

# don't write *that* book!

## Episode 23:

### The Great Pre-Order Debate

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

Welcome back to the Don't Write That book podcast where you can learn how to write your bestseller and own your authorship. Follow along with us as we give you an insider's view of the book industry. Now, here are your hosts, myself, **Mike Michalowicz**, and **AJ Harper**.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([00:16](#)):

Welcome to the Great Debate, <laugh>. That's what this episode's going to be. I'm actually excited about this. We're going to talk about pre-orders and what you can gain, perhaps what you can lose through pre-orders of your book. Before we get started, I'm joined by my debate partner, <laugh>. AJ, did you ever debate in high school grade school?

**AJ Harper** ([00:37](#)):

No. I mean, unless you count arguing with the monks at my high school about whether or not I should have to part—do the homework.

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

Yeah, it sounds like a debate, but it sounds like you would lose that one.

**AJ Harper** ([00:51](#)):

Well, one time I debated about *The Scarlet Letter*, and I was wrong, and I was super haughty about it. Oh, I was just overconfident. Oh, I actually told my English professor that I felt that the <laugh>, this is, I've never admitted this, this show...

**Mike Michalowicz** ([01:10](#)):

<Laugh>, this gets everything.

**AJ Harper** ([01:11](#)):

It gets everything out of me. Yeah.

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

It's like Oprah.

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

Oh, dang it. All right. I once at the tender age of 16 said in front of my whole class, and I was new to the school, so to set it up.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([01:24](#)):

Oh, bonus.

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

Oh, yeah. So I had joined it as a sophomore new kid, said to my freshman, and they're all monks, so they're in, they're Benedictine. So they're all the black robes that you can imagine. Yeah. It's very stern. Yeah. German. I said, I don't think Nathaniel Hawthorne, I don't think you can know what Nathaniel Hawthorne intended with the symbolism for the Scarlet A.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([01:50](#)):

Okay.

**AJ Harper** ([01:51](#)):

It's like, how do you know?

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

That it was adultery?

**AJ Harper** ([01:55](#)):

It's, it's what it is. Yeah. It's written in the story <laugh>.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([01:58](#)):

Right.

**AJ Harper** ([01:59](#)):

But I decided that I felt it should be open to interpretation.

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

Okay. Like symbolism. It was symbolism.

**AJ Harper** ([02:05](#)):

It's not open to interpretation.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([02:06](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

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**AJ Harper** ([02:08](#)):

I know. I mean, some symbolism is open, but not in the scarlet freaking letter Right. Is in the title.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([02:14](#)):

Right.

**AJ Harper** ([02:14](#)):

Right. Yeah. I, I, I did that. I made a case, and I, I just was told, no, just emphatically you are, you are wrong. You are wrong, is what I was told. And I slunk down in my, actually, that's one of those hindsight regrets. You're like, at the time I was like, I'm right. I'm right. Yeah. And then years later, it's like, oh my God.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([02:35](#)):

I was wrong.

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

What the hell were you doing? <Laugh>. You're so nuts.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([02:39](#)):

That's great. Yeah,

**AJ Harper** ([02:40](#)):

That's great. I've just told you my,

**Mike Michalowicz** ([02:44](#)):

I'll tell AJ

**AJ Harper** ([02:44](#)):

Harper high School horror story.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([02:45](#)):

**AJ Harper**, my co-writer, author of *Write a Must Read*, also, author of *The Scarlet Letter Was Not About What You Think* <laugh>.

**AJ Harper** ([02:53](#)):

But it totally was.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([02:54](#)):

But it totally was her other book. <Laugh>. Welcome to the show, AJ.

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

Hey, Mike, did you have an embarrassing moment? Like, this is what I want to say. I want to introduce you by saying you'll do embarrassing things on purpose.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([03:08](#)):

Oh, on purpose. Yeah.

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

If it's going to advance your cause.

