Alright everyone, welcome to class!

The first thing we are going to do is a quick review of project management concepts. I apologize to kick off with something that may be basic to some of you, but you all will need to understand the basic precepts and frameworks on which the practical applications that make up the rest of the class are based. So please bear with me.

The following passage (until we get to "Back Planning") is loosely modeled on the Wikipedia definition, with some direct quotes from there as well. I went with Wikipedia because it was the shortest with the used the most plain language among the various sources I have. It was far more succinct than my texts from my college and industry courses. Direct quotes are annotated as such.

"Project management is the discipline of initiating, planning, executing, controlling, and *closing* the work of *a team* to achieve specific goals and meet specific success criteria."

The important thing to take away from the statement above is that all projects are circular processes with a beginning and an end. They are also team efforts. Like it or not, you can't be a successful author without getting people on board to help you.

"A project is a *temporary* endeavor designed to produce *a unique product*, service or result with a defined beginning and end (usually time-constrained) undertaken to meet unique goals and objectives, typically to bring about beneficial change or added value."

In this class, we are going to talk about being an author and about writing books. The two are VERY different and separate processes. Being an author is a lifestyle. It encompasses how you work, where you work, what you do with your time, who you network and connect with, and how much of yourself you have available to share with the people you love. Writing a book is very different. It is a specific process with a beginning and an end with a resulting product. We will talk about production later, but for now, know that you might not be able to get your family and friends on board with lots of big picture life changes all at once but most family and friend type folks are more than happy to get on board with a four to six week plan for you to finish a book, especially if you give them a schedule of sorts and let them know you writing that book won't remove you from their lives completely. Also, if they know if they help take on some of your responsibilities for a short time you could be done even sooner you might find them surprisingly willing to help.

"The temporary nature of projects stands in contrast with business as usual (or operations), which are repetitive, permanent, or semi-permanent functional activities to produce products or services. In practice, the management of these two systems is often quite different, and as such requires the development of distinct technical skills and management strategies."

This way of thinking about books versus being an author is pivotal in making relevant changes to allow you to complete projects. When I first started writing, I tried to bring everything in at once. I told my family I wanted to write and I needed to make time to do it. I couldn't write without

doing things that affected them adversely (as far as they could tell). I let things go that they were used to me doing with me simply saying I needed them to step up and help, with no reason or justification on how this could help them and WHY it was important to me. They couldn't grasp "I want to be a writer" on any real level. It essentially meant nothing because it was so amorphous and vague.

Later, once I started applying some PM concepts (and grew a little empathy about my changes), I was able to say "It is really, really important to me to be able to finish this book I have outlined it and think I can finish in the next four weeks. Would you be willing to help me do that, just for a few weeks so I can accomplish this? If you are willing, I will need you to lighten my load on these things by splitting the work with me." Then I had a list of what I needed done and when and I took the time to train each of them on exactly what to do in a patient and kind manner. There was still some kickback, but nothing serious, and nothing cupcakes couldn't take care of.

I was never able to get anyone to buy off on doing something FOR me, but I can almost always get my family and friends to take part of a task on to help me. For instance, when I am in a four week run to write or edit, I know I can't get my family to do the laundry for me. However, I can get them to gather it, put it in the laundry room and then put it away once I am done washing it. Splitting the task saves me and hour and fifteen minutes of a three hour task and my family doesn't feel like I am neglecting them. It is also good training for the kiddos to do that on a more permanent basis. This is just an example, but *partial delegation* is normally palatable for most family and friends as opposed to handing over full tasks.

Begin Quote:

A traditional phased approach identifies a sequence of steps to be completed. In the "traditional approach" five developmental components of a project can be distinguished (four stages plus control):

Typical development phases of an engineering project

1. initiation
2. planning and design
3. execution and construction
4. monitoring and controlling systems
5. completion and finish point

End Quote.

This diagram and these steps are a way to approach all issues, big, small, new or old, that you want to make a change in. If you really want to make a change you need to examine all the ways your time slips away. More on *how* to go about that later. For now, let's stick to the basic process. Before you start this you have to have a goal (Lesson 2 but I'll get you started in a bit).

