

don't write *that* book!

Episode 9:

Choosing A Publishing Path

Mike Michalowicz [00:00:01]:

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 back to *Don't Write That Book* with AJ. Harper and myself, Mike Michalowicz. Before we get started, I want to remind you, you are not just writing a book. You're an author.

Your book is not about something. It is for someone. Don't forget that AJ Harper is my co-writer. She is also a publisher. Actually sold your publishing—

AJ Harper [00:00:41]:

I used to be, yeah.

Mike Michalowicz [00:00:42]:

You used to be a publisher, right? Because you sold the company. Congratulations.

AJ Harper [00:00:44]:

Thank you.

Mike Michalowicz [00:00:45]:

And today we're going to be talking about different publishing formats. She has a perspective on all these three formats. We're going to talk about these three platforms. Perhaps is a better choice of words from traditional to self to hybrid vanity, because she has not only been a publisher herself, she's helped authors in all these venues. She is an author herself. Her book that you must get is called *Write a Must-Read*. Get your copy today. You're learning, I think, just a modicum of what is taught in that book.

Mike Michalowicz [00:01:14]:

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So, get your copy today. AJ. Thanks for being here this morning.

AJ Harper [00:01:18]:

Thank you. And I want to introduce Mike, my wonderful co-writer for ten books now, most notably *Profit First* but also *Pumpkin Plan*. My fave, *Get Different*. Actually, my new fave is the new one. It's coming out in January.

Mike Michalowicz [00:01:33]:

So good.

AJ Harper [00:01:34]:

A truly dedicated author who is trying to eradicate entrepreneur poverty, and just a really good dude.

Mike Michalowicz [00:01:41]:

Thank you. The opening introduction, the introduction to *All In* the new book is the best introduction, the best chapter we've ever created together. And I must want to point out how collaborative that was. I was doing research years back and found a story that I thought was fascinating about a security guard at Boris Yeltsin's Presidential Museum in Russia and just found it as a fascinating story, but it just showed one perspective of how employees could be disengaged. And I gave you the story, but—

AJ Harper [00:02:16]:

Tell what he did.

Mike Michalowicz [00:02:17]:

Oh, what he did was so there is a famed piece of art called Faces in Russia, and it is these blank faces. There's no eyes or nose or ears. It's just a blank portrait of a face. It's a blank face, and there's three faces. And it's one of the most recognized pieces of art that came out of Russia. It's in this museum. A security guard on his first day of work grabs a pen and decides to draw googly eyes on it because he was bored. And he's like, it looks better with eyes.

Mike Michalowicz [00:02:52]:

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It was ridiculous, and someone got terminated. And there's a lot of context and meaning behind the story and why it applies this book, but it was only half the story. We needed the counter story of someone who's in the exact same position, who doesn't deface art, but relishes it and embraces it and elevates it. Right, and you found the effing story.

AJ Harper [00:03:12]:

Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz [00:03:12]:

Not only did you find the story, I... then called them. It's the Baltimore Museum of Art.

AJ Harper [00:03:17]:

Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz [00:03:18]:

We conducted an interview. They sent us some literature about this and what they did and how it transformed the guards from being, quote, unquote, just guards and having just a job, to people who were elevating the museum, who now had careers. It's an unbelievable this and that story kind of like, don't write that book. Write this book. I think is the best story that we've ever written together.

AJ Harper [00:03:46]:

But it's a good example of you had this one story you'd been keeping in your back pocket, and then I was watching the *Today* show, and—

Mike Michalowicz [00:03:54]:

I saw that's where you found it.

AJ Harper [00:03:55]:

Yeah. I was watching the *Today* show, and they were talking about this guarding the art exhibit at the Baltimore Museum of Art. And then... look what I found, Mike.

Mike Michalowicz [00:04:06]:

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Oh, my God. It was unbelievable. It's unbelievable. Our publisher, it's Penguin Random House, subsequently the editor, and we'll talk about all of the different roles in our subsequent episodes. But just to give a little bit of context, an editor, among other responsibilities, is your liaison. That's the person you talk with and have dialogue with. And if you want to speak with the publisher, you generally talk with the editor as your primary contact. His name is Noah Schwartzberg. Noah gets back and says, this is the best open you've ever written. He goes, this is who or this is what is top-tier writing.

AJ Harper [00:04:45]:

It only took ten books.

Mike Michalowicz [00:04:47]:

It took—only took ten books to get there.

AJ Harper [00:04:48]:

Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz [00:04:49]:

And then I've never heard him glow like this. He's never glowed like this before. He's always sought ways to improve. In this case, he sought ways to not impede. It was really kind of a cool perspective, and I think that's a good transition. In this episode, we're going to talk about the different publishing platforms. I think you were saying in the last episode, one of the most common questions you get is, "How do I publish my book?" Or something like that.

AJ Harper [00:05:13]:

We were chatting in between episodes. Yeah. The two questions I get most often as I work with hundreds of authors is some version of, should I write this book? Who am I to write this book? I don't think I can write this book. That's a deep existential crisis or inner critic crisis. But the other one is, should I self-publish? Should I traditional publish? What's this hybrid thing, it's really about? How do I actually choose a publishing path? Those are the two most common questions.

Mike Michalowicz [00:05:42]:

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Okay, so we're going to break down traditional, self, hybrid, vanity, which I kind of want to tuck in with hybrid, but first, we were talking about this, and we said, let's dispel a couple of myths that are out there.

AJ Harper [00:05:54]:

Yes. There's so many.

Mike Michalowicz [00:05:57]:

Yeah. What are the big ones you hear?

AJ Harper [00:05:58]:

So, this is the one that really bugs me.

Mike Michalowicz [00:06:01]:

Okay.

AJ Harper [00:06:01]:

You can't make any money from actual book sales.

Mike Michalowicz [00:06:04]:

Yeah. Why does that bug you so? Because that gets me almost irate.

AJ Harper [00:06:08]:

Well, first of all, it's false.

Mike Michalowicz [00:06:09]:

Right.

AJ Harper [00:06:10]:

That's probably the reason, because I think your royalty checks and my royalty checks prove otherwise. I think you're really fortunate to have a good life that's also good financially, which you're very transparent about. It because of royalties, not just because of all the other aspects.

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So what happens is people say you can't make any money from book sales. This is why it bugs me. You can't make any money from book sales. So they focus on this is just lead gen, focus on being a quote unquote six figure author, which you hear all the time. What that really means is you're going to have a program, you're going to have clients, you're going to be a speaker, some combination of all those things.

AJ Harper [00:06:55]:

But you're not actually going to care if you sell books. And what bothers me about it is twofold. One, you're going to cut corners. If you don't care if you sell books, you're not going to write the best book you can. So that's just what's going to happen. Number two, you are not going to get it into as many hands as possible, because you have to start thinking sales is not about the book sale. It's about finding a reader. So if you say to yourself, I can't make any money, you're not going to write the best book, and you're not going to find the most readers.