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

Oh my God. Yeah. Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([03:14](#)):

You will do it. Yeah. And I, I love that about you because I think we, I mean, I'm shifting from my own embarrassing moment to saying something thoughtful here, but you care so much that you'll do it For sure. So it, you know, not everybody will.

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

Not No. Most people, most people won't. I was at an airport surprise always at airports a week or two ago, and all of a sudden the dude, like five, six chairs over me sitting, waiting for the plane to start singing loud and something like, like when walking down the street and there's someone that's un-homed. Is that the right word now? (Yes. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>). And like, you all make eye contact, and you avoid, like, all of a sudden there was this like repulsion.

**AJ Harper** ([03:57](#)):

Everybody's slinking away. I don't know this dude.

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

Oh my God, what's this dude? Is he losing his mind? And he starts singing Georgia. You know, Georgia?

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

Yeah. Good tune. Could he sing?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([04:07](#)):

He was great.

**AJ Harper** ([04:08](#)):

Okay. So he had every rewrite to be singing that day.

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**Mike Michalowicz** ([04:11](#)):

Every right to be singing. So then after about a minute or two, like people start getting comfortable and they start now coming closer and closer to him. He puts out a little hat, just puts it down, very innocuous. First person puts a tip down, then he starts collecting tips in an airport. And, and then he takes a break and someone's like, so why do you do this? He goes, I love to sing. I'm a professional singer, and I'll just start singing airports. And he goes, you, you won't believe how many people gimme tips or ask for me to come to their venue and start singing. So he goes, I just sing at airports. He's brilliant.

**AJ Harper** ([04:40](#)):

Did you sing along?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([04:41](#)):

I, yeah. Yeah. I have a video of me, him pointing to me and, you know, I can't, I can't sing. So, but he was kind.

**AJ Harper** ([04:47](#)):

But you were into it.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([04:49](#)):

Oh, yeah. Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([04:49](#)):

Would you do it? This is the question.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([04:51](#)):

Oh, would I simply, would

**AJ Harper** ([04:52](#)):

You break out into song? I think you would,

**Mike Michalowicz** ([04:54](#)):

If it will help sell books. See, because it can be a deterrent. So if I start to singing to sing now I'm the un-homed guy that people are trying to avoid. If I was doing it and there was a compelling, attractive reason, this, this plays into different is better. You first must differentiate. (*Get Different.*) But yeah, *Get Different*. <Laugh> Different is better. I don't even know our, our own books. It's *Get Different*. You must differentiate, then you must attract (Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>) and then direct. Yeah. And he was doing all three.

**AJ Harper** ([05:23](#)):

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Yeah. He was.

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

If I just started singing, I'd differentiate, but I would, I would repulse and that's not, I think I'd repulse so that wouldn't—

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

He had a captive audience at the airport. Had he done that on the subway? Mostly people just going, just most people right out of my way.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([05:38](#)):

Yeah. All right, let's dig into this great debate. We're going to talk about the great debates, (the great debate) pre-orders. Let me start with a story around all in, and then we can talk about was this a good or bad?

**AJ Harper** ([05:49](#)):

Okay.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([05:50](#)):

So *All In*, we reached out to historical readers and invited them to do pre-orders in two ways. One was you could join the street team. (Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>.) And if you pre-order the book, we would send you a PDF copy of it. Honestly, we didn't really tell Penguin because Penguin would've gotten...

**AJ Harper** ([06:12](#)):

You're doing it now.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([06:14](#)):

Oh, they don't listen, you, can you imagine Noah listening to this show?

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

He might.

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

Ah, maybe, sorry, Noah. So we sent out a PDF of the book. <Laugh>.

**AJ Harper** ([06:25](#)):

You just, we, you're on a podcast and you just turn it just what, sly? Like you're leaning in and you don't want anyone to hear?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([06:33](#)):

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<Laugh>. Don't tell Noah, just don't tell Noah, don't tell Noah. He might get upset. I don't know if we can or can't. So that's why. And we sent out the pdf, the book and said, here it is. We'd like you to review the book and, and send us back a review. So then when it goes live, we can do a cut and paste of that review. (Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>) So that was part of it. So we did pre-orders for the element of getting people, certain people who are interested, excited about the book. We also did a pre-order where we announced it to a, I can't remember who the community was, but it was a subset of the list. I can't remember how we picked them out, to get some early demand.

