

# don't write *that* book!

## Episode 11:

### How to Self-Publish Like a Pro

**Mike Michalowicz** ([00:01](#)):

Welcome back to the Don't Write That book podcast where you can learn how to write your bestseller and own your authorship. Follow along with us as we give you an insider's view of the book industry. Now, here are your hosts, myself, Mike Michalowicz and AJ Harper. Welcome to Don't Write That book. We're proud to have you here and proud that you're an author intentionally writing the book that you feel called to write. This is Mike Michalowicz. I'm joined in the studio with AJ Harper. Hi, AJ.

**AJ Harper** ([00:30](#)):

Hi Mike.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([00:31](#)):

AJ is a co-writer of mine, a partner of mine, a great friend, an extraordinary mother. That's what I want to talk about.

**AJ Harper** ([00:39](#)):

Oh,

**Mike Michalowicz** ([00:39](#)):

We were just talking about Jack and, uh, how you and your wife were playing Van Halen, or your wife actually was playing Van Halen's songs to him Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([00:46](#)):

When he was a baby.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([00:47](#)):

Yeah. But what stands out in my mind is in your book, you talk about, in the very conclusion Jack's story with basketball. Yeah. And the, while you didn't emphasize your participation in that, you know, Jack was showing up and, uh, ultimately he transferred teams, if I remember correctly.

**AJ Harper** ([01:08](#)):

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Well, he was a really, he was a great athlete. Yeah. But he chose the sport he was the worst at Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([01:13](#)):

To

**AJ Harper** ([01:13](#)):

Fall in love with. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([01:14](#)):

And

**AJ Harper** ([01:15](#)):

He was a terrible basketball player, and he transformed himself into an absolutely amazing basketball player by himself.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([01:22](#)):

And, but what was so fascinating with that final story of the coach he did play for at one point was now the opposite Opposing coach. Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([01:30](#)):

Had a great

**Mike Michalowicz** ([01:30](#)):

Competence. But what was behind that was you were there, you kept on showing up. Mom was supporting something that was a dream for him, but wasn't a natural talent. It had to be developed.

**AJ Harper** ([01:42](#)):

Yes. I,

**Mike Michalowicz** ([01:43](#)):

I think that's extraordinary. I think that's the definition of a great mom.

**AJ Harper** ([01:48](#)):

Oh, listen, my wife and I were both there watching every <laugh> every game where he sat on the bench most of the time. And then, you know, that's pure joy to see him transform himself. But even if he hadn't, we still would've been, we still would've been there.

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**Mike Michalowicz** ([02:03](#)):

Right. The, that's, that's the point. Like, you just kept showing up. And I think if that didn't happen, there wouldn't have been this cascade effect of him becoming this amazing basketball athlete and, and playing, you know, and, and you do this not just for your child. You do this for your authors, you do it with me. You just keep showing up.

**AJ Harper** ([02:21](#)):

Aw,

**Mike Michalowicz** ([02:21](#)):

You do.

**AJ Harper** ([02:22](#)):

That's so nice.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([02:23](#)):

Oh,

**AJ Harper** ([02:23](#)):

What a good intro. <laugh>. And here I was going to talk about how we had the opposite musical talents. Oh,

**Mike Michalowicz** ([02:29](#)):

Tell say that. Yeah. Okay.

**AJ Harper** ([02:30](#)):

That was going to be my intro, Mike. Yeah. Titz is the author of 10 business books and a children's book. Mm-Hmm.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([02:37](#)):

<affirmative>

**AJ Harper** ([02:37](#)):

*My Money Bunnies*. That's the one book I did not have a hand in.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([02:41](#)):

That's right. Great. But, but phone calls nonetheless. Hey, I have a question for you, <laugh>.

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**AJ Harper** ([02:45](#)):

Great book for kids. And, um, also, uh, one of the things I love best about you is the way that you are also a great family man. I'm always telling people, he's just like, he presents himself to be

**Mike Michalowicz** ([02:59](#)):

Oh, thank you.

**AJ Harper** ([03:00](#)):

100%. But I was going to intro and say we are about the same age. We're what, like a year apart?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([03:06](#)):

Yeah. I was born in seventy one, seventy three.

**AJ Harper** ([03:09](#)):

Okay. I grew up in Minnesota. Grew up in Jersey. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([03:12](#)):

We

**AJ Harper** ([03:12](#)):

Were listening to opposite music. Isn't

**Mike Michalowicz** ([03:14](#)):

That crazy? Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([03:16](#)):

Depe mode. Yaz erasure. You don't even know some of these bands.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([03:19](#)):

No, I know.

**AJ Harper** ([03:20](#)):

Yeah. I was dancing Danceteria, you've probably never heard of.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([03:24](#)):

No.

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**AJ Harper** ([03:25](#)):

Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([03:25](#)):

I want to know

**AJ Harper** ([03:26](#)):

You were headbanging.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([03:27](#)):

Yeah,

**AJ Harper** ([03:27](#)):

Yeah,

**Mike Michalowicz** ([03:28](#)):

Yeah. But glam hang headbanging.

**AJ Harper** ([03:31](#)):

Big hair.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([03:31](#)):

Yeah, big hair. Like, I was not into like, AC/DC was the most quote unquote extreme, like Metallica and stuff. I, it was okay, but it was just too intense for me.

**AJ Harper** ([03:40](#)):

So like, Def Leppard,

**Mike Michalowicz** ([03:41](#)):

Def Leppard for

**AJ Harper** ([03:42](#)):

Sure. I know

**Mike Michalowicz** ([03:43](#)):

Iron Maiden,

**AJ Harper** ([03:43](#)):

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He's written in how many books?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([03:44](#)):

Every book.

**AJ Harper** ([03:44](#)):

Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([03:45](#)):

Iron Maiden, Motley Crew, Van

**AJ Harper** ([03:47](#)):

Halen.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([03:47](#)):

Van Halen was amazing. <laugh>, the first girl I ever danced with was to "Jump." You were saying, we were talking about "Jump" earlier.

**AJ Harper** ([03:53](#)):

This is one I probably, one of my wife's favorite songs.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([03:55](#)):

I think I was in eighth grade. Courtney Menard.

**AJ Harper** ([03:58](#)):

Hey Courtney. And

**Mike Michalowicz** ([03:59](#)):

I stepped on her foot. <laugh>. I stepped front of your feet.

**AJ Harper** ([04:01](#)):

Shout out to Courtney. Courtney, "Jump." All right, so that's us.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([04:05](#)):

All right. Um, and so that's us. This, the show is all about your transformation and, uh, we don't dig into the how to so much that is readily available. We want to give you the behind the scenes in this episode. We're going to talk about self-publishing like a pro.

