

don't write *that* book!

Episode 4:

Does Your Book Work?

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.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:12](#)):

Now, here are your hosts. Myself, **Mike Michalowicz** and **AJ Harper**. So I, I do have a question for you. What is your favorite part of this time of the season? We're in spring entering summer.

AJ Harper ([00:23](#)):

Warm weather.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:24](#)):

Yeah, me too. Just, do you prefer warm or cold?

AJ Harper ([00:27](#)):

Warmth. Really too many, too many years. Freezing my off.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:32](#)):

<laugh> In Minnesota, right? PTSD of some sort.

AJ Harper ([00:35](#)):

Listen, I paid my dues. I'm, I want warmth. Yeah.

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

Yeah. What's your favorite season of the four?

AJ Harper ([00:42](#)):

Spring.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:43](#)):

Okay. Mine's fall.

AJ Harper ([00:44](#)):

Yeah. I love spring. I was born in the spring. Okay.

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

Were you born in April?

AJ Harper ([00:48](#)):

No. March. I'm actually March 19th. So spring comes two days after I was born. And every year my dad says, calls me on my birthday or right before my birthday. Yeah. I always, "you were born in the spring and it was so warm. There was no snow on the ground. And the irises and the crocuses were peeking out." And he says it every year.

Mike Michalowicz ([01:09](#)):

That's awesome.

AJ Harper ([01:10](#)):

Yep. Irises and the crocuses.

Mike Michalowicz ([01:12](#)):

Yeah. Interesting selection of plants. Is there a reason?

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

Yeah. I think he's confusing the two. And maybe he was corrected himself and meant to say crocuses. Because it's really crocuses that are coming up.

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

It's okay.

AJ Harper ([01:24](#)):

His point. It's just sweet. He's a man of very little sentiment.

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

Yeah, that is, that's very sweet.

AJ Harper ([01:31](#)):

So maybe that's why I love spring, but I like this hopeful.

Mike Michalowicz ([01:34](#)):

Yeah. Right, right.

AJ Harper ([01:36](#)):

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And also, if you like, back to Minnesota, if you're ever in Minnesota, when it gets to be about 40, 45 degrees, it's starting to be spring. It's like we all got let out of prison. <laugh>. I'm not joking. <laugh>. I'm not joking, shorts.

Mike Michalowicz ([01:52](#)):

No you're not. I know you're not.

AJ Harper ([01:53](#)):

Shorts. Roller skating around the lake.

Mike Michalowicz ([01:56](#)):

<laugh> Guys are shirtless.

AJ Harper ([01:58](#)):

Yes.

Mike Michalowicz ([01:59](#)):

45. That's funny.

AJ Harper ([02:00](#)):

It's me.

Mike Michalowicz ([02:01](#)):

Women are shirtless. That's funny. Um, let's kick things off. I first want to introduce my co-writer, my partner **AJ Harper**. We just spent three days together up in or at the writing cabin. I want to be clear, that's rented. I put on Facebook that I'm at the writing cabin and someone's like, oh, you own a writing cabin, <laugh>. Oh, yeah. I shouldn't say "at the, at the rented writing cabin." You know, the coolest thing in addition to the writing. And we created a book in 27 minutes. We, we have to talk about that in one episode, <laugh>. But was looking out the window that morning. I was downstairs in the kitchen. You were upstairs in your room. Oh yeah. And I'm like, at first I'm like, Ooh, they put a fountain in overnight. Like, it made no sense. Oh,

AJ Harper ([02:46](#)):

There's a pond.

Mike Michalowicz ([02:47](#)):

There's a pond out there. And all of a sudden I saw like this water splashing around. I'm like, installed a pond. Like, that's where my mind was. Now I, of course, that's ridiculous. I looked a little closer. There's a bear bathing in a pond.

AJ Harper ([02:58](#)):

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Yep. A young bear.

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

I've never seen that before.

AJ Harper ([03:01](#)):

<laugh>. And you texted me. Yeah. We were both creating videos. You downstairs and me upstairs.
<laugh>. It was, I, he was taking a bath. It was sweet.

Mike Michalowicz ([03:10](#)):

It was sweet. What I like about you, what I admire about you is you embrace the moment we, you said that guy, his favorite restaurant here. We went up to Mount Fuji.

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

Oh my gosh.

Mike Michalowicz ([03:20](#)):

And that didn't work out. They were booked solid, apparently. And then we went to a roadhouse biker bar. Yeah. For, for,

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

We went from like Japanese Disneyland to

Mike Michalowicz ([03:30](#)):

Yeah. To don't wear your colors signs when you walk in, because don't fight. Don't wear your colors.
Yeah. Leave your, uh, brass knuckles outside.

AJ Harper ([03:38](#)):

Yep. I adapt. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz ([03:39](#)):

That's what I like about you. You adapt <laugh>. That's, I think the greatest compliment is that you, you bring the best of yourself regardless of the circumstances.

