are weak, do not jump ahead to advertising.

03 Choose one ninety-day outcome

Pick a result you can influence: a stronger product page, a working email pathway, or a focused reader campaign.

04 Build in sequence

Complete the foundation before asking more people to see the book.

05 Review the evidence

At the end of each month, record what changed and what the next decision should be.

PART ONE - DIAGNOSIS

The book-growth scorecard

Circle one number for each statement. One means the area is unclear or missing. Five means it is professional, tested, and working.

01. The cover signals the correct genre at thumbnail size. **1 2 3 4 5**

02. The interior is clean in ebook and print formats. **1 2 3 4 5**

03. The description creates a clear reason to keep reading. **1 2 3 4 5**

04. The keywords and categories match real reader intent. **1 2 3 4 5**

05. The Amazon and Goodreads pages are complete. **1 2 3 4 5**

06. A reader can move from discovery to purchase easily. **1 2 3 4 5**

07. The author has a place to capture reader interest. **1 2 3 4 5**

08. Current promotion reaches readers who fit the book. **1 2 3 4 5**

09. The author can explain the book in one clear sentence. **1 2 3 4 5**

10. The next ninety-day outcome is measurable. **1 2 3 4 5**

HOW TO READ THE SCORE

Your first priority is usually the lowest-scoring area that affects everything after it.

FOUNDATION

The book must earn the click

Readers make several decisions before they read the first page. They see a cover at thumbnail size. They notice whether the title, typography, genre cues, description, sample, formatting, and price feel as if they belong together. None of those details can make an uninterested reader want the wrong book. They can, however, stop the right reader from walking away.

Open the book on the smallest screen you own. If the cover becomes confusing, the title disappears, or the design suggests a different genre, the problem begins before the description. Then open the sample. Look for crowded margins, inconsistent paragraph spacing, awkward chapter openings, image problems, and anything that makes the book feel unfinished.

The five-minute product check

- ☐ Can the title be read at thumbnail size?
- ☐ Would a reader identify the genre without reading the description?
- ☐ Does the interior look deliberate on both phone and print?
- ☐ Are the ebook, paperback, and hardcover details consistent?
- ☐ Does the price make sense beside comparable books?

POSITIONING

Make the promise obvious

Positioning is the answer to a reader's quiet question: Is this for me? It is expressed through the cover, title, subtitle, description, categories, comparison titles, author language, and the scenes or ideas chosen for promotion.

A romance should not be promoted only as a story about two people. A memoir should not be described only as a life story. A thriller should not rely on the word suspense. The reader needs the emotional promise, the specific tension, and the reason this version of the familiar experience is worth choosing.

WRITE YOUR POSITIONING SENTENCE

This is a _____ for readers who want _____ without _____.

Test it against the book

Read the sentence next to the cover and description. If each part seems to describe a different book, promotion will magnify the confusion. Tighten the promise before increasing visibility.

DISCOVERABILITY

Help systems understand the book

Metadata is not decoration. It is the information retailers use to understand where a book belongs and which shoppers may care about it. The title, subtitle, description, keywords, categories, series data, author page, and comparable buying behavior all contribute to discovery.

Avoid filling keyword fields with broad words that could describe thousands of books. Use phrases a real reader might search when they already want this kind of experience. The goal is not to appear everywhere. It is to appear in places where the book makes sense.

A better keyword question

What would the right reader type if they did not know my title or my name, but already knew the kind of book they wanted?

READER SEARCH PHRASE 1

READER SEARCH PHRASE 2

READER SEARCH PHRASE 3

CATEGORY THAT TRULY FITS

COMPARABLE TITLE OR AUTHOR

THE READER PATHWAY

Do not lose the reader after discovery

A promotion is only the beginning of a reader journey. Someone sees the book, becomes curious, looks for proof, chooses whether to buy, reads, decides whether to review, and may or may not remain connected to the author. Every missing step leaks attention.