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**AJ Harper** ([04:23](#)):

Yes. That last part's key.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([04:25](#)):

Yeah. You right. Like a pro. And I think it's everything from book design to, of course, the content to proofreading it. It's, you still have to do all those elements. So we're going to talk about that. Um, and to give you context, the very first book I authored was called *The Toilet Paper Entrepreneur*. And I wrote the book, the first pass completely by myself. I read the book, it was like a 300-page book or more. And I, I remember thinking in my head, oh, 300 pages must be good. The more pages must be <laugh>. I really thought that way must be better. And then I read the book, I'm like, this is horrible. Like, I can't read my own book. Um, so I found AJ through Divine Intervention, like that's what it was. And, uh, you helped transform that book and still allowed me to stick with my, not just my idiosyncrasies, but my mandates, um, of how I wanted the book to look, which wasn't right. You were right. I was wrong, <laugh>, but I forced it down your throat and you, you accepted it. But my God! We wrote a book that subsequently sold in the six figures. I— meaning not dollar amount, I mean, yes. Dollar amount, but also quantity. That book surpassed over a hundred thousand sales.

**AJ Harper** ([05:42](#)):

It has. Oh

**Mike Michalowicz** ([05:43](#)):

Yeah. I didn't know that.

**AJ Harper** ([05:44](#)):

Oh, I didn't tell you. No. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([05:46](#)):

Over a hundred thousand.

**AJ Harper** ([05:48](#)):

Oh, my. *The Toilet Paper*-- Oh my gosh. Really?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([05:49](#)):

Yeah. It still sells today. And that's 15, 15 years ago.

**AJ Harper** ([05:52](#)):

Way to prove me wrong, man. <laugh>.

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**Mike Michalowicz** ([05:54](#)):

Well, I wanted to sell a million copies, but we sold a hundred thousand plus.

**AJ Harper** ([05:57](#)):

Pretty good for a book that had toilet paper on the cover.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([05:59](#)):

Oh my God. Do you, I don't know if you know this, I was, um, back, I was appearing on that show called "The Big Idea of Donny Deutch."

**AJ Harper** ([06:05](#)):

Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([06:06](#)):

I found a way to get on the show, and they let me on the book came out. One, I was, while I was on that show, and Donny the host said, "No way. We're promoting this book?" <laugh> Because of the title.

**AJ Harper** ([06:16](#)):

Yes.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([06:17](#)):

They promoted everyone else's book. And that was considered like, offensive. *Toilet Paper Entrepreneur* back in, uh, what was that, 2005 or something? Now it's like, you know, *The Subtle Art of Not Giving an F* like you, you can, you can swear in your book titles.

**AJ Harper** ([06:33](#)):

What's so wrong with toilet paper?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([06:34](#)):

I know. I know. Like mine was mild, mine was minor. Um, to give you a little more context, I've self-published *Toilet Paper Entrepreneur*. The original *Profit First*—

**AJ Harper** ([06:43](#)):

Yes.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([06:43](#)):



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--was self-published because it was rejected by the publisher *Surge*. And then, uh, *My Money Bunnies*, which is self.

**AJ Harper** ([06:50](#)):

Four Self-published books.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([06:51](#)):

Four self-published books. Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([06:51](#)):

Out of 11 books. Yeah. And you might do it again if you felt like it.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([06:56](#)):

Yeah. You know, that's actually a real hard consideration

**AJ Harper** ([06:58](#)):

Every time. Right.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([06:59](#)):

Every time I ran the numbers, uh, when I had a call with Penguin, who's my, my publisher, and, uh, when I wrote *Get Different*, and I said to the publisher, the, the chief boss at the Imprint, which is portfolio, and said, if I self-publish and I sell a certain volume of books, a hundred thousand, that's kind of the standard. If I sell a hundred thousand books, this is what I'm going to make. So you have to give me a royalty advance that is X. And um, it, it's just mathematical now. And they, they did it. They did it. The, I think self-publishing is advanced so much that if done right, you can create a book that's indistinguishable from a mainstream publish book. Um, but you have to do it. Right. A couple of last things, and I want to get into a dialogue around this. Self-publishing has helped me get the word out. Obviously, *Toilet Paper Entrepreneur*, I couldn't sell if my life depended upon it to a mainstream publisher, but I was able to get it out on my own and to get my ideas out in the world.

**AJ Harper** ([08:03](#)):

Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([08:04](#)):

And, and do it my way. So it did that, uh, it created a readership, a hundred thousand plus readers. It definitely gave me bigger and greater speaking opportunities. It established a platform for me to pitch my next book. So, you get that momentum effect.

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**AJ Harper** ([08:19](#)):

And you made money from book sales.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([08:21](#)):

And Right. Exactly. And I get money from book sales. There was a note, Adayla's doing our, uh, research behind this podcast, said that Bawker said in 2018, Bawker is the provider of ISBN numbers, like the social security number for a book. Uh, they do research too that there's been a 40% increase in self-publishing from, uh, 2017 to 2018 alone. Now we are years later. This is, we're recording this in 2023. Um, there are 1.68 million self-published books as of 2018. I am sure it's more than doubled since.

**AJ Harper** ([08:56](#)):

Yeah. It's a lot of people are publishing just eBooks, you know, they don't always do print. There's lots of variations and sometimes it's reissues and, you know, it encompasses a lot of different types of books.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([09:06](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([09:07](#)):

The 1.8 million. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([09:08](#)):

Well, Self-Publishing is a, is a little bit of a double-edged sword. You can get your books out easily, but you can get your books out easily. <laugh>.

**AJ Harper** ([09:14](#)):

Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([09:15](#)):

What, what's your perception of the, the pros or the cons of self-publishing, at least the industry itself?

**AJ Harper** ([09:23](#)):

Um, well, I mean, the pros and cons, and we did go over again a, a plug for episode one where we kind of went through how do you prioritize and choose a path. Um, you know, the, the pros are you have total control, including timeline, cover, editorial, everything, and you make all the money. But the comms are, you have to put your team together. Yeah. Or find a, or find a team.

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And really it's, you don't have the backing of a publisher that knows how to position your book or trade distribution, which is nearly impossible. Not, not totally impossible, but nearly impossible to get if you're self-published, which means you have a, you don't have the same reach.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([10:07](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([10:07](#)):

Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([10:08](#)):

That's changed. because in 20, oh, I can't remember the dates. 2020, 2018, whatever. When *Toilet Paper Entrepreneur*, uh, 2008, when *Toilet Paper Entrepreneur* came out, I was able to and legitimately called Barnes and Nobles to get distribution. They rejected me. I got the books in there anyway, and we'll share that story, some future point. But they facilitated the distribution through all their stores. Like, you could still call individual retailers back in,

**AJ Harper** ([10:32](#)):

So you can, you could still find that, but it's harder to do when you just have a one-off.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([10:36](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([10:37](#)):

And it's because it's really rare for an author to make money for distributors. So they often would end up with a lot of books in the warehouse. Mostly because authors need to manage their expectations about how long it takes to get books sold and also what's required.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([10:52](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([10:53](#)):

And so a lot of distributors that used to let authors do things like that, they want to see that maybe you have a bigger catalog or whatever before they take you on. So it's not impossible, but it's really, really hard.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([11:06](#)):

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You know, one thing I never shared, and I don't even know if I shared this with you, the distributor, I won't say share their name, that Barnes & Noble hooked me up with for *The Toilet Paper Entrepreneur* went out of business, but they, you could tell they're going out of business. One day they stopped answering the phones and well, the first thing that happens, I stopped getting royalty checks from the distributor payments, then they stopped answering the phone. I kept on shipping them books. And I remember once I finally hold of someone, they said, why do you keep sending books? I'm like, I need to get the book in circulation, even though you're not paying me. And I had the stock at my house.