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

Your email list.

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

My email list. Yeah. But subset, the entire list is about 140, maybe 150,000 now. It was a, a small subset, maybe 15,000 or something like that, to get some approach.

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

I think that's a lot. Just, just so we know.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([07:22](#)):

Well,

**AJ Harper** ([07:23](#)):

I have a, I That seems like a big list to me.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([07:26](#)):

Yeah, well. That's 10% of the list, but also sizing everything. It's quality of engagement. So the readership, we have an open rate of like 17%. So,

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

Oh, I don't feel so bad now. Yeah. Of my tiny little list with my 54% open rate.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([07:41](#)):

Yeah. See, that's an engaged list. So that's another challenge we we're facing here. Do, do we maintain this list and the cost associated with it? Or do we start refining it back down to a smaller list? We have.

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

Okay, so you did the small list.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([07:54](#)):

And collectively we had about 400.

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**AJ Harper** ([07:56](#)):

Which is not that many.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([07:57](#)):

Not that many, but we're not pushing for

**AJ Harper** ([07:59](#)):

It. But in the past you had way more others.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([08:02](#)):

Yeah, yeah. We've had, so I want to talk about the pros and cons. I've been leaning toward more cons on pre-orders than pros. And I can start this out and you can tell me your thoughts.

**AJ Harper** ([08:14](#)):

Okay.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([08:15](#)):

So I—

**AJ Harper** ([08:15](#)):

Bet we're going to disagree.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([08:17](#)):

All right, let's start. Disagree. The first reason I'm not a fan of pre-orders is because it doesn't influence the buy price anymore. The retail price. So the, I'm sorry, the retail price, the RP

**AJ Harper** ([08:29](#)):

On Amazon specifically?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([08:30](#)):

Yeah, yeah. And Barnes and Noble, any of them. So on the book, say it sells for \$30 MSRP, Amazon will list it for \$30 and they'll discount the price over time based upon an algorithm they're using. I can only presume is optimizing demand and return. So how many people visit the website? How many people actually buy it? What's the lowest or right price point to get the most people buying at the highest price? That's what they're trying to figure out. I, I can only presume they used to, when we got pre-order on coming through Barnes & Nobles, for example, Barnes & Nobles was doing the same thing. And Amazon, Barnes & Nobles seems like Amazon was responding to always be one penny less than the other person. So Barnes & Noble will drop, Amazon would drop about a year or two ago. Amazon doesn't do anymore. They just leave it at the retail price until after the book launches.



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**Mike Michalowicz** ([09:20](#)):

And only when there's enough volume and demand, they start adjusting it. So more books are selling at the MSRP. So even with 400 pre-orders, which I know it's not much, but it's something that was not enough to adjust the price. My only thought was if I got more people visiting the Amazon page in volume, but not buying the book, the Amazon algorithm may say, well, people are coming but not buying the book. We should start dropping the price now. But now I'm losing that momentum by sending people to look at a book page and they don't buy in the first place. So that's my first reason of not being so excited about pre-orders.

**AJ Harper** ([09:55](#)):

(Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>) Do you have any more?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([09:57](#)):

Oh, I have a list. Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([09:58](#)):

Okay. Let's go.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([10:00](#)):

Oh, Jesus <laugh>. I'm scared. I'm scared.

**AJ Harper** ([10:03](#)):

You're scared.

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

"The Scarlet Letter was not about adultery!" <Laugh>. So the second reason I'm not a fan of pre-orders is that I feel it loses momentum with my audience that when the book launch comes, and a big component that moves a lot of books still is a multi-book order. Buy 10 copies. You get this, buy three copies. You get that, that when people buy a book in advance, they already have a credit and they said, I already bought it. The excitement is gone. And they seem to be less likely to buy in the multi-book. Or if they do, they absolutely want credit for a pre-order and say, well, I already bought the book, so I've got to get credit for that and I'll, I'll make up the difference. And that becomes a little more of a logistical challenge. (Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>) I'll tell you the pro now. The pro is the sales team. AKA (Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>) Noah and Crew is watching.