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

That is true. I know. I love that you said that. You're welcome. I'm proud of that. Actually. You should be.
Hmm. I like, okay, so on that same vein, you are not, you are so non-judgy.

Mike Michalowicz ([04:00](#)):

Oh.

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

So you could be in any situation and you will appreciate and see the good in whoever's there and what's happening. Even if it's, you know, even if it's a biker bar or we, gosh, we went to some really crap restaurants and writing retreats, <laugh>. But you always find something good about it. Oh, that's kind of you. Oh, that'll be good. I'll, that sounds good to me. I'll eat that.

Mike Michalowicz ([04:23](#)):

Thank you.

AJ Harper ([04:24](#)):

Yeah, thank you. And you're just kind of like that. You just, you're happy where you are.

Mike Michalowicz ([04:28](#)):

Maybe that's why we have such a good partnership and why that book, the new book, uh, came out about so quickly. Um, but it's not done. It's just getting started. Because we're gonna talk about, and we have to identify that the, the concept works. That it, that's a provable concept. And, and foundation, we know it. Because what we're gonna be talking about in that book, uh, I've done myself, I've observed in others. But we're gonna do deep research. That's the concept for today's conversation is what makes a book successful. Um, in, well, hold on. I I take it back. That's not the right words. What makes your book work? Therefore, what is successful that you already know. Maybe that's a better way of framing it.

AJ Harper ([05:09](#)):

And I think it's also what makes your book work for readers. Because if your book works for readers, it can work for all the other things. That's, that's how you're gonna get word of mouth sales. That's how you're gonna have, um, make the impact you want to make, et cetera, et cetera.

Mike Michalowicz ([05:24](#)):

I also have a corrections corner that we're gonna put in at the end. So we've got to remember to do that. Uh, there's an episode. One thing I want our listeners to understand is we record these episodes, uh, in batch, and then we look back and say, well, this one's better served as episode say seven, and then this other one, episode two, as opposed to how we originally recorded it. And this plays off of your strategy of readers first. What do they need next? Yeah. And we're doing the episodes the same way. Um, let's start off with a story around *Fix This Next*. So *Fix This Next* was designed to be the hub book. Meaning of all the books we've done together that speak about specific topics like build a business efficiency or profitability fix. This next was this hub book that directs you to determine what you need to do next.

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

Like a diagnostic.

Mike Michalowicz ([06:19](#)):

Like a diagnostic. Most business owners are stuck in trying to fix everything simultaneously, so nothing gets fixed. Um, this was in part based upon theory, uh, written by Eli Goldratt and his book, the Goal

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called Theory of Constraints, or TOC. And the concept is this is the performance of anything. Uh, the, the car you drive, your business will only perform at the level of the lowest performing necessary component. So you can be revving the engine, but if your gears are stripped, the engine's racing, but the gears aren't catching, the car's not gonna move. Don't fix the engine, fix the gears. Right. That, that's your constraint. And so in business, I developed a system to identify where your gears are stripped. Mm-Hmm.

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

<affirmative>,

Mike Michalowicz ([07:11](#)):

I met with you and I, I didn't have a really, I did not as best say really codified. I didn't have it codified. I didn't, I I visualized it, but I didn't have it. So we produced those 25 questions.

AJ Harper ([07:21](#)):

Well, let's be clear. We were at retreat. Yeah. And let me just say no pond, no bear, no other wildlife. Which retreat

Mike Michalowicz ([07:29](#)):

Was this?

AJ Harper ([07:31](#)):

Warwick. Warwick.

Mike Michalowicz ([07:33](#)):

Oh, yeah, yeah,

AJ Harper ([07:33](#)):

Yeah. Which is a darling town with great accommodations, but not where we were.

Mike Michalowicz ([07:39](#)):

It starts with the word war. I mean,

AJ Harper ([07:41](#)):

<laugh>. Yeah. Uh, Warwick, New York is where we were. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Lovely little town. That's right. Pretty bad. Airbnb. Yeah. Ryder Cab. Not a Ryder cabin.

Mike Michalowicz ([07:50](#)):

Not a Ryder cabin.

AJ Harper ([07:51](#)):

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We actually wrote, we'd codified it. Got the whole book organized at this. It we were in a basement. Do you remember that?

Mike Michalowicz ([08:00](#)):

I don't remember the basement.

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

It was technically a, it was the darkest place. Okay. It was extremely small. And we sat at this round table from like the Eighties. Yeah. <laugh>. I mean, nothing against the Eighties. We were both raised in the Eighties.

Mike Michalowicz ([08:16](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

AJ Harper ([08:16](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. It was like, if you were, it, it was strange. It was like, if you were trying to create this bestselling book in your mom's basement, <laugh>. Anyway, I still can see the table and I can see, we, the reason I say this is we spent hours at that table getting to 25 key questions Yeah. That entrepreneurs, business owners could ask themselves to determine what they needed to fix next. Yeah.