DISCOVERY

Is this meant for me?

INTEREST

Why this book now?

TRUST

Will it be worth my time?

PURCHASE

Where can I get it?

READING

Did the promise hold?

RELATIONSHIP

What should I read next?

AUTHOR PLATFORM

Build a place attention can return to

Social reach changes. Retail algorithms change. A reader relationship should not disappear because a platform changes its rules. An author website and email list create a stable place where readers can understand the work, choose a book, and stay connected.

The website

It should answer who the author is, what the books offer, where to buy, and what the reader should do next.

The newsletter

It should give readers a reason to open beyond release announcements. Consistency matters more than volume.

The reader magnet

It should attract the same kind of reader the books need, not the largest possible number of unrelated subscribers.

The welcome sequence

It should introduce the author, the books, and the reader promise while the interest is still fresh.

THE PLATFORM QUESTION

If a reader loves the book today, where can that relationship continue tomorrow?

THE OPPORTUNITY FILTER

Evaluate the opportunity before paying

A professional-looking offer can still be wrong for your book. Before paying for a feature, newsletter, advertisement, tour, review service, or media opportunity, ask what audience will see it, what they are expected to do, and what remains after the campaign ends.

1. Does the audience match the book?
2. Can the provider explain exactly how readers are reached?
3. Are the deliverables specific?
4. Is the offer selling real exposure or artificial engagement?
5. Will the author own any part of the resulting relationship?
6. Can the result be measured without inventing a sales guarantee?
7. Is the book ready to convert the attention?

RED FLAGS

Walk away from purchased reviews, guaranteed rankings, undisclosed audiences, and pressure to pay before the provider explains the work.

YOUR NINETY-DAY PLAN

Days 1-30: repair the foundation

The first month is for the work readers notice before they trust the book. Do not measure this month by reach. Measure it by whether the book is easier to understand and easier to choose.

- ☐ Review the cover at thumbnail size.
- ☐ Check ebook and print formatting.
- ☐ Rewrite the description around the reader promise.
- ☐ Confirm keywords, categories, series data, and author page.
- ☐ Complete the Amazon and Goodreads profiles.
- ☐ Choose one clear positioning sentence.

The evidence I will collect

YOUR NINETY-DAY PLAN

Days 31-60: build the reader pathway

The second month gives interested readers somewhere useful to go. The goal is not to create a large platform overnight. It is to remove the dead ends between discovering the book and becoming part of the author's audience.

- ☐ Create or improve the author website.
- ☐ Make the buying links obvious on mobile.
- ☐ Set up the newsletter and welcome email.
- ☐ Develop a reader magnet that matches the books.
- ☐ Create a simple page for the featured book or series.
- ☐ Begin thoughtful book-club and reader-community outreach.

The reader journey I will improve

YOUR NINETY-DAY PLAN

Days 61-90: create focused visibility

By the third month, the book and pathway should be strong enough to receive more attention. Choose the channel that best matches the book and the author's capacity. One coherent campaign is more useful than five channels managed badly.

- ☐ Plan a focused email or newsletter campaign.
- ☐ Test Amazon advertising only if the page can convert.
- ☐ Create short-form content from the book's strongest hooks.
- ☐ Approach podcasts or media with a relevant angle.
- ☐ Invite readers into a conversation, not only a purchase.
- ☐ Record what produced qualified interest and what did not.

The single outcome I will measure

AUTHOR STORY - REVIEW COPY

Kate Sweden and Wrecked By You

When Kate Sweden brought *Wrecked By You* into our orbit, the book already had something many campaigns spend months trying to manufacture: a clear emotional engine. Rayann and Max were not simply two people placed in a romance. They were opposites forced into the same high-pressure assignment in the Scottish Highlands, carrying the memory of a kiss neither of them could dismiss. The setting, the friction, and the promise of sharp banter gave the book a recognizable reader identity.