AJ Harper [00:07:31]:

So that one bugs me.

Mike Michalowicz [00:07:33]:

Yeah, that bugs me, too. When I was first working on the *Toilet Paper Entrepreneur*, before you and I met, there were so many naysayers, and I found a way to overcome them. The naysayers would say, "You can't make any money writing a book. Are you crazy?" I started to ask a question, and I wish I started early with this. When someone was a naysayer, I'd say, "Well, tell me about the book you wrote?" The majority never written a book before. This was just their hearsay. Oh, I just heard you can't make money writing a book.

Mike Michalowicz [00:08:01]:

So, I disqualified that instantly. There's no value in someone that hasn't experienced it. Some authors or some people had written books, told me, you can't make money writing books. So I asked them, I said, "Well, why can't you make money writing books?" And they would start outlining the problems, which I said, those are things I need to overcome and fix. But by circumstance, I ran into Tim Ferriss. I was doing that show with a big idea with Diane Deutsche. Deutsche and I have a whole technique on how to get on television, and I was deploying that. And I did.

Mike Michalowicz [00:08:32]:

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And I go into the green room and we had just finished *The Toilet Paper Entrepreneur* and just had published it. Tim Ferriss was in the room, in the green room. And there I'm sitting with him for a half hour, just me and him. And so we're talking he had just released his book *The 4-Hour Work Week*, six months prior. And I'll never forget, I said, hey Tim, I hear you can't make money selling books. I really didn't know. I said, can you? And he kind of looked around the room like, is there someone know doing a can of camera?

AJ Harper [00:09:01]:

Am I being punked?

Mike Michalowicz [00:09:02]:

Yeah. Am I being punked? That's it. Am I being punked? And he looks at me and goes, you can make an F load of money selling books. And he kind of like looks around and almost like shrugged, like. It was so obvious. And for the rest of the 20 minutes or so we were together, I asked him how and he shared write a book that transforms lives. That was effectively yes, it was effectively and marketed accordingly. Because he also explained that you need to arm yourself now, once you write something that can change lives, you need to fight for those people.

Mike Michalowicz [00:09:34]:

So, they discover this like it's a responsibility.

AJ Harper [00:09:36]:

Well, that's the thing, is it's a cop out to say you can't make any money from book sales.

Mike Michalowicz [00:09:40]:

It's a cop out.

AJ Harper [00:09:41]:

That's a cop out.

Mike Michalowicz [00:09:42]:

Yeah.

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AJ Harper [00:09:43]:

And I'm not saying it's easy. It's not, but it's doable. And it's mostly about staying the course and staying dedicated to it. That's why I say it's a cop out. It's a cop out that affects the quality of the book, but also affects your bank account.

Mike Michalowicz [00:10:00]:

Yeah. You can make a life-sustaining or life-altering income through traditional publishing, through self-publishing, through hybrid. But what are the myths around those publishers?

AJ Harper [00:10:09]:

Well, I want to make something clear. A lot of people say traditional publishers don't do anything for you that you can't do for yourself. So when self-publishing I came up when self-publishing was becoming more popular and acceptable, it was sort of democratized, and that's a good thing. You should be able to publish your own stuff. That's great. All of a sudden, there weren't barriers for expense and distribution, thanks to Amazon.

Thanks to some self-publishing platforms, better qualities, print on demand. The problem was people just eliminated all of these important quality controls, because they said, well, we don't have to do what traditional publishers do. And then they didn't replicate the same process in self-publishing. So traditional publishers, they have a process that works. You can replicate a lot of it, but some things you can't. For example, a Big Five publisher has a distribution arm that you can't match. They also understand book positioning in a way that you are not going to know as a self-published author. They have access to data, information, and they have experience knowing how to position a book so that the most people read it.

AJ Harper [00:11:26]:

They also have relationships and connections, sales teams that are out there getting your book on the shelves. Those are things that a traditional publisher can do for you that it's very hard to do for yourself as a self-published author.

Mike Michalowicz [00:11:40]:

Little insider sneak peek, I guess. Sneak peek is probably not the right word, but a little insider knowledge that very few people know. Simon Sinek's first book, *Start With Why*. That title was dictated by the publisher, which happens to be Penguin, with my imprint, our imprint, which is Portfolio. I can't believe that for a second. Yeah, Portfolio went blank. You know, he was adamant. Simon was adamant that it was *The Golden Circle*.

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Mike Michalowicz [00:12:09]:

That's what he wanted to name the book, *The Golden Circle*. And the publisher said, "Listen, we know this market and that title is not going to be successful." And they said the title needs to be *Start With Why*. Because they saw the theme of the book, they saw what the message was, and they wanted to give the answer, the solution in the title. I'm not saying that book is so successful alone because of the title, but that title opened the door. And I wonder if Simon chose to self-publish, if the title would have remained *The Golden Circle*, and then I wonder if everything else stayed the same, how successful that book would be.

AJ Harper [00:12:46]:

Yeah. So they offer you perspective, experience that you can't get unless you could pay for it. You can definitely build your own team. But there's some things traditional publishers, they're the only ones that can do it. I think that's a myth.

Mike Michalowicz [00:12:58]:

I agree. So, what's the mythology around the alternative then? The self-publishing industry?

AJ Harper [00:13:03]:

So, just so we're clear, I'm not knocking self-publishing. Self-publishing, we've done it together.

Mike Michalowicz [00:13:07]:

We've done three books. Self-publishing.

AJ Harper [00:13:09]:

Self-publishing is read. It's just you got to do it the right way. But I think a myth is self-publishing is easier and faster now. It can be, but then what people don't realize is that's not going to get you the things that you want. They don't realize all the milestones they might be missing and quality controls. And actually, it's pretty hard to put together a team. You could get a self-publishing packager, vanity press, that will just get your book to market. They exist.

AJ Harper [00:13:37]:

But just because it's easier and faster doesn't mean you should do it.

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Mike Michalowicz [00:13:42]:

That's right.

AJ Harper [00:13:43]:

Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz [00:13:44]:

And it's perpetuated by... I see it in the Facebook ads and the social media, oh, write a book overnight, a weekend to becoming an author. And those, I think, perpetuate this belief that you can just get something out instantly.

AJ Harper [00:14:05]:

I mean, you can.

Mike Michalowicz [00:14:06]:

Touché. You can get something out instantly. I think when we write a book... I know the average time to create a book from concept, including the research, the codification, then the documentation, the assembly of the book, and the publishing. It's about five years on average. So when you and I are actively engaged in writing a book, it's usually my third year into working with that concept and so forth, and then we start playing with it. So, I've been working on a sales concept now for about two and a half, three years. And that's one of the subjects I'm going to bring up to you—surprise! —one on sales, another one on customer service, another one on personal wealth. But we've been researching and testing these things out. Even with all that stuff, it's still another couple of years before the book is released.