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

And I think the big thing from that conversation we came out with was to get it to the point where it was yes no answers. Um, because then became an if then kind of system. Right. And the second you hit the first No. In this sequence, that was, that was the way to pinpoint where your gears were stripped.

AJ Harper ([09:02](#)):

Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz ([09:03](#)):

So I don't remember the basement. I do remember spending a, a boatload of time on this. Uh, I came back to the office here where we're sitting right now, worked with Kelsey a little bit. Went through it. She's like, okay, I, I get it. Um, I don't know if she loved it. And then I went for the first test. The first test was down in Nashville. I was in a group, they called themselves the Wizards. It was just a mastermind group, uh, put on by Robin Robbins, a very successful entrepreneur down in Nashville, who kindly invited other entrepreneurs to come on her dime, uh, just to mastermind together and share ideas. She, she got the facilities, she got the lunch. We had to pay for our travels and lodging, and anyone could bring any concepts to the table. I said, I got the best concept ever.

Mike Michalowicz ([09:46](#)):

<laugh>. I want to put this down and I want to see how quickly we can get through this. So there was 25 entrepreneurs in the room. I gave everyone the document and I said, this is gonna identify what your biggest problem is in your business. Please start going through this and answer these questions and tell

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me where you, you go. I think within like a minute, I hear the first <laugh>, like, <laugh>, these people, like weren't pulling punches. And, uh, Robin, who I love her because of her integrity, she looks at it. She goes, this is garbage. And puts and puts it aside. It, it was a real punch to my ego. Within six minutes, the exercise was over. No one completed it. People were dismissing it. They were frustrated or just ignored it. Or they would rather be involved in our conversation.

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

But didn't you also say you got, there were people who were hostile.

Mike Michalowicz ([10:35](#)):

Oh, yeah. Well, there were people that say, this is. Like, Mike, this sucks. And y you know, my reaction is, and I'm, I'm trying to not have this wired into me, is defensiveness.

AJ Harper ([10:47](#)):

Yeah. I'm like, how can it suck?

Mike Michalowicz ([10:48](#)):

AJ and I spent, you know, days codifying something that was years of, of planning. Apparently we did this in the basement <laugh>, and it's just dismissed instantly. It was a punch to my ego.

AJ Harper ([11:02](#)):

Yeah. But I would imagine if you hadn't done that, and then we said, we love these 25 questions. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Right. Which we did. Yeah. We're like, this is great. Every time we leave a retreat, this is amazing. This is it. Yeah. And then we just went ahead with it. Yeah. And then it was in a book.

Mike Michalowicz ([11:22](#)):

I know. I know. It would've been a disaster. And I think this is gonna be the essence of our teachings today, is to write a book that's effective. You have to know it's effective first.

AJ Harper ([11:35](#)):

Yeah. And the, the thing that, the thing that happens with authors is that you have this thing that you know yourself. So this is something you had in practice. And then you had to figure out a way to communicate that and help others. So that was number one. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. So even if you already have that, let's say you work with clients or you teach something, it may not actually work in a book. Or if you don't, if it's just for you, it may not work for others.

Mike Michalowicz ([12:05](#)):

That's right.

AJ Harper ([12:05](#)):

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So you might know it kind of works or you might know it works for you. Or you might know it works for clients, but that doesn't mean that it's going to work for readers.

Mike Michalowicz ([12:15](#)):

That's gold. That's gold. Yeah. Yeah. I believe if it works for us, there's this internal instruction set we have going on. Maybe we're, it's even subconscious. We don't realize that's filling in gaps where there could be confusion for readers. And we just don't see it because we've done it so many times. I think the best test is with someone that's never done it before. Yeah. So I want to give another antidote. Antidote.

AJ Harper ([12:39](#)):

Yeah. Anecdote.

Mike Michalowicz ([12:40](#)):

Anecdote. Thank you. Not anecdote. Well, maybe it's an antidote because you're thick. <laugh>. Um, Patty Elli was my assistant at our computer forensics company.

AJ Harper ([12:51](#)):

Yes. I remember Patty. It's lovely. Did you ever meet her? Many times.

Mike Michalowicz ([12:54](#)):

Okay. Back in the day. Lovely.

AJ Harper ([12:55](#)):

Yeah. Because she was part of *The Toilet Paper Entrepreneur*. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz ([12:58](#)):

She helped watch the book. I have a great, appreciate the greatest appreciation for her. Uh, she came to that new business where you met her. She was commuting almost an hour a day to get there for a part-time job. Not because it made much money. Uh, she wasn't being paid particularly well. Uh, not because she loved the job, but she had such a loyalty to what we had done together that she wanted to continue it in the new flavor. I just, a remarkable human being. I've lost contact with her. Um, but man needs to reestablish that and just show appreciation. So, uh, we called it the Patty test at our forensics company. We had to do forensic acquisitions, which is you take someone's computer, whether there's potentially evidence, you then copy the hard drive. But following this very specific protocol where you don't taint the evidence, then you store it, you bag and tag it, and then you can start reviewing it.