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

Yep.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([10:54](#)):

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And so I got a call from Noah, he's like, ah, you only got 400 out there. You know, we're not going to, the print run we're going to make is probably going to be a little smaller. Yeah. And stuff like that. Yep. So now I'm getting pushed back toward, ah, maybe, maybe I should push for more for pre-order.

**AJ Harper** ([11:06](#)):

Yes, you should.

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

Okay. You're obviously, you're very pre-order. I'm, I, I slant no pre-order. So give me your stuff, your thoughts.

**AJ Harper** ([11:14](#)):

Okay. I have a lot of them. Wait, is that all, that's your whole, that's your whole debate. <Laugh>. That's it?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([11:21](#)):

Is this how you respond to a debate? Like on the debate team, the counter debate's? Like, hold, wait, is that it? That's your whole debate. <Laugh>. I love it. You throw knives.

**AJ Harper** ([11:30](#)):

I'm going to, I'm genuinely wondering. I don't want to be, I didn't want to step one your toes. Do you have more to say?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([11:34](#)):

Bet you had the insult by saying it was genuine. That really hurts all you go, yes. That was it. That was freaking in.

**AJ Harper** ([11:40](#)):

Okay. I thought you had a lot <laugh>. Okay, here's the thing. Yeah. You have this window publishing industry is focused on front list, meaning books that are about to come out or coming out in the future versus, and books that have been out about a year, sometimes two years. But really it's the books that are about to come out. The publishing industry is focused on that. The media around books is focused on that. New books, what's new, what's happening, what's coming. Your sales team is focused on that. So you have to get excitement. This is this window. You have a window and you need to get that sales team pumped. If they see that a book is doing well, they're going to push and amplify. So I know this from being a publisher. When the sales team starts to see numbers go up, up, up, they say what's going on and they want to know more.

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

And then they're going to push and amplify. It gives them leverage. If they see, say a bunch of pre-orders on Amazon, it gives them leverage at Barnes & Noble and other indie bookstores. Then get some shelf

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space. Maybe, although Barnes & Noble has changed their policies on that. But they can still pitch. They can say, look, we're seeing a lot of momentum here. It's just like anything, if it's going well, it can go better. So you, you really do need to invest in the pre-orders. If you are trying to get on a bestseller list that's not Amazon. So Asterisk, not Amazon, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times* bestseller, *USA Today*, for example. You need to focus on the pre-orders because as you know, and you know this well, they count towards your seven day sales in that first week that your book is out, but not after.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([13:28](#)):

Yeah. So it counts at the shipping period, not when the orders made.

**AJ Harper** ([13:32](#)):

Yeah. So let's say you had 3,000, 4,000, 7,000 pre-orders, 10,000 your chances combined with your launch day sales, launch week sales, of getting on the list. That's your chance. So if it matters to you, you need to push.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([13:49](#)):

Yeah. The challenge though is if you get those 7,000, we'll say pre-orders, then when the launch happens, you have to get more people. Different people.

**AJ Harper** ([13:59](#)):

I know, but you know what I think, I think it's just that you need a different PR strategy or a pre, pre-order strategy. And I'll, I'll say that (I like that.) I just think you have to, well, I'll just say it now. Yeah. And then I still want to say, say it. I still debate my case.

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

Yeah. No <laugh> your debate's way better already. Go.