AJ Harper [00:14:57]:

Yeah. Now, I mean, a person doesn't need to say it doesn't mean it's going to be five years for every author.

Mike Michalowicz [00:15:01]:

That's correct.

AJ Harper [00:15:02]:

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But the point is, just because it's faster and easier doesn't mean that it's going to get you the results you want. So, it's just understanding what you might be missing out on when you choose to say, write and publish a book in 90 days.

Mike Michalowicz [00:15:15]:

Yeah.

AJ Harper [00:15:16]:

The other myth is self-publishing is only for people who can't get a book deal. A lot of successful authors choose self-publishing for specific books. So, it's not a negative to self-publish it's—Just do it in the right way.

Mike Michalowicz [00:15:32]:

The other thing is, I want to add an additional myth. It's around advances that if you get an advance, you are successful from that moment that you're qualified to be an extraordinary author. And if you don't get an advance, you're done. I see people determining an advance as a judgment of potential. And while there's a hint of that in there, it really isn't about that. I had an author, aspiring author, reach out to me and say, “Hey, I want to work with you, Mike, but I got to get a mid-six figure advance, otherwise I'm not going to do this. That's who I am.” And I'm like, hold on.

Mike Michalowicz [00:16:11]:

This person was so focused on what it meant to them, I already could hear that they weren't focusing on the reader, the impact it was self-facing.

AJ Harper [00:16:22]:

Also, can you imagine if you want a \$500,000 advance, which are few and far between at this stage, can you imagine the pressure of earning that out?

Mike Michalowicz [00:16:33]:

And we're going to talk about earn outs and stuff. Yeah. You can set yourself up to destroy your career with that one stroke of the pen.

AJ Harper [00:16:41]:

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Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz [00:16:42]:

Demanding in advance. And somehow you maybe dictate that if you fail to fulfill that, you are blacklisted, or you could be.

AJ Harper [00:16:50]:

You could be.

Mike Michalowicz [00:16:51]:

All right, so let's get into the publishing platforms.

AJ Harper [00:16:54]:

The three primary paths.

Mike Michalowicz [00:16:55]:

Yeah. Primary path. One is traditional, and you wanted to start there for a specific reason. Why was that?

AJ Harper [00:17:01]:

Well, they know how to publish books. So, let's start with what's that about and then see the others are just variations on that.

Mike Michalowicz [00:17:11]:

Okay?

AJ Harper [00:17:12]:

Right. That's where we start. Traditional means a publisher that gives you a contract to publish your book, and they are not charging you for that contract. It's really simple, right? Some traditional publishers, there's different sizes and so forth, and we'll get into that. We're going to do a whole episode on traditional publishing and break it all down. But there's publishers of every size. Some of them have different focuses, some of them have different abilities in terms

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of distribution and editorial. But the point is, a traditional publisher is not asking you for a freaking penny.

Mike Michalowicz [00:17:53]:

Okay?

AJ Harper [00:17:54]:

And they have the experience, right, hopefully to put a quality book out to market.

Mike Michalowicz [00:18:02]:

So traditional, they don't ask for a penny. Could a traditional publisher be a brand-new startup publisher that started yesterday and you're their first author. If they follow that format, is that still considered traditional?

AJ Harper [00:18:13]:

Yes.

Mike Michalowicz [00:18:14]:

Or is there some kind of heritage that's necessary?

AJ Harper [00:18:15]:

No.

Mike Michalowicz [00:18:16]:

Okay.

AJ Harper [00:18:16]:

No, you mentioned that. I had a publishing company. I co-founded it with two partners, and we sold it a little over a year ago to a mid-tier press. It was a definition of kitchen table publisher, how we started.

Mike Michalowicz [00:18:30]:

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Right.

AJ Harper [00:18:32]:

We were traditional because we didn't charge anything. In the beginning, we couldn't give advances, and then we moved into small advances once we could afford them. But the authors had no financial investment whatsoever.

Mike Michalowicz [00:18:44]:

Okay. So that's what defines it, that the author does not put money into this, they get a contract. And what does kind of general sense in return for being an author for this publisher, what does the publisher generally provide back to the author?

AJ Harper [00:19:00]:

So they're providing you the developmental substantive editing support, plus copy editing, proofreading, interior page design, cover, book positioning, distribution, making sure your book is available, and then 1000 other things that you don't see from behind the scenes to make sure your book is actually sold. And then there's a lot of nitty gritty stuff about just logistics. They're handling all that stuff. Most of it you don't see when you're in traditional. You mentioned how Noah is your liaison with Penguin. You don't see the amount of people that are working on your books.

Mike Michalowicz [00:19:43]:

Yes, that's right.

AJ Harper [00:19:44]:

You don't know all the decisions they're making. So, they do—right?

Mike Michalowicz [00:19:47]:

Right. And we're going to talk about it a little bit on this episode. They do marketing. And I think there's a myth about a traditional publisher that once you have the deal, they don't do anything for you. Or there's kind of a reverse belief, too, is some people who are writing hopefully authoring their first book say, oh, now they have a traditional publisher.

AJ Harper [00:20:10]:

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Hands off.

Mike Michalowicz [00:20:11]:

Hands off.

AJ Harper [00:20:12]:

Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz [00:20:12]:

It seems like this dichotomy it's all in or all out.

AJ Harper [00:20:16]:

Yeah. There's two myths they're going to do all the marketing for me, and I hear it all the time. Authors will say, "Well, I think I want a traditional publisher because I just don't want to mess with all the marketing." Well, that's your job no matter which path you choose. Traditional self-hybrid, that is your job. But what they don't then there's this other side, and you'll see this a lot with fiction authors. They'll say publishers don't do anything for you.

AJ Harper [00:20:41]:

Well, publishers are not good at explaining what they do. Yeah, I wish they would get better at it, but they do all this behind-the-scenes stuff with book positioning and the sales team trying to get your book out. The thing is, it's not democratic, and that's what really pisses authors off. They don't realize this. They're not giving equal treatment to all the books they have on front list and front list are books that are coming out or were recently out. Publishing is all about front list, what's coming. They do not treat let's say they have 20 books in a season. They don't treat them all equally.

AJ Harper [00:21:17]:

They know which books are probably going to sell better than others. And it's just not a democracy. They are going to put their efforts behind this book. And it's not like they're ignoring other books. It's just they've figured out what they think is going to work.

Mike Michalowicz [00:21:32]:

It's driven by the almighty dollar. Yes, they need to make money to sustain.

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AJ Harper [00:21:37]:

And there are things authors can do to get on the top of their list. But see, the problem is, publishers don't explain any of this, so it's kind of too late. By the time authors figure this stuff out, authors are just getting an email from their editor. But at any rate, they do actually do work. It's just more behind the scenes and they don't tell you what they're doing.