Mike Michalowicz ([13:53](#)):

There's maybe 15 steps. It's very technical. But what we had been doing is hire people that had experience doing this. Former police officers, people that went through criminology school and so forth to do this process. Well, it's expensive and we couldn't afford it. So we're like, how can we get Patty to be able to do this to this legal standards that are necessary? And we went through iteration after iteration, simplifying the system, and we kept on asking Patty. And the day Patty was able to do it, following our

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instruction set, we're like, oh, now we got it. And then we test with Holly and there's a couple other people in the office who weren't technically oriented. They were administratively oriented, who could do it just by looking at a sequence of papers or steps and like, oh, now we've got it. And I think that's what we need to do with our readers, is to realize that they are coming from a point of ignorance. We, as the author, are often coming from a point of understanding and knowledge, because that's the work we do. And there's a disconnect. Yeah.

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

Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz ([14:44](#)):

So similar story, just different angle. How do you find your community? Like how do you find those people that you should be testing with? What's your

AJ Harper ([14:55](#)):

Experience? So first you have to know who is your ideal reader. And we have an episode, uh, about that. Yeah. Once you know that, then you look for where they hang out. You know, if, if it's, if you're writing to writing, um, an ideal reader that you're already serving, that shouldn't be that difficult. Yeah. You know where they're hanging out online, you know where their in-person events are. You might have access to them directly through a mailing list or a friend's mailing list or a colleague's mailing list. So it's, it's not that hard to find them.

Mike Michalowicz ([15:26](#)):

How do you know you're not ready yet? Like what's the, don't write that book indicators with this test driving of content.

AJ Harper ([15:33](#)):

So just as we said earlier, if you aren't sure if your message will work for those specific ideal readers. And also if it works for you, but you haven't tried it with anyone else. That's an obvious one. That's, that's an obvious one. But you'd be surprised. I work with a lot of authors who, they have a system that works for them and they're sure of it, but it may not work for other people. We have systems that work for us that are tailored to us, but that doesn't mean that the average person can get there. We also forget everything it took for us to get there. It's like we just forget that. Yeah. You know, so there has to be levels of understanding before they can do what you're doing. Or if this is a big one, if it works, one, let's say you're a coach or you're servicing clients.

AJ Harper ([16:26](#)):

If it works for you, your clients, when you, they have you as one-on-one, it might not work in a book because the difference is in a coaching session or when you're providing a service to clients, you get to talk to them. So you're not even thinking about all the troubleshooting you're doing all the questions you're answering in real time. So you think this system works, but it works because you can talk to them and walk them through things. So it can still work in a book. But you just have to be mindful of what are

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those questions? What do you have to walk them through? What can't they do because you're not sitting there with them.

Mike Michalowicz ([17:05](#)):

And then ultimately is the ultimate test to document your system. Maybe it's not in the book format yet, but document the system and just hand it over and see if people can do it.

AJ Harper ([17:14](#)):

Maybe. I mean, I did this for my own book. So, well, first of all, I didn't even know I was gonna write a book. So let's, let's be really clear. I wasn't, it didn't set out to do it that way. But when you challenged me when I left ghostwriting and I said I'm done. And you said you should teach or coach, I don't remember the term you used. I said, "No one, no one can do what I do."

Mike Michalowicz ([17:40](#)):

Yeah. It's just I remember that.

AJ Harper ([17:40](#)):

And you said literally that's... And you challenged me, I knew from my years of ghostwriting personal and professional development books, descriptive nonfiction, that I couldn't teach it till I was sure I could do it. One-on-one. And I didn't quite know what my, you said you have a system. I said, "I don't have a system." And you said, "Yes, you do. You just haven't written it down yet." So I thought, okay, let me do client work first. Pay attention to what, figure out what the system is through the client work. Pay attention to what I say all the time. Sure enough, I did have a system, but then I used the class. I was able to create a class based on that knowledge. And it was only when I knew for sure that it worked, that the class worked, that I felt like even got the idea to write the book.

Mike Michalowicz ([18:34](#)):

Are you doing a class, uh, on testing content? You are. Right.

AJ Harper ([18:39](#)):

Well, I have a standalone self-directed course called Test Drive Your Content, which helps authors figure out if their content works with, for inclusion in a book. This really Yeah. Specific here. Because when you test drive, there are considerations. You don't just want to do the test drive, see if it worked out, get a testimonial at the end. You want to actually track their progress in a meaningful way. Yeah. To see where are their missteps, where do they want to give up, where they, where they love something. Yeah. Um, so that you can make improvements. And then there's other benefits. But yeah. And then I, sometimes I do a live version of that. There's a standalone course that I have.

Mike Michalowicz ([19:28](#)):

What I love too is that those people that test drive your content could become stories for your book.