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

I think you, you can shake the tree a little with the pre-order. Right. Like you, you get in priming the pump, getting in, going with some of your folks. But you need to focus on people that you maybe don't normally market to, to get the pre-orders. So we tend to focus on our circle, our sphere of influence. (Yeah.) Our platform as we should during launch. People who know us, people who want to support us. If we had a pre-order strategy that was going out into other areas, and you'd have to provide a value add to make that happen. Right. Then you're not, your people are still going to buy during launch week. Because you didn't ask them to pre-order. (Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>) You're going out to other people, other branches on the tree. It takes some strategy. But I think that would be the way to do it. So you can get the best of both worlds because you do need that buzz.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([15:17](#)):

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Yeah. And, okay, so my counterpoint to that is that a pre-order sale is harder to make than an active sale because the consumer, I'm assuming here, wants it now. I've seen books say, oh, coming in six months, I'm not going to buy it now. I'll wait until then.

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

Yeah. But that's why you have the value, that's why you have the value exchange. Yeah. So you need to have—

**Mike Michalowicz** ([15:37](#)):

Yeah. Something significant.

**AJ Harper** ([15:38](#)):

Significant for sure. So a lot of people don't do, they do bonus stuff for multi, multi and don't do a lot for single. Yeah. So you have to think about that. I will come up with ideas for you. Yeah. Okay. But my point is, I think you, instead of saying, I don't think the debate should be pre-orders or no pre-orders. I think the debate should be how can we do pre-orders in a way that doesn't cannibalize what we're trying to do instead of being binary about it. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([16:07](#)):

A hundred percent agree.

**AJ Harper** ([16:07](#)):

That's my view on it. Yeah. But let me just run down my (Yeah, keep going. I like it.) Lemme do my debate points. Okay. I'm prepared.

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

You were prepared for the debate. I wasn't. I just came in. I jumped in.

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

That's okay. You can react. You can, you're, you can react.

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

I appreciate you let me do that. Okay. Okay.

**AJ Harper** ([16:22](#)):

There, Barnes & Noble changed their policy. So they used to order a ton of books and they would now at a national level, right? So they would pitch, the sales team would pitch Barnes and Nobles Right. Buyers, they've take, given they used to have the, the individual retailers, different stores had some buying power, but now they have almost all the buying power. (Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>) So it's changed. Hmm. And they've actually, I mean there's a lot of challenges there and problems there, especially with debut authors, marginalized authors, people of color who are not getting a lot of resources to begin with

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not getting on the shelves, et cetera, as a result that they have, however, seen that they have fewer returns because the local people know what their people want to read in that store.

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

Interesting.

**AJ Harper** ([17:12](#)):

So, you know, they, they pay attention though to Barnes & Noble pre-orders. They'll see the buzz there. So it, it pre-orders are important. Not just on Amazon, but also making sure you get some people to buy on Barnes & Noble. to so that they can see that buzz moving forward. (Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>) The other thing is we said sales team enthusiasm. That's a big one. So if you, oh yeah. This was the other one. Even if you have a small press or a hybrid publisher, you still need a sum pre-orders so that Amazon starts kicking in. Now nobody really knows what they do and maybe they do nothing right to help with. But you having zero means you're not, nothing's happening. Right. So you have to, you have to do that. If you are self-publishing, I see people holding off to post and not doing a lot of self-publishing pre-orders. But the problem is if you're, if you're self-publishing, you could run out of stock with a big launch.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([18:17](#)):

That's right.

**AJ Harper** ([18:19](#)):

So you have to get some, my solution would be get your street team. So if anybody's wondering what that is, it's just a group of people who've decided to actively help you pro promote the book in usually extra ways. Right. Yeah. So maybe your, you know, your, maybe your BFF will promote it on launch day, but your street team is going to do maybe three or five or seven things as opposed to say one thing.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([18:44](#)):

Generally super fans and sometimes you give them a special benefit. Yeah. Just so we had a party at my house Yeah. For the people that promote the book. And some people did extraordinary things. And then we had this big old party at

**AJ Harper** ([18:54](#)):

My house and it could be a class you give inside information. It could be one-on-one time. There's so many things you can do to create this Yeah. Value for your street team, even if you don't have super fans. But if you get the street team to prime the pump and do some, if you're self-published and do some pre-ordering, even if you could even do that, if you're traditional, that way they're not, you know, you can still get them to buy a second time. That can be part of your agreement.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([19:22](#)):