Mike Michalowicz [00:21:57]:

Yeah, the Authors Guild, that's a consortium of authors. It's an organization. They did a survey back in 2018 of its author members, 35% of the respondents this is in 2018 were following the traditional model. They were traditionally published, which means there's a lot of engagement there still I understand that's 2018. So we're looking years back, but a large portion of authors still are traditionally published. There are multiple or there's two primary compensation models. One is an advanced plus royalty. The other one that's becoming a little bit more popular.

Mike Michalowicz [00:22:36]:

It may explode. I actually predict it will, is profit sharing. Profit sharing is where there is no advance from the traditional publisher, but in exchange, they give you a higher percentage of royalty. Let's talk about self-publishing. That is the most popular. Tell me about that.

AJ Harper [00:22:52]:

So, self-publishing there's two ways, actually. You could maybe say three if you want to. This is where vanity press comes in. So self-publishing is if you either DIY it so that's what we've done. You put when we self-published *Toilet Paper Entrepreneur*.

Mike Michalowicz [00:23:07]:

Right.

AJ Harper [00:23:08]:

Profit First and *Surge*.

Mike Michalowicz [00:23:10]:

Surge, which is a good book.

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AJ Harper [00:23:12]:

It's a good book.

Mike Michalowicz [00:23:13]:

It's the bastard child.

AJ Harper [00:23:14]:

It's our cautionary tale.

Mike Michalowicz [00:23:16]:

Yeah.

AJ Harper [00:23:18]:

We can talk about we should do a whole episode on the cautionary.

Mike Michalowicz [00:23:20]:

Oh, that would be good.

AJ Harper [00:23:21]:

Surge. Why doesn't this book work?

Mike Michalowicz [00:23:24]:

Yeah. *Surge*.

AJ Harper [00:23:25]:

Yeah. Anyway, self-publishing, you can DIY it, you can put your own team together and manage everything yourself, or you can get a company to publish it for you. But they're not actually in the business of selling a lot of books. Their money is made upfront in getting your book to market. So, they're not motivated. Like a traditional publisher. Right. Traditional publisher wants to sell a lot of books.

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Mike Michalowicz [00:23:51]:

Yeah.

AJ Harper [00:23:51]:

A self-publishing packager that might call itself a publisher is really disinterested in the fee of charging you to get the book to market. Which is fine. Right. But just know that that's what that is. And then a vanity press falls under this as well. So you could even call those self-publishing packager type publishers vanity presses.

Mike Michalowicz [00:24:15]:

So interesting, because the traditional publisher is in alignment, compensation wise, for you to do what you want to do, move many books. If the traditional publisher doesn't move books, they're taking a loss.

AJ Harper [00:24:27]:

Exactly.

Mike Michalowicz [00:24:28]:

The self-publisher, if they don't move many books, or any books, they still are profitable.

AJ Harper [00:24:33]:

Yeah. Because all their money is up front.

Mike Michalowicz [00:24:35]:

But the self-publisher, of course, has to satisfy the author, so they still have a client, which is you, the author, so they want you content or happy.

AJ Harper [00:24:43]:

Yeah. But that just means getting your book not even on the shelves, just listed on Amazon, basically.

Mike Michalowicz [00:24:48]:

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Yeah. So the quality of the book for the reader, for the self-publisher, really doesn't matter. For the traditional publisher, it does matter because that's how you're going to sell more books. Okay. There's a study that came out of Bowker. Bowker is, I guess, the registration center for ISBN.

AJ Harper [00:25:05]:

ISBN.

Mike Michalowicz [00:25:06]:

An ISBN is the Social Security number, effectively, for a book.

AJ Harper [00:25:10]:

I never thought about it that way. I never thought... But yeah, I always say this much more involved answer when people ask me.

Mike Michalowicz [00:25:17]:

Oh, really? What it oh, yeah. Social Security for a book. Now, here's the thing. A book can have children. So you have a print format. I'm going too far. Right. You have an audio format, you have a Kindle format.

Mike Michalowicz [00:25:29]:

All those children have a unique social. Bowker identified that over 40% of books in 2018. So we're looking back at the same time frame were self-published. I assume this is an assumption. It's a much higher percentage now. And I believe a lot of books that are self-published don't ever get an ISBN. I can make a PDF book having my own website and doesn't have an ISBN. If you have to go through a retail market, you have to have that Social Security number.

Mike Michalowicz [00:25:58]:

But there's many books that are produced that never go there, including Seth Godin wrote a book. I think it was called like, *Bootstrap Entrepreneur*. He wrote a book that is only available in PDF. It's a book and it's Seth Godin quality. It's a great book. I assume this is an assumption that doesn't have an ISBN. It's not necessary.

AJ Harper [00:26:18]:

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Right.

Mike Michalowicz [00:26:19]:

So, you can self-publish even without that. My simple point is I think 40% is on the low end, but maybe it's true of books are self-published, which moves us on to the third and final model, which is hybrid. And we mentioned the word vanity. That can kind of tuck into self. It can kind of tuck into hybrid. So, I want to see where that falls in.

AJ Harper [00:26:41]:

But I don't think it tucks into hybrid. Okay, this is where I disagree.

Mike Michalowicz [00:26:44]:

Great, then tell me what hybrid is. Now let's see where we can talk.

AJ Harper [00:26:47]:

Okay, so to be clear, I just want to say hybrid on a base level is supposed to be getting the benefits of traditional publishing with the experienced team, the editorial support, the book positioning, and hopefully trade distribution if your book warrants it, which we'll get into on a later episode, because that's its own thing. What happened is anybody can say we're a hybrid publisher. It's not regulated. So, the quality, it can be just across a whole totally trash all the way up to just the best books you can imagine. So, you have to do so much homework. It's really helpful if you contact IBPA, it's IBPA online, and they have a list of hybrid publishing standards so that you can use that as a barometer to determine which hybrid is actually following those standards. But because any company can say we're a hybrid, right, or they can even say we're a publisher, but you don't actually know what they're actually doing.

Mike Michalowicz [00:28:02]:

Interesting.

AJ Harper [00:28:03]:

So, this is why you have to educate yourself and listen to this podcast. Right? But a hybrid is bringing together all of those supposed to be traditional experience of getting a book to market, but you're investing in it. And that's how it's a hybrid, of getting those quality controls, the same results, the same outcomes, same experience. But you are putting money in. And the best hybrids do want to sell books because they also make money on your book.

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Mike Michalowicz [00:28:37]:

Back to the income component, making money on the book. In self-publishing, generally, you make 100% of all the income, all the royalties. In hybrid, you make generally the majority, 80, 90%, it depends.

AJ Harper [00:28:52]:

Sometimes it can be as low as 50. But 50 still great.

Mike Michalowicz [00:28:56]:

Yeah.

AJ Harper [00:28:56]:

Compared to traditional, which is 15. 15 to 20, depending.