AJ Harper ([19:33](#)):

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That's one of the things. So, I mean, I'll just, I'll just tell you that there's a test drive actually has, you know, you can gather stories, case studies and anecdotes along the way. You can also, from your responses, use those to get later. Amazon reviews. Endorsements. Testimonials. You can pull from the feedback you get. you can also build your email list in the process. It's cons. It's early promo. If you're doing a test drive, so you went to an event, but you can do a test drive that's you're marketing. So that then becomes early promo for your book. People are excited about it. Especially when you tell them it's for, you're gathering information for the book. You can also find people who become super enthusiastic about what you're doing. Street team. Folks who will go the extra mile for you when it's time to launch the book. And then of course you can charge for it. So you can get some money. But uh, the main reason you do it is to see does this work. And then to gather the data you need to make changes so that it, it, your book is better.

Mike Michalowicz ([20:41](#)):

What I found interesting about charging for your test is those are people that are most then committed to the, the process. Because they've invested in it. Here's the other interesting thing, and maybe a counterpoint is when people don't invest, when it's a freebie, it better be freaking easier. They're gonna give up because there's no cost to them. So also having a part of the community that doesn't pay for the experience, just like I had those 25 people, if they all paid a thousand dollars to do those 25 questions, I suspect we've gotten a little more runway and consideration as opposed to this sucks and I'm done.

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

That's a really good point. They probably would've at least engaged with you to try and understand what you meant.

Mike Michalowicz ([21:18](#)):

So I think you actually want to mix the people that invest because then they're engaged and they can help you, but also be able that get it for free because they're gonna be actually the most critical ironically.

AJ Harper ([21:27](#)):

Yeah. So, you know, you did it in a speech, but then you tested it in other ways. So that was just the beginning.

Mike Michalowicz ([21:34](#)):

Yeah.

AJ Harper ([21:35](#)):

Let's talk back. I really want to share, I really want to hear what you think of... I feel like I really tested you. I feel like that's when you were maybe—

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

Oh, yeah. Yeah.

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AJ Harper ([21:45](#)):

I do. I do want to hear your perspective. Because I've never asked you. Yeah. I mean, I think I probably sent you back to the drawing board. I don't even know. 10 times.

Mike Michalowicz ([21:55](#)):

I don't know. Right. So *Fix This Next* had these 25 questions, um, we had multiple tools in there. The survival trap was really developed out. Yeah. It felt like at least 10 times that you been pushed me back to the drawing board. I will tell you this, um, I was absolutely frustrated in going back again and again and again. And in retrospect had another level of appreciation for you, your commitment to simplicity. That it had to be accessible to the readers. And I think it was during writing *fixes next* that I was like, oh, I get it now. And it still frustrates me when we're writing all in.

AJ Harper ([22:46](#)):

Oh

Mike Michalowicz ([22:46](#)):

Yeah. And you're like, not simple enough, <laugh>. But it frustrates me in not in the way of like, oh, AJ's too critical. I'm like, ah, Mike, you didn't do the effort yet. Well

AJ Harper ([22:57](#)):

You did though, because it's, it's, it's iteration.

Mike Michalowicz ([23:00](#)):

It's iteration, but it's necessary.

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

And that's what the test drive does.

Mike Michalowicz ([23:04](#)):

So I was so grateful of that, that feedback of it's got to be easier. It's got to be more accessible. And you've always done that. It was during *fix this next* that I realized this is such an asset that you bring to the table that is not done until it's totally accessible to every reader.

AJ Harper ([23:20](#)):

Yeah. So does it work? Does it, so what, let's share some of the things you, you did. Because you didn't just do the speech. You did, I think you did a folk, uh, what did you do? Client work.

Mike Michalowicz ([23:30](#)):

Yep. Client work. So we brought people in, um, in a group and consulted them through the process to identify what challenge they had. Um, I have some coaches who were coaching and still do, um, *Pumpkin*

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Plan and other of our tools and said, “Hey, would you want to test this tool out and give critical feedback?”

AJ Harper ([23:48](#)):

Oh, that's such a good idea. So you can use your existing network to test it for you.

Mike Michalowicz ([23:55](#)):

And that was great because, because ultimately *Fix This Next*, *The Pumpkin Plan*, um, *All In* now have organizations behind them. So you I have a responsibility to train the trainers to some degree. Um, and does, does the language and the understanding of the book translate into someone being empowered to teach someone else?

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

I didn't know that. I love that. So you were testing it plus you got other people to test it, which is the ultimate way to see if it works. Teaching it.

Mike Michalowicz ([24:30](#)):

Correct. Because the telephone, it's the telephone game.

AJ Harper ([24:33](#)):

Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz ([24:34](#)):

And it, it can get confusing pretty darn fast. So that was a way we tested it.

AJ Harper ([24:39](#)):

Didn't you do also a class? Did you do, am I wrong? Did you do a class on a class as you did so much?

