

don't write *that* book!

Episode 26:

Grow Your Readership Through Collaboration

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. Here's what I love about you, is that you are willing to speak from the heart. You are willing to speak the truth, and you're willing to say it candidly, because you care. You point out the elephant in the room, and you've done it with me, AJ, and you just did in this last episode too. I think it is really common that an author will struggle with "What should I do next?" And I think some authors don't put value in that struggle, and they say, this is just what has to be done. And they've compromised their book because they've written something they feel is necessary, but isn't necessarily appropriate. So, I appreciate you for that.

AJ Harper ([00:56](#)):

Thank you.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:57](#)):

You're welcome.

AJ Harper ([00:58](#)):

I think you're also speak from the heart. You're also candid. I think we have that in common. We're very, very different people <laugh>, would choose completely different things to do on, say, a Saturday night. (Correct.) But I think our values are aligned.

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

I a hundred percent agree. And I also believe that the greatest collaboration comes out of that. And that's going to be the topic for today, is how to grow your readership through collaboration. Now, there's different forms of collaboration. Of course, ours is in the production. I, I really think we produce extraordinary books and *All In*, I think, really is our best work to date. And I am hearing it with some regularity. (Oh, are you?) Yeah. Saying, holy cow. This is just the next level from readers.

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

Yay.

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

I looked at the numbers and I we're going to do an episode on ROI on book performance, and I shared the slap I got from Penguin a few episodes back. Yeah. !! he, they slapped me again. What? But I don't

don't write *that* book!

know, I thought it was like almost an email problem. About a week later, I got an email from Noah saying, your book sales are really sliding, and how can we help? And we've got to talk about the *Profit First* workbook. And I'm like—

AJ Harper (02:11):

Both of those things in the same email?

Mike Michalowicz (02:13):

Same email. Okay. The a week prior, that's the call we had. So I emailed him back and said, "Oh, I think the email got stuck. We already talked about this." He said, "No, it's a new email." So then,

AJ Harper (02:22):

So basically you're not doing very well. You are not doing very well. It still, still Mike.

Mike Michalowicz (02:30):

A week later, a week later, so I looked. The sales are up, we moved 800 units and then a thousand and then 800. So it went from, I think launch week was maybe 6,000 or something. 7,000. And then it dropped down to maybe 500, then went to a thousand, then 800 and then, or whatever. It's been oscillating around that. So I called him, I said, where's the slot? And he's like, oh, your tails are up a lot. Good job. What? It was very weird.

AJ Harper (02:54):

It sounds like he's sending an email based on someone saying something to him.

Mike Michalowicz (02:57):

That's what I think. And I think they get different data. I think they're getting, I still think they base a lot of significance in only the hardcover sales. The numbers I shared are the collective sales, audio and so forth. Yeah. It's looking—

AJ Harper (03:10):

It's always, that's what they always do.

Mike Michalowicz (03:11):

Yeah.

AJ Harper (03:12):

So that'll be another episode though. <Laugh>. I

don't write *that* book!

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

Know it. So it's a little bit manic. We're, we have a call scheduled for tonight. I'm going to have a call with him.

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

Oh. So this is going to be our whole podcast now. Okay. Here's my latest conversation with my editor, <laugh>.

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

I know. Yeah. I'm looking forward to it. He and they are very supportive. They've done extraordinary things for me, for us. And I also like that they put this new expectation out there. because I'm rethinking everything about promoting books.

AJ Harper ([03:37](#)):

And we're meeting later this week to do a big...

Mike Michalowicz ([03:40](#)):

Friday. Friday. Yeah. Are we confirmed? Okay. Yeah. Yeah. The team's coming up. Kelsey. Yeah. Andrea, me. But collaboration. So we, we set quarterly goals at our office. And my quarterly commitment is to get to 6,000 units a week of book sales. Right now we're average.

AJ Harper ([03:55](#)):

For all your books?

Mike Michalowicz ([03:56](#)):

All books, overall books. Yeah. Right now we're moving, well, it's over 3000.

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

Oh, so you have a ways to go.

Mike Michalowicz ([04:03](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

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

Did you just set, we're talking about a different episode.

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

No. This is your grow your readership through collaboration. I'm building to it.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper ([04:11](#)):

This is building, okay.

Mike Michalowicz ([04:12](#)):

Sorry.

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

You have a, do you have a collaboration? Okay. Shh, Anjanette, quiet.