Mike Michalowicz [00:29:00]:

Yeah, exactly. You wrote *Write a Must-Read* with a hybrid. Page Two.

AJ Harper [00:29:06]:

Yes.

Mike Michalowicz [00:29:08]:

They represent, I think, the high watermark because they're really selective, very selective. They come from a traditional publishing background.

AJ Harper [00:29:18]:

They have the team, and they have trade distribution. In fact, their distributor is a Big Five Publisher in McMillan.

Mike Michalowicz [00:29:25]:

Okay. Right. So there you go. I've worked with Inspired Girl, which is a micro size boutique-- Hybrid, who's they've produced amazing books. There are, I guess, thousands now of hybrids

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that are out there in self-publishing, it seems, Mike, there's actually fewer organizations or groups that do the self-publishing model because it sounds like, to me, they're more kind of like bakeries. They just kind of bake them up.

AJ Harper [00:29:54]:

And factories.

Mike Michalowicz [00:29:55]:

Factories. That's the word. But I would encourage people to check out Ingram Spark. That's your favorite. You've won me over, by the way. And that's not even a self-publishing platform. They're a distribution platform and printing platform.

AJ Harper [00:30:08]:

Yeah. Well, we'll get more into this when we get into the self-publishing episode. But Ingram Spark is... Ingram Content Group is the largest distributor in the world, and they have a self-publishing arm called Ingram Spark. And it just makes it possible for you to get your book on the shelves. It makes it possible for your book to be available in over 95 countries so you can self-publish and get your book. You can say, My book is available where all books are sold.

Mike Michalowicz [00:30:33]:

Yeah.

AJ Harper [00:30:34]:

And you want to be able to say that. So self-publishing is a viable option. Hybrid is a combination of in the best of worlds, hybrid is a combination of both. But you do have to do your homework.

Mike Michalowicz [00:30:46]:

So, here's the big question. How do I, as an author, choose which publishing path to follow?

AJ Harper [00:30:53]:

So, people ask me this all the time, and they usually come in with a preconceived notion about something they read or a friend told them this thing, I shouldn't go for a deal because XYZ, I should self-publish. I shouldn't self-publish, I this or that.

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Mike Michalowicz [00:31:08]:

Right.

AJ Harper [00:31:11]:

So much of this podcast is about reframing. I want to reframe so that instead of thinking, what should I do? Because everybody else thinks so, is try and think about what your priorities are for yourself and then choose a path that best fits those priorities. So, for example, if credibility is a huge factor for you, and it isn't for most people, it still is for academics. It still is for a lot of people in corporate. They can't self-publish because that's not credible. And they might not be able to do hybrid.

Mike Michalowicz [00:31:44]:

Interesting. Okay.

AJ Harper [00:31:45]:

Because it would be a ding. It would be a problem in their career.

Mike Michalowicz [00:31:49]:

So, is this the judgment of peers? Predominantly.

AJ Harper [00:31:53]:

Yes. And then sometimes. So, for example, if getting on TV is really important to you, it can be harder to get booked. I know you have your ways, but it can be harder to get booked because a lot of producers are really just trying to work with these big publishers.

Mike Michalowicz [00:32:08]:

Makes sense.

AJ Harper [00:32:09]:

But for the most people, though, credibility is not a factor because the average reader has no clue. They have no clue.

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Mike Michalowicz [00:32:18]:

Yeah. Our listeners can do a test right now. Think of your favorite five books, whatever the titles are, and without looking those books, ask yourself who published them? Mike, what's the publishing or publisher behind those?

AJ Harper [00:32:30]:

They don't know.

Mike Michalowicz [00:32:31]:

They don't know. Of course I don't know. And you may even be surprised at books that you think were mainstream published, were self-published, or a book that you think was self-published was actually through hybrid. It's actually surprising when you dig into these.

AJ Harper [00:32:45]:

Yeah. So if credibility is your main thing, you really need to go with traditional. That's how you decide financial, that's a can of worms. But it's not just money in in terms. So if it's money in, do you want to make sure that you don't spend a penny on getting your book to market? Aside from marketing, of course. I'm just talking about actual getting the book ready to go, getting it printed. Then you have only one option traditional. But if you are willing to invest some money, then you could go with self or hybrid, depending on how much money you want to invest.

AJ Harper [00:33:23]:

And the other part of financial you can speak to, which is how much do you want to get from the experience? You already said self-publishing, you get all of it. Hybrid, you get most of it. And then traditional, you get some of it. But you can move more books with traditional.

Mike Michalowicz [00:33:41]:

Yeah, I ran a spreadsheet, so we've done this course together, Next-level Author, and I share the spreadsheet. I spent a lot of time going through an analysis of volume of book you move and then the three main models, how much royalties you earn and where the break-even points are. And with the consideration of an advance, if you get an advance that's traditional publishers can offer, that you can get money in your pocket two years before your book comes out. And from a cash flow basis, that can be pretty significant. So I ran it, and there's a few

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variables, so I can't say what the number is. But for me, when I ran the analysis, there was a break-even point. And I'll never forget this.

Mike Michalowicz [00:34:30]:

I'll share the exact details. I think that's important. When I was negotiating, you and I were doing get different. I ran the numbers. I called Adrian. I don't have an agent, which is very atypical, by the way, with a publisher. And some publishers mandate you have an agent, they don't want to deal with the authors. But when we got started 15 years ago, we were able to get in agent free.

Mike Michalowicz [00:34:52]:

We actually had one bad agent experience. We can share that in the future. Oh, Martha. We'll always share that person's first name. But I called Adrian and said I ran the math and for *Get Different*, if I'm going to move 100,000 books, and that's the standard, this is 100,000 books, minimally. I believe we'll move for any book with *Get Different*, we haven't moved it's—

AJ Harper [00:35:16]:

Your standard, to be clear.

Mike Michalowicz [00:35:17]:

Yeah, it's my standard. Yeah. We haven't moved that many books with *Get Different* yet, but by golly, it's going to happen. It's going to happen. I said is \$350,000 advance, Mike. That's the number that if that is not something that Penguin is willing or can afford, I respect that. But the hybrid or self-publishing, the financials work out that that's the better path for me. And there was this big pause in a little angry tone in his voice, in a little frustration, and he said, you got a deal.

Mike Michalowicz [00:35:45]:

And that was the advance. Imagine receiving whatever that is up front. It comes in tranches, too. We're going to talk about how that plays out. But getting that money up front is massive for cash flow. And we have a share in this royalty. So, you get a distribution from that. That's a consideration, too, of not just how much you'll get, but when it arrives.

AJ Harper [00:36:05]:

Yeah. It's a long process.

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Mike Michalowicz [00:36:07]:

Yeah. Share that story.