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

Uh, I think I did. Yeah. I did do a class. I always do. So I don't recall specifically now, but I will do these group classes where I invite my readership. We'll get a few hundred people to show up and I'll walk them through the process myself, virtually. I also have a group, you know, we're in Northern New Jersey, at least I am where we are right now in our studio. There's a place in Central Jersey. It's a Chamber of Commerce. It's a small one who has an open invite to me. They say anytime you have a new topic they're talking about, you can come down, you can do a speech, you can do a workshop, whatever you want. You're welcome to come down for a day's session. So I go down there. Now's so interesting is this group, uh, is, is kind to me. And therefore they don't give me critical feedback verbally. But you, I just watch their energy

AJ Harper ([25:27](#)):

<laugh>. Oh, okay. So they're—

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Mike Michalowicz ([25:28](#)):

And when they start picking up the phone and texting, I'm like, okay. This kind of sucks.

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

But you could still ask them questions.

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

And I do. And I do. So I, I did the *Fix This Next* process with them and just observe the energy, ask them questions afterwards. Oh, and the other thing is I also bring books with me and say, "Here's a, here's a pre-order sheet for *Fix This Next*." And what was interesting is watching how many people pre-order now it's a small turnout. It's maybe 30 people, maybe it's 20. And uh, if I don't get at least 20%, at least five or six people come up to order a book. That means no one's impressed.

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

Oh, really?

Mike Michalowicz ([26:04](#)):

Yeah.

AJ Harper ([26:04](#)):

I didn't know that either.

Mike Michalowicz ([26:05](#)):

Yeah. It was a, it was a, on the 25 questions, it was a zero order situation.

AJ Harper ([26:09](#)):

So it's your metric to see.

Mike Michalowicz ([26:10](#)):

Yeah. With *Clockwork*, uh, I think we sold 10 books out of the 25 people that were there.

AJ Harper ([26:17](#)):

What's the metric again? You have to get at least 5%?

Mike Michalowicz ([26:21](#)):

No, no, no, no. Like 20%,

AJ Harper ([26:22](#)):

20%.

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

20% of the room is roughly it. So I, if there's 20 people there, I want, I round it up. I want five people. So it's 25% in that case. But I want five people buying the book. And uh, if no one buys a book or less, to me that's an indicator of our problem with *Clockwork*. We had 10 people buy the pre-order of the book out of, I think there was about 20 people there. And I was like. And uh, I asked people too what the thing was, and they're like, the for vacation was a mind bender because they heard that concept and they said, the second I even thought about it, I felt an emotional response. So I get it.

AJ Harper ([26:55](#)):

Right.

Mike Michalowicz ([26:56](#)):

Um, and the captures was a big one too. Oh, I have actually, as you shared, you have a system in your head you just haven't extracted yet. Here's a way to extract it with no effort or little effort.

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

Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz ([27:07](#)):

And, and those then became emphasis points for us in the book.

AJ Harper ([27:10](#)):

So you, so you're actually going and just, you're doing maybe a precursor to your keynotes that you do that are book related. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz ([27:17](#)):

Right. It's not a speech in regards to up there. Just espousing these thoughts.

AJ Harper ([27:22](#)):

No vest. You're not wearing the vest.

Mike Michalowicz ([27:23](#)):

No, no. I don't wear the vest. <laugh>. Maybe I do. I don't know. Yeah. It's, maybe it's not vest ready <laugh>. It's funny, I wore a vest yesterday for a speech.

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

That should be your testing my speech vest. Ready it.

Mike Michalowicz ([27:33](#)):

That's cute. I like that. I like that. So that's, that's the test. And is it's workshops iterative? Um, what are some other ways we can test drive content? So we said speeches, workshop...

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AJ Harper ([27:42](#)):

So if you do a speech, I love this by the way. Because you can't just do a speech and you can look out in the audience and try and judge. But not everybody is a natural speaker like you. So I for instance, wouldn't be able to look at faces because I'd be trying not to vomit. Yeah. I'm not a natural speech. I do speak, but if you ever see me speaking inside

Mike Michalowicz ([28:00](#)):

Dying Yeah.

AJ Harper ([28:02](#)):

<laugh>. Yeah. That's what's happening really. So I'm not gonna notice your facial expressions. And so you're just like a blob out there. Uh, so with that in mind, I think maybe you could have a little survey after. You could also do a pre-survey, which is actually really important when you do these test drives to see where are people coming into it and how might they be different after it in terms of thinking what they're capable of or what they understand or how they feel. Those are things to gather. Keeping it short, you know, three to five questions. But then I love your pre-order metric. I think that's great. Or you could also, you know, ask if they want to join something else, the next test drive or something like that. So the speech is great, but you do have to have an interactive component for sure. To check it out. All workshops and classes. Those are the best.