You identify the goal or result you want, think about it (this is the most important, obvious and most often skipped step), plan and design a *possible* fix (you have to test it, just like a science project), implement that fix, see if it works, tweak, implement again, until you are happy with it, then close, and move on. Even though you will be finishing projects, somethings will be on a spectrum of going from time suck and awful, to doable and a minor inconvenience. It is important to realize what is a short term project (completing a book) and a long term one (spending less time cleaning house or becoming an author) require different process changes to make them work. Longer term projects evolve and as you learn more about how to do things better for your specific circumstances, you will continue to improve the time requirements for those things. Projects are short term, creating the product as quickly and making it the highest quality possible is your goal.

Initiating

"The initiating processes determine the nature and scope of the project. If this stage is not performed well, it is unlikely that the project will be successful in meeting the business' needs."

The initiating stage should include a plan that encompasses the following areas:

1. Analyzing the business needs/requirements in measurable goals

2. Reviewing of the current operations

3. Financial analysis of the costs and benefits including a budget

4. Stakeholder analysis, including users, and support personnel for the project

5. Project charter including costs, tasks, deliverables, and schedules"

This may sound a bit technical, but it is pretty straight forward. When you start breaking down the mass of time sucking tasks often you will find things that you can combine or reengineer to not take as much time. Writers by nature are detail oriented whether they think so or not. You can't write a novel and not be able to sit down and plan your day in the most efficient manner possible, at least it's not that you aren't capable. Part of being able to make time is to realize *you* are in control of your environment. If you feel like tasks are dragging you around instead of you doing things as you need to then you are the one to blame.

I am sure those with dependents, kids, pets, spouses are about ready to write me off after that last comment. Stick with me. I have a seven year old daughter and my husband is a police officer in an understaffed super max so he works ten to twelve hours a day with one to two hours in traffic each way there and home. We have a dog with cancer and another one with a strenuous medicine regime. There are things that come up that I can't plan for, things that interrupt my routine. So how do I keep making progress? I have a list of a few big things a day I need to do and I keep a

running list of small things I can do in waiting rooms, during dance class, or things I can keep on my phone (like recordings of seminars from last year's national RWA conference). There are dozens of ways you can make progress and continue toward your goal. Small task doesn't mean useless. Doing the small things when you can cuts down on the feelings that you aren't getting anywhere. We will talk about incremental achievement in the next lesson but for now you need to know a detailed plan will tell you the correct small tasks to plan for and do so you don't lose time because you are accommodating the demands and needs of others.

Keeping your head straight and realizing even in chaos you control whether or not you are accomplishing something is a big deal in itself. Being able to adjust and have things you can do when the roller coaster starts will help keep the feelings of defeat and guilt at not achieving a large task at bay.

In Lesson 2 and 3 we will talk in detail about reviewing current operations. This is always a big eye opener for folks, usually in a good way.

There are some things in writing that are limited when funds are limited but there are many, many things that can be accomplished before you ever get published or if you are published you can continue to improve your ability and business savvy for little to no cost. One of the most common things I see with pre-pubbed or new authors is they get focused on social media (without a specific plan) and "writing books" (also without a specific plan).

Instead of floundering around on social media going down rabbit holes, make a plan, do what you need to do and otherwise avoid it. I will talk about a social media guide and plan in a later lesson. There is a lot to do with the business of writing that can be broken down into ten and fifteen minute tasks, or even five minute tasks that don't require any prior focus to complete. When most people write, it takes a bit for them to mentally refocus in order to continue on a story. Bottom line, you won't always have that sort of time. So instead of beating yourself up over lack of production, keep some lists of business things, marketing things, promotion lists and do little things that are relevant to your writing. Trust me when I say they add up. I will give you a long list of things that fall into these categories in a later lesson.

The stakeholders in this are you and your family and friends. It is important (though often uncomfortable when you first start) to bring those you love into the process, even if it is in a small way. Making them part of the process means your success is their success as well. However, while involving those around you is key, remember YOU are in control and in charge of the actual processes because you are the only one who has the information to determine the best course of action.