AJ Harper [00:36:09]:

Yeah. So, the financial part, you have to make those decisions. I actually decided not to go with traditional because I wanted more of the pie. I wanted more money, more royalties, because I'm actually not on Mike's level. I can't command a \$350,000 advance, so I need to think differently about the money. And I wanted to have more of the pie and that was one of my main decisions. And then I also wanted to have a little more control, which is another factor that you want to consider. So, if control is your main profit, you want total control over everything, cover, editorial, price, timing, everything.

AJ Harper [00:36:48]:

You have one option: self. If you're willing to give up almost if you're willing to have a lot of control, almost all of it, you can go with hybrid, but they're still going to make a decision on price. They're still going to ultimately tell you which season you can publish in and pick a date for you which you could veto if you really had a problem with the date. But it's not like you can say, I want to publish on March 17. That doesn't happen. So, you still give up some aspects of control. But there is a myth around traditional that you have zero control. So that's the least amount of control in traditional.

AJ Harper [00:37:30]:

But it's not like they tell you the title, Mike. They just veto titles they don't like and then we veto, and it goes back and forth. It's not like they say, this is the cover. Use it or lose it.

Mike Michalowicz [00:37:45]:

That's 100% true. It's a negotiation. It's a partnership.

AJ Harper [00:37:48]:

Yeah. There's a big myth around editorial control. I think it's because authors think that their editors are I think they're afraid of their editors, honestly. But that's also a negotiation. They're trying to help you. But sometimes when we get editorial feedback from an editor, we think we're being told what to do, and it gets hairy. So, you actually do have more control than you think at a traditional publisher. But it's the least amount.

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AJ Harper [00:38:19]:

So, if control is your main thing, you got to self-publish.

Mike Michalowicz [00:38:23]:

Tell us about the distribution.

AJ Harper [00:38:27]:

So, this is a complicated topic. We could have an entire podcast episode on distribution.

Mike Michalowicz [00:38:31]:

I'm making a note of it because we should. We have to.

AJ Harper [00:38:33]:

It's the thing that I wish authors understood because it's complicated, but once you get it, it helps you make a good decision. So most people think when they just have their book on Amazon that that means their book is available everywhere. But the reality is, if it's only on Amazon, a store like Barnes Noble or your corner bookstore that you love can't buy it to put it on the shelf. It also means that a lot of libraries can't. Some libraries only have a small Amazon budget, and they have to buy through these proven distributors. Same with school libraries, schools, universities, et cetera. So you have to care about, is your book available through these distributors? A lot of hybrid publishers and self-publishing packagers will say, "You have global distribution, which sounds really good."

AJ Harper [00:39:27]:

The reality is you can get that yourself through IngramSpark. You don't actually need that. What you really want if you're trying to move books is trade distribution. And you can get that through a traditional publisher, but not all of them. And we'll explain more of that in the traditional publishing episode because it's complicated. So you also have to ask, and through some hybrids who have trade distribution, like mine, Page Two has Macmillan. So, trade distribution, this is what's really important to understand, and it's a simple way to think about it. Trade distribution is creating demand and fulfilling demand.

AJ Harper [00:40:05]:

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Both there's a sales team that's like your advanced team, they're out there trying to sell your book before it's born, before the show, we're having a baby. Every other kind of distribution is not doing that per se. So, think of it like trade distribution creates and fulfills demand. Other distribution fulfills demand.

Mike Michalowicz [00:40:28]:

Got it.

AJ Harper [00:40:29]:

And we think that we're going to be on the shelves when we just have, say, wholesale or global distribution. Not necessarily. So understanding that trade distribution is ideally what we want to have that also lends itself to timing. That's why it takes so long. People don't realize why it takes so long to have a traditional publisher get your book to market. It's not because they're slow. It's because they're trying to top the editorial process. That's part of it.

AJ Harper [00:41:00]:

But honestly, the main reason is the sales team, how much time the sales team needs. You kind of have to work back from all their pitch meetings to Barnes and Noble, Target, book clubs, et cetera. And that's about a year from the time you have a finished manuscript or even longer.

Mike Michalowicz [00:41:20]:

The sales team is a little bit like the Wizard of Oz. We've been, you and I together at the Penguin offices, and we sat down with Kaushik, who was our prior editor, and said, "Hey, can we meet the sales team?" He's like, "Oh, they're on like the 13th floor. They have their own floor. "And I'm like, you go into the elevator and it shows floors 9, 10, 11, 12, 14. It skips over the sales floor. You can't get to it. It's almost like a mythical beast. Tell me about agent.

Mike Michalowicz [00:41:47]:

So, this is choosing the path to determine, should I traditionally self or hybrid? What about an agent versus not an agent?

AJ Harper [00:41:53]:

So, if you don't want to deal with getting an agent, which we can talk about at a later date, we will how to do it. If you don't want to deal with having an agent, then most traditional is off the

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table for you. So, Mike, you're the exception, but don't ever think you can also be that exception. There's gatekeepers, gatekeepers, and more gatekeepers in publishing. So if you can get past them, maybe you can do it without an agent. But for the most part, a traditional publisher that requires you to have an agent is not going to budge on that. But there are some publishers, traditional publishers that don't, they will accept unsolicited submissions, or they'll have what's called open submissions. And sometimes something I'm seeing lately is periods of time, just a little window where they'll have open submissions to try and get fresh stuff.

AJ Harper [00:42:49]:

And they kind of make it a media thing, especially when it's an imprint like Reese Witherspoon's imprint or something like that. So, there's opportunities. But for the most part, if you don't want to deal with the process of getting an agent, having an agent, and that whole thing, you're looking at self-publishing or hybrid.

Mike Michalowicz [00:43:08]:

There's a resource, I think it's called Publishers Market. You don't talk about that.

AJ Harper [00:43:12]:

It's a Publisher's Marketplace.

Mike Michalowicz [00:43:13]:

Yeah, it's a Publisher's Marketplace. Okay. That's been a great resource for finding who accepts traditional publishers? Who accepts submissions with an agent? Without an agent? And that's just one little piece of what that resource offers. What about timing? That's also a consideration.

AJ Harper [00:43:30]:

This is a big one, and this is do you need to get the book out in a specific time period if you want to have control over that and you need to get it out soon? One option, self. And then some hybrid that's not going to have trade distribution. But if you're serious about trade distribution, you're going to have to accept the fact that you're looking at one to two years more, Mike, 18 months to two years for your book to come out. So timing, if timing is a factor for you and you really need it out in a certain time frame, again, your only option is self.

Mike Michalowicz [00:44:03]:

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Well, I guess I would say there may be one variable here if it's news specific.

AJ Harper [00:44:08]:

Right? Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz [00:44:09]:

So, Sully lands the plane on the Hudson. There was a book out six months later through fast track. They can fast track, but that is absolutely the exception.

AJ Harper [00:44:17]:

Yes. So, you have to get that you need to land a plane on the Hudson, and then you can fast track your book.