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So here's why you're winning the debate, because you're making a good, good arguments. But I, I just had another thought that supports your argument for pre-orders is when you pre-order, the books are delivered on the day of the release nowadays, most of the time. So you order from Amazon and it's coming out January 1st. January 1st, the book is showing up, give or take. That means that day if you have a lot of pre-orders that day, books are arriving in everyone's hand. Social media kicks in. (Yep.) Just got mine. Just got mine. Which is an ultimate form of a, of social proof. So that's another reason to do pre-orders. I wasn't thinking of.

**AJ Harper** ([19:56](#)):

Well, there's another thing you can do, have your book available for pre-order and not do a campaign if you choose. I still think it's important to have a book listing. When you start talking about the book in big ways. You've got say media that's interested in maybe writing about you. They can't find your book. What does that say? They can't, they look it up, they can't see it. Or let's say you do a cover reveal or you do some sort of promo and people, oh, I really want to get that. They go to try and find it on Amazon, which is where they go to buy everything. Yeah. It's not there now. They're not buying it. They forgot about it. Two weeks later it's gone. You lost the sale. Yeah. So even if you're not actively doing buy my book, but people hear about it, they can at least go to their search. You know, when it's just Amazon's a search engine to buy stuff. They can at least go see it hit preorder. A lot of people do that to remind themselves, you know, that's their, they don't want to forget about that book because they know they will. And if they can't find it, you lost it.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([20:57](#)):

You're in real trouble then.

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

For sure. Yeah. So even if you're not actively push, push, push, just having the listing can be helpful. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([21:06](#)):

Yeah. That makes total sense. The other thing is, if you're doing self-published or hybrid, sometimes stocking requests are based upon how much active demand is on. So if you don't have any pre-orders, they may have too low of a stock. Especially an offset printing. So you can run into trouble there. Yeah. But we have an author of ours we're working with that we've decided that we collectively we're going to go hybrid. And one thing is interesting about this hybrid, they said, you've got to pay for the printing of your books. You went hybrid, you had to pay for those \$4 per book. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> what's interesting he said is pre-orders will pay for the printing of the book. So you can get pre-orders without having the book printed yet because it's a pre-order. Now, you can't do it through the—

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

Well, you'd have to do it on your own site. And collect the funds.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([21:46](#)):

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Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>. Correct. If you did it through Amazon or something like that, at least you know the money's been secured and what's coming your way. So you have confidence and if you do it on your own site, you actually have the cash. (Yeah.) So you can do pre-order to raise money.

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

You can, I will say, if you're trying to do an Amazon bestseller campaign, meaning you want to be on the Amazon bestseller list, then pre-orders do not help you because Amazon cannibalizes the sales. So if I, if your book comes out on Monday, but someone bought it two months ago, it only counts for that day.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([22:20](#)):

Oh, back two months ago. Yeah. The ranking.

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

So that's because the, the bestseller ranking, the BSR is updated every couple hours. So you are not going to see that on launch day, which is why so many people are saying don't do it. The that's because they overemphasize the value of being an Amazon bestseller.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([22:39](#)):

And so I was a fan of waiting for the BSR, because if you're a BSR number one in a category, you get a flag. (Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>) If you're a BSR top 100 overall, you get in a very special group. And I've been there.

**AJ Harper** ([22:53](#)):

You also get a phone call from a publisher probably. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([22:56](#)):

Yeah, yeah. It's a big deal. So that's very powerful. But Amazon's come out with this new thing that says New release bestseller. Yeah. Which doesn't matter what your ranking is, it's its own volume books.

**AJ Harper** ([23:07](#)):

It's about momentum. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([23:08](#)):

So that's pretty cool. So you're getting that flag benefit, even if you're bestseller ranking is.

**AJ Harper** ([23:13](#)):

But it goes away.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([23:14](#)):

It does, but it sustains mine. Mine always sustained for about a month.