Mike Michalowicz ([04:17](#)):

So we set this goal of "What is the expectation?" 6,000 units a week. So it was a hundred percent growth in our sales. And there's a saying, Marshall Goldsmith wrote a book that said, what got you here won't get you there. I have a preferred saying I've read. I don't know who to attribute to who said what got you here will keep you here. And I think that's a better definition. The way we've been marketing the book has got us to a certain level that can move apparently 3000 books. And if we wrote another book, it'd be 3,500. And another book would be 4,000. We have to change our model. And I believe it's all through now, collaboration with fellow authors, with influencers. And that's why I'm so excited about digging into today's episode.

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

That, you know what, that's always been a thing though, right? Courting influencers, nurturing relationships, as they say, building your sphere of influence.

Mike Michalowicz ([05:11](#)):

But in a new way.

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

Oh, in a new way. Okay.

Mike Michalowicz ([05:13](#)):

In a new way. Because the old way was quid pro quo. Right? Hey, author, do this and I'll do that.

AJ Harper ([05:18](#)):

Joint venture partnerships.

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

Oh, I hate that. Right. That's your, your mindset. Like your, your bad feelings about that word. Mindset. Your negativity toward it. Mines JVs. Because it sounds so transactional.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper ([05:30](#)):

It is transactional.

Mike Michalowicz ([05:32](#)):

Oof. I don't like it. You know, there's a myth out there that your author is your competitor. And I think most authors get what the truth is. But there are some authors, I reached out to someone and said, Hey I have a new book coming out that's in a similar in your space. Would you like to give an endorsement? And his response, kudos to him, was very candid, was, no, I won't endorse because this is a, this is competitive to my book.

AJ Harper ([05:54](#)):

<Laugh>

Mike Michalowicz ([05:55](#)):

Here's the reality. And most authors get this, that there is no competition with other authors. No. I think it's the only market in the world that's like this. When I was in computer networks and technology and so forth, if you had the same business I had and you got the client, I wouldn't get the client. Yeah. But as authors, if you and I write quote unquote competing books, I write *Profit First*. You write a business called *Be More Profitable*, a book *Be More Profitable*. If I promote your book and your book does well, readers will get interested in the topic of profitability and then expand their exploration, which means they'll more likely to read my book.

AJ Harper ([06:32](#)):

Yeah. It's not pie.

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

It's not pie.

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

Yeah. It's, there's not, there's not limited number of slices.

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

I think a lot of people don't get that.

AJ Harper ([06:40](#)):

People don't get it. And even when I tell them, they still don't quite believe it. Yeah. It's just, you have to remember that. Just look at your bone bookshelf. Let's say you love books on meditation or meditation's your jam. Do you have just the one you bought one book on meditation and that did it. Right. And now you will never read another book. There's no, there's no, even if someone loves an author, that doesn't

don't write *that* book!

mean it's to the exclusion of other authors. So how many books do you think I have on writing, editing any of that?

Mike Michalowicz ([07:15](#)):

One? You have Steve Pressfield's. (No. <laugh>. No.) *The War of Art*. *The War of Art*.

AJ Harper ([07:19](#)):

I know. I'm such a stalker.

Mike Michalowicz ([07:21](#)):

All you have.

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

Stalker. Of course not. No. I have hundreds of that. I don't think I could count them. Well, I wouldn't want to take my time to count them. Let's put it like that. And that's true of, of any genre. It's true of, of any topic.

Mike Michalowicz ([07:38](#)):

I think a big mis-perception that anyone has, not just authors, is we believe that our behavior isn't necessarily indicative of the world. So my jam, oh yeah, my jam is neuromarketing. Behavioral stuff. Same thing. I got hundreds of books on the subject. But I'm like, well, that, that's me. Everyone else finds their one book and that's all they'll ever read. (No.) And that's, if you simply investigate how you behave, it's likely the rest of the world behaves the same way.

AJ Harper ([08:07](#)):

Yeah. So, and you need to look at your authors as peers as part of a community. And, and part, you know, some of this is the collaboration piece is so many authors are just writing quietly, privately, not telling anyone about it. And this is not helpful to your career as an author. Part of collaboration is also finding those peers, even if you're not necessarily collaborating about promoting your book, but having other authors to talk to, look to being community with is an important part of authorship.

Mike Michalowicz ([08:46](#)):

By all means. And I think for a reader, the entry point will be through a book. At some point they have to read their first book on the subject through an author, and they may or may not build an affinity toward that book and that author, if they do, they'll explore that author's interests, too. Who are they connected with? (Yeah.) So I would say for me, the greatest connection I have is with Don Miller. We have very similar audiences, now.