Mike Michalowicz [00:44:24]:

Okay, touché. Tell me about control. The last we did talk about oh, we did. So the authority and control. So, I just want to recap. When it comes to choosing your path, there's many factors. So we talked about the credibility and how in some academic spaces, that's particularly relevant seems to be less relevant today for mainstream readership. But it could be the financial model.

Mike Michalowicz [00:44:52]:

We talked about the team that backs you. We talked about the distribution trade versus global. We talked about agent versus not agent. Timing and control. Let's talk a little bit about the path that we took. I call it the Double Dip, where we self-published and then went to mainstream publishing, and then we went back to self-publishing and then sold that same book, which was *Profit First*, into mainstream.

AJ Harper [00:45:18]:

But there was another, *Surge*, in between.

Mike Michalowicz [00:45:22]:

So we kind of flip flopped back and forth. I just want to share the story, and I'd like for you to diagnose this on kind of the holistic kind of how this affects all authors. But when we had finished *Toilet Paper Entrepreneur* again, the context is I had written the entire manuscript. It

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was like, 300 pages. I was leafing through it. I'm like, oh, my God, this is a shitty book. Like, I wrote a piece of shit. And I said, hey, can you take this turd and polish it? And you're like, yeah.

Mike Michalowicz [00:45:48]:

And you did. As that was being done, I started approaching publishers in that process, which, by the way, is the wrong time to approach traditional publishers. But that's what I did and kind of got laughed out of the room or didn't get calls or anything.

AJ Harper [00:46:06]:

Did you get in the room?

Mike Michalowicz [00:46:06]:

Yeah, that's a good point. I didn't even get in the room. I didn't even get in the room. So, okay. Self-publishing is the path, and we took it. The thing I think that was key was the *Toilet Paper Entrepreneur* had an ISBN that we referred to earlier, which means it gets registered in the Bowker system, which means that Book Scan and other resources now are tracking the book sales. There's a record of it. And publishers, I didn't know this traditional, and when I say publishers right now, I'm referring to traditional publishers. But hybrids can do this too. Go in, and they can look at the system and say, oh, what's this book title? I never heard of it. Seems to be selling at high enough volume.

AJ Harper [00:46:44]:

Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz [00:46:45]:

Toilet Paper Entrepreneur, and this seems to be the magical number, moved 10,000 print copies within the first year. It actually moved more than that. But within the first year, if you move 10,000 print copies, that seems to be kind of this you've crossed the threshold. You've crossed the chasm and got a call from Penguin. It wasn't that smooth, but got in contact with Penguin and they said, oh, you're moving this book. We want to do your next book, which was *The Pumpkin Plan*. Obviously, that was an effective path. Is that the common path? If you're not having an opportunity with traditional publishing, do you pursue self-publishing with the hope to do traditional is that even relevant, to hope and just write the best goddamn book and stay with that and see where things go?

AJ Harper [00:47:34]:

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Yeah, I think it's a great strategy if you're committed to authorship. It's not a great strategy if you're just getting a book done and you aren't going to really focus on sales. We said at the top of this, you have to focus on selling the books. If you don't hit that number in fact, most people aren't going to hit it.

Mike Michalowicz [00:47:50]:

Right.

AJ Harper [00:47:51]:

So, if you pull in, say, less than 1,000 book in the first year, you're not getting that deal unless something extraordinary happened. Like you land a plane on the Hudson.

Mike Michalowicz [00:48:00]:

Right.

AJ Harper [00:48:01]:

So, it's just a reality. So it can backfire on you to self-publish, and then a publisher can go, "See, oh, how did that book do?" Right? Unless you have just the best I mean, there's always exceptions. Okay. There's always exceptions. Somebody has this killer idea. They've built this huge platform, so they overlook the fact that the first book didn't sell that much. That does happen. It's just it's in your best interest to sell the heck out of that book so that a publisher can see, oh, wow, they moved a lot of books.

AJ Harper [00:48:36]:

Not we, you need to sell actually through the ISBN. They don't want to hear about your back of the room sales at your speaking engagement.

Mike Michalowicz [00:48:45]:

That's right. It is on your permanent record. Effectively your first book, your second book, every book is on your permanent record, and it's accessible into perpetuity. And people will look at this because they're betting on the jockey. That's the term I've heard is the book is the horse. You are the jockey. And if the jockey ran well with that first horse, probably going to run pretty well with the second horse. But if that jockey did not run well with that first horse, no, I don't know if I should bet on that.

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AJ Harper [00:49:15]:

The yeah, I think another thing we didn't talk about with choosing a publishing path is people will say, "I don't think I have a big enough platform to try and get a deal yet." And that is often true. A platform is basically your reach, your influence, your ability to sell books. So it could be are you a speaker? Do you have a following? And doesn't social media they don't actually. Really? Aside from TikTok right now, social media isn't selling books. TikTok is selling books. But the other social media, they don't care about a million Twitter followers, honestly, because they're not necessarily buying from that. It's more about an engaged email list, an engaged community speaking to a lesser extent podcast.

AJ Harper [00:49:55]:

But it's still a factor. And this multifaceted approach you have to reaching people and how big is your reach, including the people that you know who also have a big reach. And that was a big factor in getting the *Pumpkin Plan* deal. Do you remember that in the proposal, a lot of what we did was show all of your influencer connections.

Mike Michalowicz [00:50:14]:

That's right. That is right. I do recall that.

AJ Harper [00:50:16]:

Yeah. And there's authors who have gotten deals because of their influencer connections.

Mike Michalowicz [00:50:22]:

We went through what I call the Double Dip, and this is not an industry term whatsoever. After the *Pumpkin Plan* was published, and that book did move that 10,000 1st year, I think it moved 25, 30,000 units, individual sales, by the way, which is also different than back of the room and different than bulk sales. Bulk sales matter if they're through the ice.

AJ Harper [00:50:42]:

And you're talking about hardcover.

Mike Michalowicz [00:50:44]:

Oh, yeah, I'm talking about hardcover.

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AJ Harper [00:50:44]:

You're not even counting the digital.

Mike Michalowicz [00:50:46]:

Digital, yeah, digital assets. That's right. I know some people that say, oh, I've moved 5,000 books. I'm like, wow, that's amazing. Well, it was purchased by Acme Co. And they bought 5,000 books for their employees, which is great. You move 5,000 books?

AJ Harper [00:51:03]:

Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz [00:51:04]:

Unlikely. You have 5,000 readers. If you have 5,000 individual sales, people that departed with their own money to purchase your book, the likelihood of them actually consuming that book increases. So 5,000 individual sales is radically different than one big bulk 5,000 sales.

AJ Harper [00:51:20]:

Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz [00:51:20]:

And publishers realize this. What happened was, after the *Pumpkin Plan*, and we had those tens of thousands individual sales, Penguin came back and said, what's your next book? I said, "I got it. *Profit First*."

AJ Harper [00:51:34]:

It's called right of first refusal.