When you become an author (or write a book) you become an artist and CEO (sometimes literally, other times figuratively). You gain the right to be protective of your work, your time and your creative well of inspiration. The only person who can protect that right and those things is you. So instead of looking at your situation as a mother, wife, child or participant take a few minutes each day and consider your situation as if you were a consultant you hired to help an author start up their career, not you in your own situation. Pulling yourself out of the situation for just a few moments and looking at it to determine what needs done will allow you to identify

things that aren't working well for you. You can't fix a something you don't know is broken so put away your ego, expectations, given beliefs (the surety that things must be done a certain way), traditions and open your eyes to exactly what is actually happening around you. (Hint: this part can be a bit upsetting.)

There is a meme that floats around social media from time to time with an unknown author. It goes: "Don't hang onto a mistake because you spent a lot of time making it." Letting go of processes and practices that don't work is HARD. Do not berate yourself if something is uncomfortable and you have to make a few runs at it before you are mentally ready to make a change. That is perfectly fine and completely normal.

Planning

"After the initiation stage, the project is planned to an appropriate level of detail, the main purpose is to plan *time*, cost and resources adequately to estimate the work needed and to effectively manage risk during project execution. As with the Initiation process group, a failure to adequately plan greatly reduces the project's chances of successfully accomplishing its goals.

Project planning generally consists of:

1. Determining how to plan

2. Developing the scope

3. Creating the work breakdown structure, schedule, and budget

4. Identifying the activities needed to complete those task and networking the activities in their logical sequence.

5. Estimating the resource requirements, estimating time and cost for activities"

The key thing here is having a process to plan. Don't just sit down and think I need to do X. You need to have a specific X you want to make better or finish. The first thing to do after you know what I is, is to determine how the various tasks required are working now. Take what is working and write that down then make a second list (or column) on what isn't working. *This is time consuming.* Consider your projects (books) and your spectrum goals (becoming an author). Just like you have to spend money to make money, you have to spend time to make time. If you spend ten minutes a day doing something that should take five minutes a day, if you took an hour to really look at it, and research the best way to do it, then in twelve days you will have recouped the time and will from then on have fifty extra minutes a week.

I will give you a real world example. As I have said, I have a small daughter and a husband of which I think are in a contest each week to see who can generate the most laundry. I used to spend hours a week doing laundry. I did a time assessment and realized I was spending upwards of nine hours a week doing laundry. I have three bachelor's degrees, two associate degrees, a professional writing certificate and am a professional speaker and author. In six years I hadn't

thought to stop and find a better way to do laundry so that I wasn't spending NINE HOURS washing clothes. I carried a 3.98 GPA, I should be able to outsmart the laundry.

As silly as it sounds I spent the next week carefully observing and jotting down when I did anything related to laundry. Here is the break out in hours per week: 1.5 gathering laundry, 1 hour sorting laundry, 1 hour putting it in and taking it out of the machines, 3 hours folding laundry, 2. 5 hours hauling it up and down stairs.

Here is what I did; Since my daughter and I have the least (me) and most (her) amount of clothes, I took all my clothes out of my room and all hers out of her room (which also let me make her entire closet a toy chest with shelves making her room clean up MUCH easier). Then I retro fitted my laundry room with closet bars so that I could eliminate all the running up and down our three flights of stairs to put away clothes.. I stand in front of the dryer and either turn around or lean to the left to hang up both her and my clothes.

My husband is a grown up and comes down once a week and retrieves all his clothes and carries them upstairs but for hers and mine there is no more running anywhere. In the interest of full disclosure, I put them in the biggest basket I could find so he feels like a toad if I have to carry it up (that might be a bit underhanded but it's important). In the adjoining bathroom I added a cube shelf with fabric drawers for underwear, socks and bras. If you are folding any of those, other than mating socks, stop. No one cares if your panties have creases, don't waste the time. It took me five months to break the habit of folding and stacking my under things because I had always been raised to do so. Not a good use of my time in any way, ever.

I let my husband and daughter know that I would still do their laundry, but they were responsible for delivery and pick up from the laundry room. I made it like a game the kiddo actually enjoyed. If they didn't get their clothes down there on schedule they had to wash them themselves. It took a few weeks of grumbles and grouching, but it eventually worked. I also stopped picking up rabbit trails of dirty clothes and began calling each of them down every single time something was left in the middle of the floor instead of just picking it up. I was unable to just leave it, it is a limitation of mine that I can't allow that degree of mess in my house. Every time I did it I felt like a nag, I could have picked it up in three seconds. BUT, *I was fighting for my writing time after all and my writing is FAR more important than someone else's dirty sock*. Reread that. It is not unfair or unreasonable for you to expect the people in your house to do at least that much to help keep the work load off your back so you can pursue a dream.