**AJ Harper** ([11:38](#)):

Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([11:38](#)):

So I kept on sending it and they kept on sending it to Barnes Nobles. Uh, but then they subsequently, subsequently went out of business. Um,

**AJ Harper** ([11:45](#)):

Did not know that story either.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([11:46](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. So let's talk about the, if you choose a self-publishing route, let me start off here. How do you know it's right for you? How do I know I should self-publish versus some alternative?

**AJ Harper** ([11:58](#)):

Well, again, it comes down to priorities like we talk about in Episode one.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([12:02](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([12:03](#)):

So, you know, do you want to have total control for the process, including timing? And would you like to make all the money?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([12:12](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([12:12](#)):

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After distributor fees and wholesale fees, et cetera. Printing fees, you know, that's, that's a factor. Also, if you are feeling really that you cannot get a book deal, if you're really positive, you can't. Now, I usually tell my students, why don't you at least try?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([12:32](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([12:32](#)):

I have a lot of students who got traditional deals from unexpected places, because traditional doesn't mean Big Five. Big Five meaning the Big Five publishing companies that most people are aware of. It can, there are thousands of publishers that accept unsolicited submissions and sign people all the time. So I think that there's more opportunity than people realize. But if you're really certain you don't want to go through that process of working with a traditional publisher, then, you know, go ahead and self-publish. But control is the main reason why people do it.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([13:04](#)):

Hmm.

**AJ Harper** ([13:04](#)):

Well, and control, and they think they can't get another deal.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([13:08](#)):

Yeah. You know, at Penned with Purpose, this is a little side, uh, I'm not side, I shouldn't even say side business. It was something we started testing. It's getting such traction. We're helping authors. The first two authors that we signed, uh, both got traditional publishing deals. The third author we're just about to pitch. And I'd be shocked if they don't get a traditional deal, even though for each one of them is their very first book. So that still exists. But let's say you make the decision to self-publish. And let's just go under the assumption you already know what your book's about. I, I we're going to dedicate a full episode to just figuring all that out. But I've decided to self-publish. I want to know what the Keys to Success are.

**AJ Harper** ([13:48](#)):

Well, I think it's important to talk about, you know, the problems with self-publishing.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([13:54](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([13:54](#)):

And, you know, I think when I came up in this industry, so that would be 2005.

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**Mike Michalowicz** ([14:00](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([14:01](#)):

Self-Publishing was becoming much more, um, prevalent and accepted because of Print on Demand. Print on demand Publishing is just, it means that books can be printed even as one one copy as needed. Which means you don't have to do these big print offset print runs. Offset printing is minimum a thousand. Usually at least 2,000 copies. And you have to make this big investment. You know, you bought 20,000 copies of *Toilet Paper Entrepreneur*.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([14:32](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([14:32](#)):

And then you have to warehouse them and the whole deal. Right? But Print on demand means you books, you know, you could print two at a time, five at a time. A hundred. Or you know, you can even do a short run of say, 500 copies, whatever. That makes it much more affordable and accessible for people. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([14:49](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([14:49](#)):

Even though it costs more per unit to do print on demand, it still made it more affordable. The problem is people, when they started to see that, Hey, I can do this, the positive is that Democratized Publishing people have access to it. They can get their ideas out. That's fantastic. But it's almost like they just tossed out all the traditional publishing standards.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([15:15](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([15:16](#)):

So now it's the situation of just because you can doesn't mean you should.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([15:22](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([15:23](#)):

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So, while traditional publishing definitely has drawbacks, they do actually know how to get a book out into the world that's quality. So we can't just ignore their process. In episode one, we do go over that process. So I'm not going to get too far into it, but the problem is people said, "Oh, you can get a book out fast and you can skip all these things." Now, a lot of my job when I'm working with students is educating them about what actually is the publishing process. Because the self-publishing industry has so warped the knowledge base to, we don't even understand what are the steps, how many editors do we need?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([16:03](#)):

Hmm.

**AJ Harper** ([16:03](#)):

What's the process? We assume if we can get it done in 30 days or a week can't be that hard. So we skip all this stuff that we don't even know we're skipping.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([16:12](#)):

Yes.

**AJ Harper** ([16:13](#)):

That's the thing. They don't even know we're skipping it.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([16:15](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([16:16](#)):

And I think if people really knew they wouldn't skip it.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([16:20](#)):

Yeah. Because

**AJ Harper** ([16:21](#)):

Ultimately most people are writing a book because they want to because they care. Yeah. Because they want to help. Because they want to inspire because they have a story to tell. Mm-Hmm.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([16:31](#)):

<affirmative>.

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**AJ Harper** ([16:31](#)):

So if they just knew, hey, oh wait, that's a step. Okay, let me do that. It's just that they don't know.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([16:38](#)):

Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>.

**AJ Harper** ([16:39](#)):

So what happened was people weren't testing their ideas. Um, people weren't ensuring that the writing was great. It was all about just like, hire somebody some stranger to write for you. And sometimes you don't even meet that person. And now with artificial intelligence, forget it.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([16:57](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([16:57](#)):

That's just going to be everywhere, by the way, just books that AI wrote with someone else's name on it.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([17:03](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([17:04](#)):

That are honestly not inspired. I mean, they'll get the information. Right. because it's pulling from all these different sources. But it's not going to be inspired.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([17:12](#)):

I was, uh, I can't remember who said this. I was with somebody and they said, with the advancements of AI, the cost of writing bullshit is now \$0.

**AJ Harper** ([17:19](#)):

That's right.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([17:20](#)):

And, uh, it's unbelievable how much online content already was AI generated that we just didn't know all that click bait, all that nonsense.

**AJ Harper** ([17:28](#)):



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Yes.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([17:28](#)):

You know, and now it's producing entire books that is just sucky, low quality.

**AJ Harper** ([17:34](#)):

Yeah. Well, what's, here's the thing about this. This is a diversion, but super inception. So AI pulls from all of these sources. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([17:43](#)):

But

**AJ Harper** ([17:44](#)):

Then AI is going to be pulling from AI sources. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([17:47](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([17:47](#)):

And then it's going to keep pulling from AI sources.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([17:50](#)):

Right. It's this feedback loop, which makes it more, more generic.

**AJ Harper** ([17:53](#)):

Which is going to be more bullshit. Bullshit upon bullshit upon...