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**AJ Harper** ([23:18](#)):

That's not, that's unusual. (Oh, is it?) Oh yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([23:21](#)):

I thought that was long, longer.

**AJ Harper** ([23:22](#)):

One. I do, I think we overemphasize the value of an Amazon bestseller status. We, we do it, not we people do it because they want to be able to say they're a bestselling author, but I don't think that's accurate. If you were a bestselling author for four hours on a Tuesday.

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

Yeah. It's manipulative. And I'll tell you, don't write *that* book, for God's sake. The one that has the stamp on it says it was a bestseller.

**AJ Harper** ([23:44](#)):

Oh, you should, if it's an Amazon bestseller, do not put that on your book, actually. Yeah. Do not. Because anybody in the industry knows that. That's a moment in time. I will say though, if you want it, if you want them to get a screenshot and you just want to be able to have it somewhere in your, you know, back pocket, don't mess around with the print book. Put the eBook up for pre-order, do a deep discount, do a simple Amazon campaign for three days. Yeah. You'll absolutely get it. You can go to [kindlepreneur.com](#) and there's an article there about, we'll, we'll link to it in the show notes about exactly how to do it. You don't have to pay anyone to do it for you. Hmm. Although I do recommend their product, and I think you do too. I don't get any money from this, but is it Publisher Rocket?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([24:31](#)):

Yeah. I love that tool.

**AJ Harper** ([24:32](#)):

Yeah. They have a great tool that can really help you with that. You could DIY it, but that, that's a fantastic tool.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([24:37](#)):

And I think it was a hundred dollars lifetime. It's an app.

**AJ Harper** ([24:41](#)):

It's a no-brainer.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([24:42](#)):

It's Yeah, it's a no-brainer. Yeah. And we, we use it regularly.



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**AJ Harper** ([24:45](#)):

So just do it on the eBook. You can still say Amazon bestseller and don't mess with like, get the pre-orders on the print book. There you go. That would be my strategy. There you go. And just remember, it's a couple little notes. You can do pre-orders, like I said, on eBooks, but also Audible. So, you know, if you don't want to do it on the print book, there are still things that you can do for, to make sure someone can buy your book.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([25:09](#)):

Let's talk about your book. Write a must read. Did you get a lot of pre-orders? How did it play out for you?

**AJ Harper** ([25:14](#)):

I made a point to try and get as many pre-orders Okay. As I could to, so that my publisher was happy with they wanted me to get at least, I think it was a hundred, 150 by a certain date. Okay. In order to trigger something from Amazon that they knew about. Yeah. Which I did. I should have done more. It was, you know, we should do a whole episode on what happens if life intervenes and you can't do the book launch you planned. Yeah. We should, we should do a whole episode on it, because I am the poster child for that.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([25:51](#)):

Well, I, I believe like a, a launch never ends. Meaning like, you don't have to say, well, the book's published, I can never launch it. You can, you can go through.

**AJ Harper** ([25:58](#)):

No, you can absolutely do it again. You, you're right. It's just, I had other plans for the pre-orders. I wasn't trying to make a list though. Mm. I had toyed with the idea. Let me try just for my students, you know, my let me just try just to be a good, you know, role model. Sure, of course. Almost. But in the end that's a military operation. Like that's a whole next level thing. Yeah. So I wish I had done more on the pre-orders. But I was, it, it, it worked out fine. So

**Mike Michalowicz** ([26:29](#)):

*All In*, the first four weeks, sold 9,600 copies, I think. But this is includes Audible and Kindle print units, about half that. So let's say 5,000 units. I'm wondering next book launch, if we should try all 5,000 prior to the launch.

**AJ Harper** ([26:46](#)):

Yes. The answer is yes.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([26:47](#)):

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Okay. And I'm wonder if nothing else changed that if those 5,000 when they arrived on Monday or whatever that day is of the week when the book ships, which is actually a Tuesday, typically is, would that trigger momentum on its own?