I strung a lingerie clothes line in the laundry room right above the washer and dryer. All unmated socks get hung over that line. I mate them as I take them out of the dryer. Because I have a six foot mini-clothes line for them to lay over I can see every single one of them at a glance. No putting them in a basket and taking them elsewhere. Every two weeks, anything without a mate goes into the rag bin. No more time laying out a memory game of unmated socks that cover the whole bed or couch and sucks up twenty minutes to find the pairs.

I made them sort their own laundry. I bought three big toy bins (the ones with the rope handles) and painted "DARK". "WHITE" and "COLORS" on them in giant letters. It doesn't look all that spiffy sitting along the wall before you walk into the laundry room but it is easy and it works for

them so they actually do it. Little pretty bins on wheels didn't work, those mesh sorters didn't work because I had to be there to tell them what went where. Make the process so simple someone could walk in off the street and figure it out. Our families don't intend to impede our progress, but they often may not realize how important it is to us for them to be able to complete a task in suck a way that we don't have to redo it, which not only cuts our time but results in resentment from us that those family members may or may not even be aware of. Make your changes, ask for help but make sure you are fair about how you do it.

Suffering in silence is not your friend. With those changes I took about eight hours overall to make, I cut laundry time from nine hours a week to three. In those eight hours, I took the time to stop, look at the process and look at where the bottle necks were and think up ways to lessen the time required to complete parts of the task or prevent those bottlenecks. I thought about those fixes in the shower, going to the bathroom, in the car with the kiddo watching Sofia the first at full volume and when I was waiting in line in the school office to pay for the kid's lunches for the month. When I had a plan I implemented it. I lost eight hours to figure out the new process but I made up those hours in a week and a half.

THAT ONE CHANGE, IN THAT ONE SIMPLE REPETATIVE PROCESS, FREED UP THREE HUNDRED AND TWELVE HOURS A YEAR.

Executing

"This phase involves proper allocation, co-ordination and management of human resources and any other resources such as material and budgets."

In other words, when you get ready to start shaking up your household (if it involves more than just you) call a family meeting, lay out your plan, listen to objections and ask for feedback. Sometimes your family will not only come up with a better idea, they may offer to take on tasks as a whole. If you present it as "Could you help me do this by owning a portion of the process?" not "We are changing this and you are going to grow up and help whether you like it or not." You will often have much better results. You can also offer up temporary changes. Four times a year (quarterly), my family knows I take one week and go into hard writing mode. I don't cook, I clean very little and if they are lucky I at least remember to shower. I sit at my desk every waking moment that I am not required to keep someone from starving and I crank out as much rough copy as possible. Then the rest of the time I edit a few pages a night (every night or I lose the train of thought). I can swap thirty minutes a day of editing late at night for sleep but if I do more than that it impacts us all and I am grouchy and over tired. I can't create text in a few minutes a night though. I just don't work that way.

Communication is key for this to work. My husband and I set up daddy daughter trips and fun things for them to do all week while I am binge writing. The sucky part is I don't get to go have the fun with them but I get my draft cranked out. I make sure the day prior to my week starting I spend the day with the kiddo, do all the laundry and dishes and wipe myself out getting them ready for me to be mostly absent for the week. Because I don't do it often and burn them or me out, I am able to do it occasionally with success.

I have a pal who took this class and her family does this every Thursday night. As soon as her husband gets home from work, he gets a kiss and she bails. No hesitation, no how was your day, she is literally waiting at the door laptop in hand. He knows it is Thursday and agreed to not make her feel bad or be needy on that night. It is sort of odd to put it that way, but they made a contract as a couple that he would help her do this and giving her a night to go write was the best way for him to support her dreams.

She goes to a local Mexican restaurant and has a regular corner table (because it has a plug in under it). She tips the server ten bucks before she even orders then settles in with her head phones and works for five straight hours every Thursday night. Her average output since she preplans what she needs to write (because she can do that over the course of the rest of the week as she edits) and there are no distractions is eight to twelve thousand words (and sore hands the next day). The server knows what she is up to and quietly keeps her iced tea full and brings her dinner at the requested time. It works for her. Getting her out of her home situation is key for her to have a successful write night. The rest of the week she mostly belongs to her family and everyone is happy with the deal. It took me weeks to convince her not to feel guilty about it. She completes an eighty thousand word MS about every four months with a full family and job load.