Our role was to look at how that identity was reaching readers. The useful question was not, 'How do we promote this more?' It was, 'Which parts of the book give the right romance reader an immediate reason to stop?' The enemies-to-lovers tension, forced proximity, Scottish setting, humor, heat, and the wider *Wilder Horizons* series all needed to work together instead of appearing as separate selling points.

This is the point where Kate's exact story must replace general campaign language. Before publication, this section will include what Kate told us she had already tried, the problem she believed she was facing, the recommendation we gave her in our own words, what she chose to implement, and the verified change that followed. Her quotations will appear exactly as she gave them, with her approval. We will not turn a real author relationship into a made-up success story.

FACTS STILL NEEDED FROM THE TEAM

REVIEW NOTE: Add Kate's original messages, the exact advice Halcyon gave, the work completed, dates, and verified outcomes before this page is published.

AUTHOR EXPERIENCES

What authors say after the work

“ It was wonderful to see people discussing my book, sharing their thoughts, and giving me the opportunity to ask questions and interact with them directly. It felt genuine and engaging.

A.M. JUSTICE

“ The final book is clean, polished, and professionally formatted for publication. I also appreciated their quick turnaround and willingness to make sure I was satisfied.

MHUBB

“ Amanda brought thoughtful research, strong strategic insight, and a clear understanding of book marketing. Her recommendations gave me valuable direction as I prepare for my book launch.

ARLENEANTOINETT

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Questions authors ask before marketing

Do I need every marketing service?

No. You need the work that fixes the earliest constraint. Buying everything at once can hide which change actually helped.

Should I run Amazon ads immediately?

Only when the cover, description, metadata, reviews, and positioning are strong enough to turn attention into interest.

How many reviews do I need?

There is no universal number. Reviews support trust, but relevance, presentation, price, and reader fit still affect the decision.

Should I promote before publishing?

Yes, when the work builds launch readiness, positioning, and real reader relationships. Repeating that a book is coming is not a strategy.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Questions authors ask about the platform

Do I need an author website?

You need one when readers, media, event hosts, or potential subscribers require a reliable place to understand your work and act.

Is social media enough?

It can create discovery, but it does not give you ownership of the relationship. A website and email list protect the connection.

Can anyone guarantee book sales or ranking?

No ethical provider controls reader decisions, retailer algorithms, competition, timing, or market conditions.

Can I work with Halcyon on one part of the book?

Yes. An engagement can be focused on one problem or coordinated across publishing, design, marketing, technology, reader growth, or PR.

DECISION WORKSHEET

Name the real constraint

The part of my book journey that currently feels stuck is:

The evidence I have for that belief is:

The earliest problem that may be causing it is:

The one result I want by the end of ninety days is:

The work I will stop doing while I focus on that result is:

NINETY-DAY TRACKER

Your twelve-week focus

WEEK 01**WEEK 02****WEEK 03****WEEK 04****WEEK 05****WEEK 06****WEEK 07****WEEK 08****WEEK 09****WEEK 10****WEEK 11****WEEK 12**

THE HALCYON SERVICE MAP

When professional help makes sense

■ **Book creation**

Formatting, ebook and print files, cover production, KDP checks, and publishing setup.

■ **Positioning and discoverability**

Book descriptions, genre signals, metadata, keywords, categories, and Goodreads.

■ **Marketing and reader growth**

Launch planning, email promotion, Amazon advertising, BookTok, book clubs, and reader communities.

■ **Author platform**

Brand direction, author websites, newsletters, reader magnets, automation, and technical support.

■ **PR and authority**

Media positioning, podcast outreach, press materials, interview preparation, and launch video.

OUR APPROACH

The goal is not to sell you the longest list of services. It is to identify the work that should happen next.



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YOUR NEXT MOVE

Bring us the real situation. We will help you find the next move.

You do not need to diagnose the service before contacting us. Tell us the book, the stage, what you have already tried, and the result that matters. We will begin there.

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Review notes