**Mike Michalowicz** ([17:56](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. And more and more generic the creativity, the opportunity. But

**AJ Harper** ([18:00](#)):

That's an opportunity because then you stand out because you have a distinct message and voice. Correct.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([18:06](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([18:06](#)):

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Correct.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([18:07](#)):

I think AI, and we're going to dedicate an episode to that too. It's, it's a great, uh, tool, but it is a tool. It is not the creative source. It's

**AJ Harper** ([18:14](#)):

Not a replacement.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([18:15](#)):

Yeah. It's not.

**AJ Harper** ([18:16](#)):

So the other thing that, this is my biggest one. Mm-Hmm. The other thing that happened because of self-publishing becoming so prevalent Yeah. Is people stopped editing their books. <laugh>.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([18:25](#)):

I know. It's killing me.

**AJ Harper** ([18:26](#)):

I, I, I, I almost am speechless when I talk about it, but people just stopped editing their books. They go from writing to maybe tweaking it. Yeah. Getting some eyes on it. Nobody who's necessarily qualified to do so. And then straight to copy edit, which is dot i's cross e's punctuation, grammar.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([18:46](#)):

Syntax.

**AJ Harper** ([18:47](#)):

That sort of thing.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([18:47](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([18:48](#)):

Don't even know what it takes.

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**Mike Michalowicz** ([18:52](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([18:52](#)):

To edit a book. That's actually where a book comes alive. That's where a book becomes a book.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([18:58](#)):

So explain what that is. We're moving big pieces, is again, the flow. Right? What is it?

**AJ Harper** ([19:03](#)):

Well, that first of all, let's back up. There's self-edit. Before you even get to developmental edit. In my book, I have several chapters dedicated to how you do it.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([19:14](#)):

Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>.

**AJ Harper** ([19:15](#)):

And it's a method that I created when I was ghost writing. because I had to figure out a system to edit books. Right. And, um, the self-edit is just as important as the developmental edits, where you are checking to make sure that your book is doing everything you want it to do. And that it's attending to the reader, and as it is as accessible as possible. But then there's developmental editing, and that's the person who's doing the 30,000-foot view. That's what I do, is the flow working the sequencing. That's probably the hardest thing.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([19:50](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([19:51](#)):

Is your through line of your core message, is it working all the way through? Does it deliver on its promise? Are the stories compelling? Do you, are you missing stuff? Do you have too much of something? Is it clear? Is it inclusive? Just big picture stuff.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([20:05](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([20:07](#)):

And then after that, you get into copy edit, which is what most people think of as editing. Worse, when people skip that big step and then they go to copy edit, they try to find the

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cheapest person possible, which is often their friend who's an English teacher or somebody online, and that person actually doesn't know how to do a proper copy edit. I can tell when I look at a self-published book, if they use the right copy editor, there's an easy tell. Oh,

**Mike Michalowicz** ([20:34](#)):

Was that, what that?

**AJ Harper** ([20:36](#)):

Look to see? How is the word acknowledgments spelled?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([20:42](#)):

Okay.

**AJ Harper** ([20:42](#)):

Because people always add this extra, this e acknowledge, like the word acknowledge.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([20:48](#)):

Oh, in....

**AJ Harper** ([20:50](#)):

Yeah. And it, the e in acknowledge.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([20:53](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([20:54](#)):

It comes out in acknowledgements.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([20:56](#)):

Oh, that's an interesting look.

**AJ Harper** ([20:58](#)):

So I, in fact, I do this all the time.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([21:00](#)):

You flip right there.

**AJ Harper** ([21:01](#)):

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I'll flip right to it just to see. Oh, okay. Oh,

**Mike Michalowicz** ([21:03](#)):

This is not ... You know what actually, another tell is forward versus foreword.

**AJ Harper** ([21:08](#)):

Yes.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([21:09](#)):

I can't believe how many people put F-O-R-W-A-R-D.

**AJ Harper** ([21:13](#)):

Yes.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([21:13](#)):

As the foreword, I'm like, "Oh my gosh."

**AJ Harper** ([21:16](#)):

Yes. And you can tell other things. Um, do you know, because the, the publishing industry in, in the United States follows the Chicago Manual of Style. So I can tell just from a few little things besides acknowledgments, did this copy editor actually follow Chicago?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([21:30](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([21:31](#)):

Which any copy editor who's legit will do. And I can tell right away. It can also tell from design.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([21:37](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([21:37](#)):

So that's another factor. Do you have a good cover?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([21:41](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([21:42](#)):

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Are your, are the words all scrunched together in the back? Is the picture, does it even make sense with the title?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([21:47](#)):

Right.

**AJ Harper** ([21:49](#)):

What about the interior? Are there extra spaces? Look for this: extra spaces in between paragraphs. It should all be together. Yeah,

**Mike Michalowicz** ([21:58](#)):

Of course. Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([21:59](#)):

Right.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([21:59](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([21:59](#)):

That's a tell, also that you are... this is a self-published book that didn't have a proper designer.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([22:05](#)):

And that's a page layout specialist.

**AJ Harper** ([22:07](#)):

Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> Interior page design.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([22:08](#)):

Interior, you know. So, uh, there's also testing, I just want to give everyone a heads up on that, is that we are really leaning into that testing the content. So as you and I write, we will send to pre-reads a chapter or a section or a story and say, "How's this landing with you? How's this resonating with you?" The titles too. I, I used to fall in love with a title saying, oh,

**AJ Harper** ([22:35](#)):

Like *The Pumpkin Plan*?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([22:36](#)):

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Like *The Pumpkin Plant*. Oh, yeah. Yeah. Which I still love that title. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. But, and it wasn't originally *The Pumpkin Plan*. I, I, I think it was something else. You're, you're the one who gave it the alliteration, if I recall.

**AJ Harper (22:45):**

I don't remember what it was called.

**Mike Michalowicz (22:48):**

But, um, many authors I talk to say, oh, here's the title of my book.

**AJ Harper (22:51):**

Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz (22:52):**

I'm like, oh wait, have you written it yet? No, no, no. But this title, I know my title. And they start building the book around a title that isn't necessarily a great title. So one little hack, I guess we use for our authors at Pen With Purpose, what we do is we say we have to write minimally a hundred titles. And their goal is, is to break them from the habit of saying, I love this one title. Just have them spit out more and more titles to get almost exhausted from it. And what we find is often they say, oh, maybe that first title, *The Pumpkin Plan* isn't the best. Here's all these alternatives. And then we go through a testing process of using a polling system and so forth to see what is the best.

**AJ Harper (23:28):**

Yeah. That's cool that you do a hundred titles.

**Mike Michalowicz (23:29):**

Minimally.

**AJ Harper (23:30):**

We have a whole episode on titles that we'll be recording soon.

**Mike Michalowicz (23:33):**

Oh, that's right.

**AJ Harper (23:34):**

Yeah. Yeah.