Monitoring and controlling

"Monitoring and controlling consists of those processes performed to observe project execution so that potential problems can be identified in a timely manner and corrective action can be taken, when necessary, to control the execution of the project."

The bottom line here is is it working? If yes, then pat yourself on the back (realizing you are making progress and solved a problem matters) and move on to the next issue. If no, look at the process again and see where it is breaking down, find a new fix to try and try it. You can normally tell where things are breaking down because that is where the mess is. If your laundry process is breaking down you will find stray piles of clothes. Why are they in that particular spot instead of in a hamper? If your desk is constantly snowed in with paperwork not related to your writing figure out a way to stop that paperwork from making it to your desk.

For me, I move the recycle bin to the side of the entry stairs to our house. I stop there every day on the way in and drop all junk mail, circulars, flyers, etc. into the recycle. I need to write worse than I need to know what shoes are on sale at Macy's. It is hard but I do it. If they don't come in the house I don't stop to read them. Be ruthless. I have shelf by the door in my office with plastic bins. One is labelled bills to pay next paycheck, action and records. I leave the bills until the next payday, sometimes unopened until time to pay them, I put the action items on my calendar for the next day or a few days from there so I don't stop what I am doing and foul up that days list and I file all the records once a month. It keeps all the mail off my desk and out of sight so I am not tempted to mess with it. But I had to think of a way to keep that clutter off my desk so I didn't get overwhelmed by it. It is hard to leave it at the door but I do it.

One thing at a time, shooting for as little disruption to your daily existence as possible. Think of it as a slow swing to a more efficient way of going about things, not a big implementation of a bunch of new things at once. Trying to fix or improve too many things at once normally won't

work because you can't isolate a single cause and effect if you have multiple variables changing at once. Try to think of it as a spectrum of decreasing stress and relieving the general feeling of being overwhelmed and unproductive. You don't make it go away with an overhauled laundry room but you give yourself some breathing room, and by doing that, you relax for a few heart beats then you refocus on what is next on your grand plan to what you want.

Here is a valuable note about change:

"Change is a normal and expected part of the process. Changes can be the result of necessary design modifications, differing site conditions, material availability, contractor-requested changes, value engineering and impacts from third parties, to name a few."

There will be changes as you try to fix things. You will notice the more you do this the better you get at it. As I mentioned earlier, if you can get your family on board, sometimes they will have a better idea. I am going to talk about where to find better ideas on how to do things if you can't come up with it on your own in a later lesson. Don't get discouraged, I encounter a lot of people who deal with adversity every day in a very defensive way. Life throws issues at them and they have to solve them right then. To keep reevaluating your situation and solving problems from being one more bit of stress you need to keep it in the frame of mind of an offensive sort of challenge. You are challenging yourself to make your situation more efficient and you can stop at any time. If today really is too much to allow you to think of anything else, that is OK. Allow yourself to roll with the issues of the day, just don't do it every day. You are in control of how you react and how you feel when things get complicated. So if you get frustrated, let it go for a few days, ask a pal how they solve that particular problem, or try an external source. Don't give up because something is hard. Give yourself a moment to regroup and refocus then try again. If this job was easy everyone would do it, so don't be too hard on yourself.

Closing

"Closing includes the formal acceptance of the project and the ending thereof. Administrative activities include the archiving of the files and documenting lessons learned."

When you are done with a process or product, let it go and leave it alone. MOVE ON. Look at it and make adjustments to cut down on mistakes or tight time lines next time around and move on. My first book was so hard for me to let it go. I wrote the book in six months and then edited it for three years. The bottom line is I was a coward. I was afraid to put it out there so I made up all sorts of excuses to not let it off my desk. I should have found an editor, took my hits and put it out. Or, I should have left it alone and came back to it when I was mature enough as an author to put the book on the market.