Mike Michalowicz ([28:54](#)):

Yeah. Because you're, you're teaching it and if people are paying for it, they expect the value in return.

AJ Harper ([28:58](#)):

You can also do for very, very low cost. Yeah. We don't have to do big numbers. Um, and also, I just really want to be clear that people understand a class could be half an hour. A class could be four weeks. Anything in between a class could be live with you. A class could be a hybrid of live with you. And videos, a class. I even had, I had a student once who she was so far removed from ideal reader that it had, it was her, an earlier version of her, but a way earlier version of her. And so she, her very intricate system of planning her year. It was very easy for her. But she wasn't sure that a, she understood where her reader was really what they were really feeling because it was so far in her rear view. And B, she really didn't know if they could do this planning system.

AJ Harper ([29:54](#)):

But she wanted a very low involvement. She was very clear, I'm not gonna teach a live class. I don't want to have a bunch of people asking me stuff all the time. Okay. So she was really smart. She set up a Facebook group. It was free, and she did once a week a video. Then she had a beautifully designed workbook page. And then I coached her through the questions to ask every week to track and get their feelings and insights and really understand where they were coming from and what worked. And I think it was a four-weeks Facebook group, I've, that was a few years ago. She's writing the book now. So that might sound daunting to people. What, I have to do this for years? But in the process, she has this amazing for-Profit Workshop community now. So it started with a free thing. There's within a month she

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had over a thousand people in that free thing. Oh my gosh. Is right. So she has this enormous built-in community now that when she's finally gets that book out, not only is it she sure works, but there's people who are already going to buy it.

Mike Michalowicz ([31:09](#)):

I love that.

AJ Harper ([31:10](#)):

Um, so that's one way. So just to think outside the box with workshops and classes, they don't have to be super involved.

Mike Michalowicz ([31:17](#)):

Right.

AJ Harper ([31:18](#)):

Uh, you could also have an interactive webinar where you do mostly presenting, um, and just do the same survey thing.

Mike Michalowicz ([31:25](#)):

That's what I do. And, and the chat box is amazing. You can export the chat from Zoom or whatever you're using. So I'll ask people to tell me how you're feeling in the moment. Where are you confused, where you're stuck. So I'll present for a little bit and say, Hey, just in the chat, tell me where you're confused, where you're stuck. I'd really appreciate this because I'm gonna review all of this.

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

Yeah. And then you could also do, I like challenges. So, you know, I did a, last summer, I did a summer writing challenge with writing prompts and got people to sign up to participate. If I were writing a book for that at the time, I could have incorporated weekly surveys along with the prompts that I sent out and so forth. And then I would've done maybe a pre-survey and a close. And then that was very low involvement. I'm just sending out an email to the people who subscribed. So that's another example. A really involved test drive is chapter by chapter. So I really think you need to do the test drive before you write, or at least really soon in the writing process. But you could also do, if you haven't done it yet, you could also do a chapter by chapter test drive where every week you share a chapter and get feelings on it. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz ([32:40](#)):

Yeah. How we do the chapter by chapter is when someone reads a chapter to highlight in one of three colors a section, wherever they feel compelled to red is something that they are confused, don't understand, or totally boring through yellow is something that is an opportunity for improvement. They understand it, but it's not totally clear and green is something they're loving upon.

AJ Harper ([33:02](#)):

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And that's built off of for you. Rob Fitzpatrick's. Yeah. Um, what's his book?

Mike Michalowicz ([33:08](#)):

Write Useful Books. Yeah. It's a great book. That is. It's a great book. And so we don't, he has a tool I think he offers.

AJ Harper ([33:15](#)):

It does, it's an app.

Mike Michalowicz ([33:16](#)):

Oh, it's an app, okay. Yeah. We just do it, uh, by, by emailing out one chapter in Google Drive. Here's the key though. Don't share one iteration or one copy with the 10 people or 15 people you send it to. Give each people an individual copy so they don't see each other's highlights, because that influences each other.

AJ Harper ([33:34](#)):

Oh, that's a good tip. That's a, that's a great app by the way, everybody.

Mike Michalowicz ([33:38](#)):

I haven't tried it. Um, and his book sells with your book in parallel. So *Write A Must-Read* and *Write Useful Books*.

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

Yeah. I actually heard about the book when I was in the final edits of my own book. And I recommended it in my book because I thought it was that great.

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

Yeah, it's a great book. Yeah. Uh, back to the challenge, real quick. *Body For Life* was a challenge-based book for, for my understanding is for the preparation of the book, how do you transform your body in 30 days, whatever it was. But then also, also the promotion of the book. So when you bought *Body For Life*, if you flip, if you got the hardcover and flipped it open, the inside cover was always pictures... pictures of people who have been transformed, following the system before the book was written. So he was testing the system, but then used it for marketing material too.