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**Mike Michalowicz** ([23:35](#)):

So, uh, yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([23:36](#)):

But that's, but that's, this is an example. So when you don't test the title, when you don't test the cover, when you don't take the time to write a good book. Yeah. When you don't take the time to self-edit and get a developmental edit when you don't focus on good interior page design. Those are all problems with the self-publishing industry where people aren't encouraged to take time with those things.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([23:58](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([23:58](#)):

And in fact, don't understand also marketing milestones. Most people miss a bunch of them.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([24:04](#)):

Or don't even know they exist.

**AJ Harper** ([24:05](#)):

Exactly. And I would say a lot of people don't realize that when they're publishing with certain companies, they don't longer own their ISBN, which as you said earlier, is like the social security number for your book. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([24:18](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([24:19](#)):

So I just think it's, this is why knowledge you've got, you've got to learn. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([24:25](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([24:25](#)):

You can't just rely on what somebody else is telling you. Even what we're telling you right now, you should be doing your own research. But this has been the, the challenge with the awesomeness of self-publishing has also led to people saying never mind about all these other things. To the point where people don't even know they exist anymore.



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**Mike Michalowicz** ([24:45](#)):

I love that point of, of doing your research. Be careful of these packaged offers. And I'm not saying they're all bad or all good, they're definitely bad and good out there. But I think in the entrepreneurial industry, if I start a new business, I can find a business packager effectively. You, you spend \$2,000 and they'll set up your LLC and they'll do some initial registration. You can do that all yourself, and you just do the filing fees and maybe it costs you \$175, but you're paying this massive multiple just because you're ignorant of the process. If you invest us a little bit of time in understanding the process, you can manage on your own and get better results and retain full control.

**AJ Harper** ([25:21](#)):

Yeah. It would be also, it would be cheaper if you hired a, say a virtual assistant or an assistant in person to just project manage once you've chosen your people.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([25:33](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([25:33](#)):

Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([25:34](#)):

So let's talk about those differences. The, the full DIY, which I've, we've done and I've done in every single self-publishing case

**AJ Harper** ([25:41](#)):

Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([25:41](#)):

Versus the self-publishing services that are out there. What, let's start off, what's the main difference between the two? And then let's start off with DIY and digging in.

**AJ Harper** ([25:50](#)):

Well, I mean, the self-publish, let's talk about self-publishing purposes. Um, services. Yeah. So they'll call themselves publishers.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([25:59](#)):

Okay.

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**AJ Harper** ([26:00](#)):

But they're really just getting your book to marke.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([26:02](#)):

Right.

**AJ Harper** ([26:02](#)):

They're just assembling the team and getting your book to market. They're not actually concerned with if your book sells. Right. That's a what a, that's the distinction a publisher actually wants your book to sell, because publishers actually make most of their money from backlist, which are titles that are a year or more old.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([26:23](#)):

Mm-Hmm.

**AJ Harper** ([26:24](#)):

So a self-publishing packager that calls themselves a publisher, they're making their money upfront with whatever you invest in the process. They're not really concerned about whether you sell it and they actually don't expect you to. So that's important distinction. The, so what they care about is that upfront money. And so it's that, that means that there might be charging you for stuff you don't need.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([26:50](#)):

Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>

**AJ Harper** ([26:51](#)):

Et cetera.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([26:51](#)):

Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>

**AJ Harper** ([26:52](#)):

That they, they'll say they're a publisher and that gets you thinking, well, they're a publisher.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([26:58](#)):

Right.

**AJ Harper** ([26:58](#)):

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Because again, you don't have the knowledge. But any company, any person, anybody in their basement could say they're a publisher.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([27:05](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([27:06](#)):

Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([27:06](#)):

Yeah. So, but they do have some advantages. They can help you find the people you need, the resources that you need, like the copy editor. Like...

**AJ Harper** ([27:17](#)):

So Yeah. I mean, here's the thing. You have to vet these people.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([27:20](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([27:20](#)):

Because I know from being in this industry a long time, that there's a tendency with people who they'll self-publish their own book.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([27:28](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([27:29](#)):

Then they've decided they're an expert in self-publishing. Then they start a company to help other people self-publish their book.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([27:36](#)):

Yeah. But

**AJ Harper** ([27:37](#)):

But they're really not an expert. They just did their own.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([27:40](#)):

Yeah.

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**AJ Harper** ([27:40](#)):

Right. Um, and they're pulling from the same source you would as ADIY. Yeah. They're, they don't nec— They might have a small team, but really they're just outsourcing.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([27:49](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([27:50](#)):

So that becomes an issue. If they don't have their own team and quality controls. They're dependent on outsourcing just as much as you, they're just upselling.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([28:01](#)):

I would invite, if someone listening in is considering a self-publishing service, buy the books from Amazon or whatever your preferred retailer is, of the books at these places are self-published. And look for, acknowledge the word acknowledgements.

**AJ Harper** ([28:15](#)):

Uh huh.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([28:15](#)):

But, but really dig into these books and check out the quality of the books.

**AJ Harper** ([28:18](#)):

Yeah. And also talk to the authors. People are actually really available to speak to. And don't look at the testimonials on the site. Actually contact those people. Say what was your actual experience?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([28:30](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([28:30](#)):

Most people write testimonials early in the process when they're excited. because they just got their book.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([28:35](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([28:35](#)):

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And it's really shiny. But then they might realize later that they weren't happy with this or that. So actually with self-publishing, hybrid publishing and traditional, you always want to talk to the authors.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([28:46](#)):

Let's talk about the DIY, uh, the DIYI have to assemble a team. Can we just explain what the team is real quick?

**AJ Harper** ([28:52](#)):

Yeah. So, uh, you know, you might need a project manager, someone who's rallying everybody. If that's or wrangling everybody, that's not necessarily going to be you. But you're going to have a developmental editor, copy editor and proofreader. They're all three different people. You have a cover designer and an interior page designer is sometimes the same person.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([29:15](#)):

Mm hmm. <affirmative>

**AJ Harper** ([29:15](#)):

Sometimes they have the same skill. And, uh, the interior page designer should also make your eBooks. Beyond that. There's nobody else that you need, unless you need a separate person to write some marketing copy if you're not going to be doing that. But the rest of the tasks are just uploading files and putting up listings and that sort of thing. So you can handle that yourself.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([29:40](#)):

Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> There is a major marketing component and uh, traditional publishers don't necessarily do much. They do do some, uh, but no matter what the self-publishing, you're going to have to do all of it yourself.

**AJ Harper** ([29:52](#)):

Well, I think any path you choose, that's your job.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([29:55](#)):

Yeah, yeah. Right. You, you're the representative of the idea. And you've got to get the word out. Uh, I'll tell you the one thing that traditional publishing does that, uh, you could do in self-publishing, but traditional publishing just does, is they have an infinite number of books available. You can send them to whoever, uh, however you want. And often they'll cover all the mar— the mailing costs and so forth. So, uh, but

**AJ Harper** ([30:16](#)):

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Let's talk about marketing for a minute. With self-publishing. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([30:19](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([30:20](#)):

So that's your DIY team. But you might add other people who are marketing people onto the team.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([30:25](#)):

Right.