Mike Michalowicz [00:51:37]:

I said it's *Profit First*. And I'll compress the story down to a real simple summary. They said, well, we don't need another accounting book, so sorry. And I'm like, It's not an accounting book. And they said yes, it is. And so that inspired us to go back to self-publishing. That book

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hailed ass as a self-published book. Penguin came back, I want to say on their hands and knees, they didn't.

Mike Michalowicz [00:51:58]:

But they came back and said, we'd like to buy the rights to this. And we released as a revised and expanded yeah, it was the best thing because we made the royalties of a self-published stream, which was pretty significant. But then we got the advance and expanded the distribution significantly. *Profit First* is in 27 languages now, languages I didn't even know exist now.

AJ Harper [00:52:22]:

Like what? What's the language you didn't know exist?

Mike Michalowicz [00:52:24]:

I can't even pronounce it. Okay, here's one. Indonesian, I think is a language. Indonesian it is. Yeah, I think so.

AJ Harper [00:52:32]:

Oh, my gosh. I feel ignorant.

Mike Michalowicz [00:52:34]:

Yeah. And I may be totally wrong about this, so whatever. There's certain languages being translated into.

AJ Harper [00:52:41]:

Apologies to those who know—who speak Indonesian.

Mike Michalowicz [00:52:43]:

Or say that doesn't exist.

AJ Harper [00:52:44]:

Extremely American of us.

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Mike Michalowicz [00:52:45]:

I know. I think we're going to dedicate an episode to agents, so I don't want to dig into that. We got to start bringing things to a wrap. But we can't do that without talking about marketing. So, let's talk about marketing and the confusion, specifically with publishers, traditional publishers I'm.

AJ Harper [00:53:03]:

I alluded to it earlier that there's this myth around marketing that a publisher will handle everything for you.

Mike Michalowicz [00:53:10]:

Yeah.

AJ Harper [00:53:11]:

And then there's this myth that they do nothing for you. And it's really more of both things are true. You are responsible for all the marketing for your book. Got to get out there and shake it for your book, basically. But they're going to do publishers will do the behind-the-scenes stuff that moves books in ways you can't see. But the evergreen stuff, the stuff you have to do to keep your book moving, building readership over time, that's on you.

Mike Michalowicz [00:53:43]:

I was talking with Noah, our editor over at Penguin, and he goes, this was yesterday. I've never heard him frame it this way. He goes, we do two things for you. We do marketing and we do publicity. I said okay. He goes, "Marketing is where we will help you sell to your existing community." And that was clarity. Marketing wasn't an unknown community.

Mike Michalowicz [00:54:06]:

It was your existing community. And he said, "Ways to do this is we'll distribute books. One thing that costs publishers very little is to print books. Mike, a hardcover print book probably costs them around a dollar to make that book." Where when I self-published at the highest volume with *Toilet Paper Entrepreneur*, we ran 20,000 in one print run, which, by the way, the printing house was blown away. That should have been an indicator that—

AJ Harper [00:54:30]:

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There was something wrong.

Mike Michalowicz [00:54:31]:

They were like, "We've never... Mike we're having a party." Yeah. No one orders that many books. The guy said, "It must be good." I was like, "Uh oh," but they cut down to the lowest price point, which was \$2.50. But a publisher, traditional publisher like Penguin prints such a massive volume.

AJ Harper [00:54:50]:

And they often have their own printing houses.

Mike Michalowicz [00:54:52]:

Yeah, exactly. He goes, "We will market for you, which means distribute books to your community. We'll do things to motivate your existing community within the confines of the resources they have." And he goes, "We also do publicity. Publicity is where we try to give you exposure to people that don't know you. But publicity typically is through traditional media outlets." He goes, "That's the things that we're talented at and can do. Most authors don't understand that, so they don't leverage the access to books and the marketing resources they have, and they think that marketing is simply the publicity and you're going to get me on that big TV show and thousands of books are going to be moved."

Mike Michalowicz [00:55:31]:

And that's rarely the case.

AJ Harper [00:55:32]:

But do you feel like they do actually do the publicity piece for you?

Mike Michalowicz [00:55:37]:

Yes, they do. And it is very rote. And that's the problem.

AJ Harper [00:55:44]:

Right.

Mike Michalowicz [00:55:44]:

don't write *that* book!

I think the mistake that authors make, and I've made on the publicity front, is not understanding it where I can then modify it and enhance it to my special method. You and I, our team here, has been extraordinary at leveraging the marketing. We have gotten books to people in our own unique way, including pumpkin bread. And we'll talk about all the stories in unique ways because Penguin was willing to foot the bill for getting the book out, doing the distribution, the marketing, the mailing, and stuff like that. The publicity... Now they understand it better, by golly, I think we're going to see bigger results. They have the community I just didn't know how to tap into it. Right.

AJ Harper [00:56:25]:

That's so much of this and this is why one of the principles in this podcast is for you to reframe and think, I'm not just writing a book, I'm an author. You have to engage in this way and find out instead of just going along with what everybody tells you. There's so much that publishers don't share and it's not because they're evil, they're just busy.

Mike Michalowicz [00:56:48]:

They're busy and they have a script, and the script works generally, just go through the process again and again. We have to leverage the resources they have in a way that uniquely expresses ourselves.

AJ Harper [00:57:02]:

Yeah. And that comes to this point I wanted to make before we close, which is I think we need to stop thinking of our publisher as a fairy godmother.

Mike Michalowicz [00:57:13]:

I love this.

AJ Harper [00:57:14]:

That can just give us the author dreams we have, and we have to stop thinking of them as our boss that are in charge of us. It's neither. And I see authors think one or the other and usually have a negative reaction to both because ultimately, if you think the publisher is your fairy godmother, you're going to be wrong and you're going to be disappointed. And if you think they're the boss and it's contentious, right? But really, they're your partner and they don't say that. They just don't do a good job of saying it. But it's true. They want your book to sell, and they want to amplify your efforts. That's important.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper [00:57:53]:

Key point. You have to have made some effort and they will absolutely amplify that. And it's kind of like chicken before the egg. If you're doing a great job and selling your book and getting out there, they're going to put more effort behind it to support you. So, you have to go in with thinking, my publisher is my partner, even if it's a hybrid or whether it's hybrid or traditional, instead of fairy godmother or boss.

Mike Michalowicz [00:58:19]:

There you have it. You have a checklist now. We explained it in this episode of how to choose your publishing path. So, there's your call to action. Identify which publishing path feels like the right one. Spend the time necessary to do that and pick your publishing path. I want to invite you to visit our website. It's Dwtb.com

Mike Michalowicz [00:58:37]:

So, *Don't Write That Book*, <https://Dwtbpodcast.com>. We got free resources for you. The best of what we have is there, and it's all available for free. In exchange, we'd like your email address so we can be in contact with you. But go to Dwtbpodcast.com and as always, write a better book. See you.