Don't confuse knowing you are not mentally ready to own being an author with not being capable of writing a book. The two are very different. You can finish a book and put it in a drawer and know it only needs edits and that is fine. That does not mean you can't write a book. That could mean that in your heart, you know you are not developed enough professionally to feel comfortable releasing or querying a book.

I took four years of observing, stalling, over volunteering and over tasking myself for me to finally accept I didn't feel like I knew enough to be an author yet. I didn't know if I could ignore an agent's request to change this or that even if I KNEW I had it right for my story. I didn't know if traditional versus indie publishing was right for me. It all took time for me to figure that out. So if you are not finishing your books, consider that you might have some big picture things you need to work out before you publish even if you are well past THE END. Once I finally had those answers and enough experience to be confident in them things fell into place, almost as if by magic.

Taking the time to figure out your long term plans and goals can save you tons of money, time and effort. It can be downright demoralizing to have to start from scratch on marketing and promotion platforms because you didn't think out your plans. More on how to do that later as well. Don't ever short change yourself the time to think things through no matter what everyone else says. I am on a RWA chapter board, liaison to another RWA board and have been on a planning committee for the largest writer's conference on the West Coast for six years. I am a big fish in my little pond and have met and networked with dozens of editors, agents and publishers over the years. I have eleven requests for fulls that I stared at and felt like a failure not brining myself to submit. I kicked myself daily for three straight years because I couldn't get the lead out and just finish already. I wasted hours researching this or that agent or editor. I pitched at our conference every year and always got requests for fulls.

I didn't send any of them. They didn't feel right. I knew in my gut they weren't right for me. Last year I decided to look at it from a strictly business point of view. For me, traditional publishing didn't hold that much of a draw. The more I read about contracts and boiler plate agreements the less I liked them. I wasn't comfortable with losing my rights for the life of the work. I didn't want to sign over film, foreign and audio rights in part or on the whole. I shopped around for an attorney and found one I liked. We talked it over and she advised me to indie publish and start my own company. I realized for me to be happy I needed to maintain control of my life, my schedule and my work. AND I had every right to do so, I didn't have to do anything any certain way. So I reconsidered everything. I thought about what I wanted to do and how I wanted to live each day to get to those goals.

I spent four months thinking. I did nothing else for my writing but think about what I wanted and who I wanted my writing personas to be. It made all the difference in quieting the white noise and allowing me to move forward. Once I felt like I was ready to make the decisions, they were easy to make. Don't short change yourself by not giving yourself a chance to come to terms with and make sure what you want is what you are going after. I don't mean that as a complaint against traditional publishing, BTW. It just wasn't right for me. However, it took me a long time to realize it really wasn't for me and I would never be happy there. How I came to that realization is covered in Lesson 2.

Back Planning - What it is and why you care

A few of you are prior military and the following section will be old news to you ☺

When the military deploys or large organizations embark on projects they do something called back planning. Instead of making a to-do list and going through it as they are able, they do the reverse. They start with the end goal and make a list of exactly what steps are required to get there. That often means that during the planning phases they have to research each step to find out what it entails and how long it takes. Planning forward, from where you are to where you want to be is defensive and often goes awry because you don't know if you will have enough time for each step and sometimes things get squished at the end. Back planning begins from the event you want to happen and is an offensive way of going about it because you determine how much time you wish to allow for each step and there isn't a scramble at the end because you start in the right place.

In a later lesson, I will give you a full list of how I back plan a book. I start with the release and make a giant list of every single thing I can think of that I need to do. Then I take each section and figure out how long it will take, add ten percent more time to each step and then fill in my calendar accordingly. I plan all the marketing aspects, then go back and do all the cover art aspects. I put in when I will need to call my editor to get on her schedule (which is based on my edit schedule). I leave room for if she doesn't have room for me, and move up my finish date if I need to.

I start from release and work my way back looking at all the factors. It takes me about TWO DAYS to think through all of it. Remember I publish indie and I keep control of as many aspects as I can, so I do it all and I like it that way. However, it requires an immense amount of planning, if I do it right though, I don't have to think about what I am doing or missing a deadline, I simply follow my calendar. I space out big tasks and little tasks according to the time I think I will have. I make extra room when I know I have other things going on. It is a bit labor intensive but I get everything done on time and without deadline stress if I take the time and effort to think it through and preplan.