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

Maybe. But I also think you cannot, like I said, you cannot underestimate the power of people behind the scenes in publishing and saying, oh, hey, look at this book. Yeah. Yeah. Because it's just everything is amplified then.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([27:15](#)):

Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([27:16](#)):

Interesting. Publishing is not, it's not fair and equal treatment. Yeah. So it's not like your sales team has maybe say, a hundred books they have to pitch or who knows? Depends on what type of, if it's a smaller dis trade distributor or if it's a bigger one, or if it's in-house with a publisher, they've got a bunch of titles, a lot each season that they have to pitch. And it's maybe get 30 seconds Yeah. Or a minute for each book. And an author wrongly assumes everybody's getting the same treatment. Yeah. No, that's not happening. If they see that a book has potential, if they see an author is busting their ass. If the sales team-- Sorry for saying ass.

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

No, you can say ass.

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

Okay. I'm saying ass <laugh>. If the sales team sees opportunity there and they see buzz and they see things climbing, oh wait, what's this? They push it, they might not admit to it, but it becomes a featured title within the behind the scenes. And sales teams are writing down when they get pitched. Notes, notes, notes, notes, notes. And they are not going to give the same attention to every book. I don't care what anybody says, they just aren't. And it's unfortunate.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([28:34](#)):

It's reality.

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

But it's the reality. So let's do everything we can to get them to sit up and say, what's that? Tell me more. What's up with that book? Right.

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

Yeah. I think it was a few weeks ago in episodes. I mean, it was literally a few weeks ago when we had this conversation, but maybe it was a few weeks ago in episodes I got, I got a new word. It we were

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saying B-I-T-C-H slapped. But you can't say it anymore. I got flip slapped because penguins have flippers. So I got flip slapped by Penguin.

**AJ Harper** ([29:04](#)):

That's what you're going with?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([29:05](#)):

Yeah. I thought flip slap. I thought it was funny. A few weeks ago we had the first thousand unit week. It has an up curve. Now it could be a one week anomaly and it could be in a bulk order. We can't figure out what the cause was. Or it could be unit sales, but the best seller ranking is settled in nicely now. So maybe it's individual sales. So that was...

**AJ Harper** ([29:21](#)):

Well, you know what that means. People are reading it and liking it. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([29:26](#)):

That's what I'm, that's what I'm praying to God.

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

I mean, let's just be real. Yeah. That's the ultimate promotion strategy.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([29:32](#)):

That's, you want people like it and can't stop talking about it. And that's what praying has happened. So we've got to see. All right.

**AJ Harper** ([29:37](#)):

So what's, who won the debate?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([29:39](#)):

You won the debate. Hands down. (I won!) You won. You won. Not only did you win, you actually had me making arguments on your behalf. <Laugh> Like, oh, all the books arrived on the same day. No, you were much more eloquent. You make way better points. Let's focus on pre-orders. All right, my friends, we hope you enjoyed this master debate episode. <Laugh>, the, the debate team was here. The best debate I saw was old school. You ever see the movie Old School? (Yeah.) When Will Ferrell makes, all of a sudden he gets overtaken by energy and just starts <laugh> with who's the guy, Carville was his name. Oh, I don't remember. He's a political expert commentator. Southern Boys. Oh, him. Yeah.

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

He was on the Clinton Campaign.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([30:20](#)):

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Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Very. They debate, and Will Ferrell crushes him. So go to our website to get the free materials. Please sign for our email list. That way you don't miss a single episode. And we'd be honored if you spread the word too. And you can do that by simply rating and reviewing us on your pod catcher. The website for us is [dwtb-podcast.com](http://dwtb-podcast.com). I'd love to get your emails too. That's at [hello@dwtb-podcast.com](mailto:hello@dwtb-podcast.com). Please check out AJ's book, write a must read. She's the top three book workshop too. If you are serious about being an extraordinary author, that is the program that I'm telling you hands down. Thanks for joining us today and for every single episode. We look forward to seeing you next week. And in the meantime, always remember, don't write that book. Write this one.