**AJ Harper** ([30:25](#)):

You might need a publicist, but that's only if you really need to be on tv.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([30:29](#)):

Right.

**AJ Harper** ([30:30](#)):

You really need top tier placement in say, Wall Street Journal, O magazine, whatever. If you don't need that, and you might think you need it, but you, but most people don't.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([30:42](#)):

Most people don't. Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([30:43](#)):

So if you need that, you might need a publicist. And that's going to be you priciest, uh, of the self-publishing package. Your most expensive person is your developmental editor.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([30:53](#)):

Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>.

**AJ Harper** ([30:54](#)):

But setting that person aside, which is why people set that person aside, which is why people skip developmental editing.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([31:02](#)):

Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>.

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**AJ Harper** ([31:02](#)):

Even though it's crucial.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([31:04](#)):

Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>.

**AJ Harper** ([31:05](#)):

That person's the most expensive. because after that, you could get a book done for say, three to five grand. Mm. Setting aside developmental editing and marketing fees. So it's totally doable. And you don't need to have that money all upfront. It comes in stages.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([31:21](#)):

Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>.

**AJ Harper** ([31:22](#)):

But you also have on your DIY team, a person who's helping you launch.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([31:27](#)):

Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>.

**AJ Harper** ([31:27](#)):

You might hire a company for that or a person to just help you manage all of it. You might also have somebody who's helping you run your social media.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([31:36](#)):

Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>.

**AJ Harper** ([31:37](#)):

Who else is on your team? You have a big marketing team.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([31:40](#)):

Yeah. So we have, uh, effectively customer service people respond to reader engagement, which is a huge part of marketing that is not often considered when someone starts reading your book. Some people will reach out to you and say, "Hey, I loved your book." Or "I have a question about it." You've got to manage those emails because now you have one-on-one engagement with those folks. There's also subsequent we call them, um, evergreen launches. So you have the launch when the book is released, you have pre-launch, that's preparation for it. Your influencer network and so forth. And then post-launch and Evergreen. How do you boost

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sales again? What are the things you can do to get things moving? Often it's leveraging influencers. So we have someone in our office, um, that will maintain the schedule. So me, the author is responsible for the relationship, but maintaining that as a fresh relationship, Aaron at the office handles all that scheduling.

**AJ Harper** ([32:30](#)):

Yeah. So that's a lot. Yeah. But a person who's just starting out could just have an assistant to help them a little bit. Yeah. To help them get the launch going and kick all those things into gear. So that's another expense and another person on your DIY team.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([32:43](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. You know, the fear I have, if someone's listening in right now saying, "Oh my God, there's so much. Maybe I should just skip doing a book altogether." <laugh>.

**AJ Harper** ([32:50](#)):

Well, it is daunting. But I think you have to be, look, it's worse if you don't know and then you bump up against it and you say, "Oh my gosh, what did I get myself into?" It's a lot. There's a lot of moving pieces, but you're putting something out into the world that Absolutely. I mean, we say this, we say will change lives. It starts to sound like, okay, that's, you're saying that a lot you would not believe. The people I hear from, from my book, from my students' books, I know you hear from people all the time to have the kind of impact, on another human being is astounding.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([33:29](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([33:30](#)):

Never mind what happens to you.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([33:34](#)):

Right. Personally, you're transformed.

**AJ Harper** ([33:36](#)):

And it's, it's not just the professional transformation, meaning how you uplevel in every way, how people perceive you. I personally believe that the act of writing and publishing a book challenges you and changes you personally. Its own transformation.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([33:54](#)):

Yeah.



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**AJ Harper** ([33:55](#)):

So it's going to be hard. Nothing wonderful in life is easy.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([33:59](#)):

Right. Right. And it's Right. You've got to go in with knowledge. Um, and there's alternatives. We'll, we'll talk about hybrid, uh, and why that may be an option too. Because they come with a prepackaged team, if you will.

**AJ Harper** ([34:09](#)):

We have a whole episode on that.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([34:10](#)):

I Know. Yeah, we do. Um, let's talk about print on demand and distribution with self-publishing. So distribution, you were talking about earlier, offset printing, print on demand. I don't know if there's another type of printing. What-what is offset Exactly.

**AJ Harper** ([34:25](#)):

So offset is, there's, these are separate printers actually, if you, they're actually different machines. Yeah. A print on demand machine is, doesn't require the same, um, mechanics and setup as offset and, uh, offset. Those are for your larger runs. They're called print runs.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([34:43](#)):

Right.

**AJ Harper** ([34:44](#)):

And traditionally, that's how you had to print a book. You would do a big run. Now you can have, and for a long time we've had print on demand.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([34:52](#)):

Yep.

**AJ Harper** ([34:53](#)):

So that's just a different machine. You can kind of tell a print on demand book. And if you look in your library and you see this crease along, if on the front of the book, like a little line

**Mike Michalowicz** ([35:05](#)):

On the front cover.

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**AJ Harper** ([35:06](#)):

Yeah. Okay.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([35:07](#)):

Right

**AJ Harper** ([35:07](#)):

At the spine,

**Mike Michalowicz** ([35:08](#)):

Near the spine. So the offset, because I've been to a printing facility that I think they use the Heidelberg presses still. And my understanding is the book is printed in all different pieces and it comes together is assembled.

**AJ Harper** ([35:23](#)):

Yes.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([35:23](#)):

A print on demand. I've never seen the machine. So this is an assumption is that it all happens within the machine. The, the, the pages all kind of comes together in the machine. It's not pieces that are then blended. Well,

**AJ Harper** ([35:35](#)):

Except for the cover. Except

**Mike Michalowicz** ([35:36](#)):

For the cover.

**AJ Harper** ([35:37](#)):

Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([35:37](#)):

Okay.

**AJ Harper** ([35:38](#)):

But they'll print that separately and then they have another machine--

**Mike Michalowicz** ([35:41](#)):

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That attaches it.

**AJ Harper** ([35:42](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. And I'm sure there's other machines I've never seen. So those of you who are aficionados in printing machines, if you want to write in and tell us about that, that's cool. We don't, we're

**Mike Michalowicz** ([35:52](#)):

We're not--

**AJ Harper** ([35:52](#)):

We're not, we're not ultimate specialist in that. No. We

**Mike Michalowicz** ([35:55](#)):

We are going to have a corrections corner in these episodes. So if we say something incorrectly or, or not fully complete, we're going to add that in.

**AJ Harper** ([36:02](#)):

But it's important to know about print on demand, That while it affords us a lot of flexibility, and of course you don't have to put any upfront money to that besides up the cost to upload your files, which could be as little as \$49. Mm-Hmm.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([36:17](#)):

<affirmative>

**AJ Harper** ([36:19](#)):

You are paying more per unit than offset.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([36:23](#)):

Hmm.

**AJ Harper** ([36:23](#)):

It costs less because when you do the volume on the offset printer, you're getting a lower price per unit, the more, the greater volume you do.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([36:32](#)):

Yeah.