I also include family time, self-care and regular things I know I have to do so I don't get so snowed in I am too overwhelmed to finish. If I have a place where I am over tasked or I know I can't get what I need done on time I plan for it. I ask my mom to come spend the weekend or talk to my husband and let him know I have something time sensitive that I can't do ahead of time and ask him to help.

Sometimes this is as little a thing as putting a note in my calendar a few weeks ahead that I need to do something a few weeks hence. I keep an incredibly busy schedule and the only way I am able to be productive, network, volunteer, work, get contracts and publish effectively is to keep a detailed calendar. Remember, as an author you are essentially a business. I spend the first fifteen minutes of each day drinking a hot tea and pretending to be my own secretary. I don't look at the individual events and think about it as what I personally have to do. I look at it as a secretary checking the day for my boss. Times, order of events, calls that can be made between events, etc. I make my daily list in that mode.

That covers process management and the general idea of back planning. We will revisit both as they specifically apply to writers in the coming lessons. I don't have home work to post but I

want you to get in the right mind set for Thursday's class. We will be talking about goals. So instead of the standard approach of tell me your five, ten, etc. year goals don't bother. I know we all want to be authors.

What I want you all to do the next day or so is pretend you are already the writer you want to be. Think about what it means and entails to be a writer doing the daily grind and consider if you really want to be one or if you like the *idea* of being one. Think specifically about what kind of "author" you want to be.

I run a media company that does web design, book covers, head shots, runs virtual classrooms for authors to teach from, and several other random things to support working authors. When I get new clients I hear a lot of the same things. I don't want to do promo. I don't want to market or brand. I don't want to ever see people or do book signings. I don't want to put myself out there like that. I don't want to deal with people at all really. I tell them then they don't want to be an author, they want to be paid hobby writers which, from my experience, don't have much financial success. All of those things are a part of writing and you have to be willing to do them regardless of the publishing path you chose.

Take some time to check out the websites of a few authors you think live an ideal existence. An existence you want for yourself. Look at how many appearances they do. Do you want to travel or more importantly CAN you travel? Do you have dependents and responsibilities that prevent you from doing that? I have animals and a young child. My husband is a law enforcement officer who can be called in at any time and we don't have relatives nearby. I couldn't go to a conference in another state if I wanted to, and won't be able to for some years to come.

I am not comfortable spending thousands of dollars on conferences because I am still unpublished even though I teach, it is not always the best call for me to spend family assets to that end. If I can order the recordings and don't need to pitch, why would I go and upset everyone's routine? Do your authors do book signings and have large social media presences? Do you not want to be on social media all that often because it is a time suck and often terribly depressing? You need to think about all these peripheral things because if you don't plan for them they will eat up all your time and happiness.

Do you want control of your work or do you want the notoriety and respect of a big five contract? Are you in this for the money, the art or a little bit of both? Really look at what is in front of you and separate it from what you imagine it is. Think about how a day in the life of those men or women really goes. Do you really want to sit in front of your computer for five to eight hours a day in your house, isolated and writing or are you a social type who needs face to face interaction every day? Or are you like me and the solitude and chance to write stories invigorates you and you feel charged and excited after a few productive hours at the keyboard (even though I gave up watching any television and family time that night to do it)?

There are no right or wrong answers, only what will make you happy.

We will talk about this in depth in Thursday's lesson but start considering it now. Research being an author like you might any other corporate job. Look at things like health care, retirement

planning, financial stability. One of the first things I learned as a writer is that most banks require three years of you showing a profit before they will loan you money on large purchases like cars, land, or houses. Do you have savings or a spouse who can get your family what it needs on his or her income alone if your books don't sell? Do you want to quit your day job? Do you do something you are proud of and don't want to lose the prestige of that job? Can you live with the constant competition and fight for readers? Can you bounce back from a harsh edit and not take it personally?

All of those things are part and parcel of being an author. All those questions are part of the reason I stood up my company. Before I did that I was scared and a little lost. I figured out what I wanted and began moving toward that goal. It was one of the toughest times in my life for various reasons so if you don't know what you want you won't be able to fight hard enough to get it.

This lesson was dense, long and packed full of things for you to roll around until Thursday. My apologies on that score. Most of the lessons are not as tightly packed ☺

Until Thursday…

Warm Regards,

Merien