AJ Harper ([09:17](#)):

If you don't know who he is, he wrote famously *Story Brand*.

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz ([09:19](#)):

Yeah. he also wrote many books in the small business space, growing. And they're, they're excellent. They're absolutely excellent. So I called him up and said, Hey, I, new book coming out. And he goes, "Hey, why don't you, if you're willing to come down here, we'll do a, a live broadcast podcast," blah, blah, blah, blah. And he lines up all these things for me, I think if I may, that the quote unquote selfish win for Don Miller is he is bringing content to his audience, and he is seen as the delivery source of this information. So it doesn't dilute him. They don't say, "Oh, there's this guy, Mike, let me ignore Don." I think they're, "Oh, I'm grateful to Don for bringing Mike." And now it expands. They consume both of our stuff.

AJ Harper ([10:04](#)):

Yes. A value add. It's complimentary content.

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

Yep. We did, we, meaning our office. We did an announcement to our email list a few years ago around *E-Myth*. We'd written *Clockwork*. And I just love *E-Myth*, what it stands for. And so we just sent out an email blast saying, there's this book you got to read. If you haven't read any business books, please read.

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

What rock have you been living under?

Mike Michalowicz ([10:29](#)):

I know <laugh>, please read this book. I didn't make mention of anything else. *Clockwork* had its best day of sales besides the launch period on that day. And what happened was, on *E-Myth*, we saw *Clockwork*, you know, frequently bought together. It popped up within a few days. And that opened my eyes to... my gosh. When you give something of value to your readership, some people will be triggered and say, "Oh my gosh, I haven't purchased Mike's book yet." So I think the first question is how to build community. And I want to share a very specific how to that I've done.

Mike Michalowicz ([11:05](#)):

So about seven years ago, I said, I, I want to be in the room with authors who might not necessarily seek me out to be in the room with me. I, I think there is value to quote unquote playing with someone at our, at our slightly higher level than you. And so what I did is I reached out to Don Miller because of our report and said, Hey, I'm thinking about putting on a little bit of an event. Would you have be interested in participating? He goes, "I'm interested in hosting because I don't want to travel." He has a young child. And he said, I'd rather just be local. So he goes, I'll volunteer my house. (Mm-Hmm.) So I'm like, Hey, got Don, got my house. Then I started reaching out to authors and they were James Clear, Ryan Holiday. I remember the group specifically.

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz ([11:50](#)):

John Gordon, Chris Gabo, myself, John Ruland, so, and Don, so seven, six or seven of us. And I reached out, every single person responded. And it wasn't because, hey, I'm hosting an event, James Clear you, he had just released *Atomic Habits* maybe a year or two prior. "Hey, you want to hang out with me?" I said, "Hey, Don Miller's, you know, <laugh>, you know, Don Miller has a house available. I'm trying to organize folks. Do you want to come and meet Don?" Yeah. I'd love to meet Don Jameson. Reach out to Ryan Holiday. Hey, Ryan. I know we're not like buddies or anything, but James Clear and Don are getting together with me at his house. Would you want to join us? I think you'd love to meet James Clear <laugh>. Ryan Holiday, in. Chris Gallaboat, in. And it, it just became this cascade effect.

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

Mm.

Mike Michalowicz ([12:34](#)):

I felt it was weird. I kind of like a fly on the wall. I don't think I des quote unquote deserved to be in that group if that's—

AJ Harper ([12:41](#)):

That's bs, but Okay.

Mike Michalowicz ([12:42](#)):

You know, you know what I'm saying with the word. Like, I don't, normally I wouldn't be invited if they hosted one, I don't think they would reach out to me.

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

All right.

Mike Michalowicz ([12:48](#)):

But I was running the event. Yeah. So now I'm the star of the show. And I have access to all of these folks now because of that one event. It doesn't mean we have a relationship, but we have dialogue occasionally. And it's definitely brought me perceived value with all those folks. Oh. Dave Ramsey was there too. So, so James Clear wanted to meet Dave Ramsey taken care of, I am now associated with that. So I brought value to that. Don Miller was appreciative. He always wanted to connect with James Clear and Ryan Holiday, you know, and so forth. And you're seeing as the collaborative point. So technique one to building community is create the room you wish you could be in. Most people don't want to facilitate because it's a pain in the and organize an event. So just put it on and do it. Here's a not to do, necessarily. Or maybe it doesn't hurt, don't try to swing for the fences. You may not get those folks there. Like, to me, the swing for the fences would be Malcolm Gladwell, would be Simon Sinek, though.

don't write *that* book!