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**AJ Harper** ([36:32](#)):

It costs more to do these short runs.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([36:35](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([36:36](#)):

Also, there's some bookstores that don't like to order print on demand.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([36:42](#)):

Oh, interesting.

**AJ Harper** ([36:43](#)):

Yeah. Not, you know, it's hard. You never know who it's going to be. And then some places like Barnes & Noble, they're not, you know, routinely stocking print on demand. If a book is super popular, they'll do it because money talks. But the, it, it doesn't mean that you can't access it. You go up to the reference desk at Barnes & Noble, do you have such and such book? They'll say, I'll get it for you. But you might have to pay for it then because they might be worried if they can, you know, sell it. Print on demand does have some limitations in terms of reach. It's just something to note.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([37:17](#)):

We made a note here of Amazon's Create Space and IngramSpark, they are distributors, but also they provide print on demand. Is that how it works?

**AJ Harper** ([37:26](#)):

Well, Create, it's not Create Space anymore. So it's called KDP.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([37:30](#)):

Oh, Kindle Direct Prints.

**AJ Harper** ([37:31](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. It used to be called, um, Create Space's.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([37:35](#)):

Right. And then

**AJ Harper** ([37:35](#)):

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They decided to call the whole thing KDP. So that's your eBook and the paperback version. And then there's IngramSpark. And, uh, I think they're both options that you can use. I think it can be helpful to do them both at the same time. And the reason is Amazon tends to make rules, like they just change something major.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([37:57](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([37:58](#)):

Uh, and they're doing it all the time. And they give you no warning. And everything Amazon does is to make sure that you're exclusive to them.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([38:06](#)):

Yeah. They keep on pushing that.

**AJ Harper** ([38:07](#)):

They keep pushing it. And so it, a good hack is to have your book with IngramSpark and KDP paperback so that you are covered in, in every way possible.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([38:20](#)):

Oh, that's interesting. So you can do both.

**AJ Harper** ([38:22](#)):

You can.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([38:22](#)):

It's kind of like, uh, when you hop in an Uber, and they also do Lyft, they have both apps.

**AJ Harper** ([38:26](#)):

You got your backup.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([38:27](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([38:27](#)):

Yeah, yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([38:28](#)):

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But the driver does both too.

**AJ Harper** ([38:30](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Uh, so those are the primary, um, POD. You could get private POD publishers. And I will, this is a caveat, the distribution factor, where some bookstores, you know, don't accept POD. They will, if you have trade distribution, which is a whole other thing, which is very, like I said earlier, hard to get if you're a one-off. But let's say you start a little publishing company.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([38:56](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([38:57](#)):

And you start having really quality books out there. My little publishing company that I sold, we were print on demand.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([39:04](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([39:04](#)):

For a really long time. Yeah. But because we eventually got trade distribution, it took us about four years to get it. Then we were taken seriously by the bookstores.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([39:14](#)):

Let's talk about eBooks. Uh, author earnings estimated back in 2016, that self-published books accounted for around 42% of all eBooks sold. Now my experience, and this is now 2023, about 10 to 15% of any title I sell will sell in eBook format, Kindle predominantly, um, self-publishing for eBooks. Is there any knowledge we need to know?

**AJ Harper** ([39:39](#)):

Well, I, I think it's important to understand that, oh, first of all, you can publish through those same pub, you know, KDP and Ingram Spark. Both have eBook distribution. And then to make sure that your book is accessible to as many places as possible. You also want Smashwords or drafted digital. Those are two other companies that will make sure it gets onto Nook, Sony Reader, Kobo, which is important in other countries. Kindle is not as popular in other countries. Mm-Hmm. I think the important thing to note is that we often, like I this theme, the theme of the day is let's not skip, let's not skip things. Let's not cut corners.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([40:14](#)):

Yes.

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**AJ Harper** ([40:14](#)):

When we self-publish, and I tend to see people with eBooks just uploading these files without really checking to see how do they look on a Kindle? How do they look on a Kobo, how do you know, et cetera. This is where having an interior page designer whose quality will help you because they know how to design an eBook, how to take the print design, transfer it to an eBook for readability.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([40:39](#)):

Hmm. And then let's talk about, uh, audio. So for me, audio represents 52. I think it was percent of my book sales on any single title.

**AJ Harper** ([40:50](#)):

Okay. But I think, I think that's an unusual number.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([40:54](#)):

That may be high.

**AJ Harper** ([40:55](#)):

That's... I think it's because people love your audio books.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([40:57](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([40:57](#)):

And you have a reputation for doing off the cuff stuff. They love listening to you. Yeah. So I think it is higher than the average.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([41:05](#)):

Maybe. Yeah. I'm rerecording *Profit First*. Right now at the studio there is interesting about the rights. So this was with a traditional publisher, penguin. Then they, they own the distribution rights. They sold the rights for the audio to a couple company called Gildan, but only for five years. And the five-year renewals up, penguin called me and said, Hey, should we just renew with Gilden? Um...

**AJ Harper** ([41:27](#)):

Oh no.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([41:27](#)):

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Yeah. I'm like, no, <laugh>. I'm like, I know you should renew it with, they said, oh, you mean we should take it back house? I said, no, no, give it to me.

**AJ Harper** ([41:33](#)):

<laugh>.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([41:34](#)):

They said, no way, Mike.

**AJ Harper** ([41:35](#)):

Yeah, I bet.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([41:35](#)):

So of the lesser of two weak options, going back to Penguin is a higher royalty rate. So I'm like, let's do it. Plus we have more control over it.

**AJ Harper** ([41:44](#)):

Yeah. We

**Mike Michalowicz** ([41:44](#)):

We can do it. I don't if you know this, I just found out you can change an audio book, uh, or a Kindle book after it's been published. You can go back and say, oops, there was an error here. Uh, the website was wrong. And you can go back and do an insert. So sometimes you'll listen to an audio book and you hear the voice of the reader change slightly in one section. That's a, they've gone back and edited it at some point. Um, but the, for self publishers, I invite people to check out acx.com.

**AJ Harper** ([42:12](#)):

That's also owned by Amazon.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([42:13](#)):

Yeah. I mean, they're, the--

**AJ Harper** ([42:14](#)):

Amazon owns the world.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([42:16](#)):



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They own the world. And it's a great platform because you can upload it, it, it walks you through it. My biggest tip for people in the prescriptive nonfiction space, authors should read their own books because you know why you wrote what you wrote, you can emphasize the parts you need to emphasize, you can read it correctly. These professional voices, while they have, you know, FM/DJ, late Night Voices, <laugh>, they, uh, they don't understand why something was written. And I've heard mispronunciations or the context,

**AJ Harper** ([42:50](#)):

Well, isn't the heart missing?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([42:52](#)):

That's the word.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([42:53](#)):

The Heart's missing.

**AJ Harper** ([42:53](#)):

Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([42:55](#)):

So, uh, that's my experience with audio.