AJ Harper ([34:22](#)):

Yeah. I mean that's, uh, it reminds me of Linda Ugelow. She wrote *Delight in the Limelight*, which is a terrific book for anybody who's struggling with feeling, being afraid to be seen. So public speaking videos teaching, that sort of thing. Amazing book. And, uh, but throughout the process she did a ton of test drives. She did, she followed the system that you mentioned. She took my little, my little baby course. And she followed it. And she would do, I would see her on social all the time. "Oh, I'm doing a one-hour class." And she'd do a part of it that I think is a key distinction. So she would test a part of her content, "does this flow work? Does this exercise work?" And in small batches. And because she did it so often,

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she built up so much advanced interest in her book because she was constantly talking about it. She didn't keep it a secret that this was also to help her figure out if her book worked. So by the time her book came out, she had a lot of interest.

Mike Michalowicz ([35:27](#)):

Of all the books I've seen in pre-launch, hers is probably the one I can think of seeing the most. Yeah. Uh, I can see the cover distinctly in my head. Her in that tutu.

AJ Harper ([35:36](#)):

Her in the, oh no, she's not in a tutu.

Mike Michalowicz ([35:38](#)):

But it looks like it?

AJ Harper ([35:40](#)):

You, I think you are imagining the tutu.

Mike Michalowicz ([35:43](#)):

Oh. Maybe she's like, she's posing.

AJ Harper ([35:44](#)):

Yeah, she's posing. But she has, she could be. And she's got this vivacious look about her. Yeah. Maybe in your mind she's in a tutu.

Mike Michalowicz ([35:51](#)):

Maybe some kind of, yeah. Maybe. In my mind I saw the image so much in black and white in color with flashes of pink. I thought it was just really well done and got me super engaged. Um, before we wrap things up, the Test Drive Your Content course I asked you about, I didn't ask you like how people access it or is a link or something.

AJ Harper ([36:07](#)):

You can just go to **AJ Harper.com** super easy.

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

Oh, **AJ Harper.com**. Check out Test Drive Your Content course.

AJ Harper ([36:13](#)):

Can I just say a closing thing? Yeah. What we didn't say? So you, your suit, you love every idea you have <laugh>. So <laugh>, I was just—

Mike Michalowicz ([36:24](#)):

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I'm looking up Linda's book.

AJ Harper (36:25):

It's, it's a good thing.

Mike Michalowicz (36:26):

Okay.

AJ Harper (36:27):

But that's, that's not typical, you know, I work with so many authors. What's typical is being nervous that your book idea isn't good.

Mike Michalowicz (36:40):

Yeah.

AJ Harper (36:41):

You don't usually think that at some point you'll say, oh, this book isn't, this isn't, this isn't...

Mike Michalowicz (36:45):

Usually when it's, it's about to go to market.

AJ Harper (36:48):

But in the beginning, you don't really have, you're just jazzed. Yeah.

AJ Harper (36:52):

That's not typical. What it's typical is, is anyone gonna read this? Is this any good? Is this worth pursuing? Who am I to write this? And what I've found is that doing a test drive, whatever you design for yourself builds confidence because now you have evidence rather than trying to psych yourself up and say, yeah, I can do it. It just prove that it works. That's how you actually combat that feeling. So if I could just plug that whatever you do, you can design your test drive any way you want it to be. That will help you have the confidence you need to keep going and finish it.

Mike Michalowicz (37:34):

Nice. But before we wrap up, I do have a corrections corner. Now I have two things. So Linda is not wearing a tutu. <laugh>

AJ Harper (37:40):

She's not.

Mike Michalowicz (37:41):

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No. It, you know what it is? I'm looking at the image. It's, she's wearing jeans. It's a juxtaposition between her, uh, her top and the jeans. It's a white versus dark blue, I assume, but it's a gray out. So it looks like it's a very definitive line. So that's why I thought it was a tutu, I guess. I don't know. But the real corrections corner is in a past or future episode, like we shared earlier, we re-sequence these things. Uh, we talk about *Surge* and I said that *Surge* sold around a 30,000 copies. It's actually under 15,000. Looks like it's about 10,000 copies of sold. So your instinct was right. <laugh>, your instinct was spot on. I don't know what part of my butt I pulled that 30,000 from, but when I looked at the data, that was it.

AJ Harper ([38:19](#)):

Okay. Probably the same butt that says, I love this idea. This is, this is great. Yeah. Let's go

Mike Michalowicz ([38:23](#)):

<laugh>. No evidence at all. Let's rock and roll. <laugh>

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

All right. Um, AJ, as always, thank you for these insightful topics and ideas. I want to remind everyone listening in, uh, how much we appreciate you for being here. I want to invite you to go to [dwtb podcast.com](#). That's "don't write that book podcast.com." And also, we'd love to hear your stories. Maybe you, you're making a bestseller or have one out there, you have tips for us. Send us an email at hello@dwbpodcast.com. Thanks again for joining us for today's episode. We're looking forward to seeing you on the next episode. And as always, don't write *that* book. Write *this* one.