**AJ Harper** ([42:58](#)):

But you should, I feel you this again, I'm going to be beat this drum. Don't cut corners. Yeah. You have to have some training and how to deliver.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([43:08](#)):

Of course.

**AJ Harper** ([43:09](#)):

So you need someone to coach you. That's, that's money well spent—

**Mike Michalowicz** ([43:13](#)):

Yes.

**AJ Harper** ([43:13](#)):

—on how to handle operative words and how to breathe and all of that.

# don't write *that* book!

**Mike Michalowicz** ([43:17](#)):

Yep. And you need to have, I have two other people in the studio with me. I have the audio engineer and the producer. And the producer is just listening. And then we'll come in and say, oh, the way you read that, it didn't sound right. Or that, that word was mispronounced. Uh, and the engineer is also checking simultaneously. You have two people listening as you're reading.

**AJ Harper** ([43:37](#)):

So, but you're going into a studio. There are other ways to do it.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([43:40](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([43:40](#)):

Do, you know, you do get a high, if you're self-publishing, you do get a higher royalty rate if you, you, if you're the talent, meaning you're the person who speaks.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([43:48](#)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

**AJ Harper** ([43:49](#)):

And if you created the Audiobook yourself versus having another producer.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([43:55](#)):

Correct.

**AJ Harper** ([43:56](#)):

Right. So if you're just delivering the files to ACX, you're getting a higher royalty rate.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([44:01](#)):

Correct.

**AJ Harper** ([44:01](#)):

Otherwise, you have to share with talent, share with the producer. The problem is, it's more money up front, but I think it pays.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([44:08](#)):

Yeah. And when you say share with the producer, they're, you can hire a studio and they provide a producer and it's a flat fee for that service.

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**AJ Harper** ([44:14](#)):

Exactly. But not, not if through ACX.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([44:17](#)):

Oh. If you hire ACX's producer?

**AJ Harper** ([44:19](#)):

Well, ACX has different royalty structures.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([44:21](#)):

Oh. Okay.

**AJ Harper** ([44:21](#)):

Based on how much work they do.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([44:23](#)):

Oh, I see what you're saying. Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([44:24](#)):

That's all. I mean,

**Mike Michalowicz** ([44:25](#)):

Oh, I've only used ACX for the uploads. I haven't hired their talent or any of stuff.

**AJ Harper** ([44:29](#)):

Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([44:29](#)):

So I understand what you're saying.

**AJ Harper** ([44:31](#)):

So it's a bigger investment upfront.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([44:33](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([44:33](#)):

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If you're going to go to a studio yourself. But you can find studios in your area. Um, you don't have to come to... You don't have to come to the greatstate of New Jersey and use Mike's. Although I did I use Mike's.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([44:45](#)):

Common Mode.

**AJ Harper** ([44:46](#)):

Listen. Yeah. And I'm that I, it is this genius place that looks, you would never think—

**Mike Michalowicz** ([44:54](#)):

<laugh> We're off the highway.

**AJ Harper** ([44:55](#)):

You feel, if you feel like you're in a movie that maybe you shouldn't be going into this place, maybe you shouldn't walk into this building.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([45:01](#)):

Yeah. It's a little scary.

**AJ Harper** ([45:02](#)):

That might be because I was there at four o'clock in the morning.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([45:05](#)):

You can come at four o'clock in the afternoon. There's only one car in the parking lot. It's the, the producer. And then you pull up.

**AJ Harper** ([45:09](#)):

It's also, not only is it by a strip mall, it's in a strip mall behind the strip mall. Right.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([45:14](#)):

It's in a strip mall behind a strip mall. And behind that, which probably wasn't there at that point, there was a cat sanctuary, A wildcat sanctuary.

**AJ Harper** ([45:23](#)):

<laugh> But they're Jesus. And they do all Stephen King's books.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([45:26](#)):

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Do they?

**AJ Harper** ([45:27](#)):

Yes.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([45:27](#)):

Yeah, they do. It's amazing. See, Stephen King doesn't record there though.

**AJ Harper** ([45:31](#)):

No. because it's fiction.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([45:32](#)):

Oh, Stephen doesn't. Oh, right. But they do also,

**AJ Harper** ([45:35](#)):

They have talent.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([45:36](#)):

Oh, I wish he'd read his own book. He did read!

**AJ Harper** ([45:39](#)):

*On Writing*.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([45:39](#)):

*On Writing*. Yeah. I thought he did.

**AJ Harper** ([45:40](#)):

Yeah. Okay.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([45:41](#)):

Um, anything else before we go off the else here? <laugh>, anything else?

**AJ Harper** ([45:45](#)):

No, but I think this is all, this is, it's on the rails. It's let's—

**Mike Michalowicz** ([45:48](#)):

Yeah,

# don't write *that* book!

**AJ Harper** ([45:48](#)):

Let's do the best we can as we self-publish. That's the,

**Mike Michalowicz** ([45:52](#)):

That's the last

**AJ Harper** ([45:52](#)):

Self-publish like a pro. We're talking about how you do that. And one of the ways you do that with audiobook is go get your own recording work with your own producer. It's more money upfront, but you're going to have a better quality. My last note on that, my last note on that is get all your formats together and publish at the same time.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([46:11](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([46:13](#)):

Audio, print, eBook at the same time. I cannot tell you how many people message me and say, I bought your book on audio and then I bought the hardcover. Yeah. I bought your book on audio, then I bought the hardcover.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([46:27](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([46:28](#)):

People are using audio to test out books.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([46:30](#)):

That's absolutely true. And self-publishing is nothing new. Poor Richard's Almanac was self-published, uh, one of the greatest or most accessible books of all time. The Bible was self-published. So Self-publishing isn't new. It's actually how it all started. And, uh, I think we can go back to self-publishing and deliver at the highest level. Before we wrap things up, we want to invite you to go to our website. It's DW tb, so don't write that book. Dwtbpodcast.com. We have free resources and materials there. We want to invite you to join our email list. Who knows, this may take off and be so successful. AJ. We'll be doing live podcast broadcasts from stage in theater while all our guests can attend.

**AJ Harper** ([47:12](#)):

That sounds fun.

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**Mike Michalowicz** ([47:13](#)):

Yeah, and it may happen. But you are listening, friend. Have to go to [dwtb podcast.com](http://dwtb-podcast.com) and sign up so you could be at that event, which maybe it's going to be at my house or yours, AJ

**AJ Harper** ([47:23](#)):

<laugh> No.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([47:25](#)):

Um, and we want to hear your stories about making your best seller or your best tips you've used to create your book and become a category defining book. Let us know by emailing us at [hello, H-E-L-L-O, Hello, at dwtb podcast.com](mailto:hello, H-E-L-L-O, Hello, at dwtb-podcast.com). All right. Thanks for joining us today and, uh, for every episode. We are looking forward to having you join us on the next episode. And as always, Don't write *that* book. Write the book you're called to write. Bye.