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

But you did invite Malcolm Gladwell.

Mike Michalowicz ([13:56](#)):

Yeah. And ironically, we were, we connected this morning. I'm not kidding. We were (You did?) Yeah. We were emailed back and forth this morning.

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

Oh! You're getting to have your email with Malcolm Gladwell.

Mike Michalowicz ([14:05](#)):

Yeah. I said in my heart, like, extra a couple beats. And he, he's just very kind. He said alas, I cannot attend.

AJ Harper ([14:13](#)):

Alas, alas, of course.

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

He goes, alas, I cannot this event. Of course. But he goes, I'm, I'm flattered for the invite. So I responded and said, Hey, I would love to have you next year, I'll ask again, but if, if, I don't want to be a nuisance either. So if you prefer, I don't ask you, by all means say that. But there has to be value for everyone. So I think Malcolm Gladwell, if he attended this event, I don't know if he had extract the value he is looking to garner.

AJ Harper ([14:39](#)):

Can I, so here's another take on this. So those people all wanted to meet each other (Yes.) and be in the room. (Yeah.)

AJ Harper ([14:46](#)):

It could also be a learning opportunity. So you were exchanging ideas, but if you don't, you know, if you want, it might not be, if you can't pull that off where you're connecting people who want to meet each other, it could be connecting people who want to learn something specific. (Yes.) But then here's one I've done connecting people around a shared mission. So for example, you know, in my former life in publishing, when I had my publishing company that I co-founded with two other people, one of our missions was diversity and representation in fiction. And so we could get people, we could talk to people just because they also were passionate about that. And get people to maybe sit on a panel with us, or have a conversation with us, or do an initiative with us that was to get books in schools or in libraries that, you know, big players that maybe we wouldn't have had access to, but because we had a shared mission, and then we were willing to, like, the key here was we were willing to organize it. Yeah. So I think you can also rally folks around shared mission.

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz ([15:54](#)):

I love that. I love that. (Yeah.) So, so when building community do ask what's in it for them? Is it the shared mission? Is it a learning? Is it the networking? But you have to understand what's in it for them.

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

But, but wait, yeah. We're getting into how do you find the people, which is what we were just saying. How do you find and build these, the community of people you collaborate with. But I think you can also do it in one-offs. It's, it's, you know, also by providing value to authors, you want to know Yep. Through helping them promote whatever they have going on or facilitate something.

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

I'll give you another way to get in front of an author very easily. And it's so powerful and so few people do this, but it's the ultimate hack. Go to their Amazon page and pick one of your favorite books. So I'll we'll say *E-Myth*. We mentioned *E-Myth* earlier. So go to *E-Myth* on Amazon and then do a review video. And the review video could be something like, "Hey, this is Mike Michalowicz. I just finished reading *E-Myth*. Here's why I love about this book. It's a game changer. Here's why this works." The one person I know who's going to see that video is the author themselves. <Laugh>. Right? I'm sure. *Write a Must-Read*, I'm sure you go to your page occasionally on Amazon. How's the rankings? What's going on with it? How many reviews do I have? And if there's video reviews, you probably scroll down and say, oh, there's a new video review.

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

Let me watch it. It's a great way to engage with an author. Tips. Don't make a promotional of yourself. Don't say, Hey, author, if you're watching is contact me. It's just a way to get your face in front of them. There's more to the community than just fellow authors. Oh, and I, I do want to give an insight working with Penguin Random House, but also other traditional publishers, there is a hesitancy for them to connect authors with authors. And I thought it was initially just Penguin, but, but now, now I'm getting experience with other traditional publishers. There's a hesitancy. And I think the reason behind it may be I don't want them having inside conversations around the contracts they have and so forth. I, I don't know what their resistance is.

AJ Harper ([18:03](#)):

Who knows?

Mike Michalowicz ([18:04](#)):

It's, it's peculiar.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper ([18:05](#)):

You should just ask why don't, why don't you, why? (Yeah. Yeah.) It was, you know, good hybrid publishers actually create community and want exchange of ideas and want people to help each other out. Yeah. So I, I don't know. I don't, I feel like publishers—

Mike Michalowicz ([18:20](#)):

You know, I haven't asked. You should ask. Yeah. My other assumption is I don't want to be a burden to my other authors. Like, I wonder if Noah, my editor says, you know, I don't want people bothering you, Mike.

AJ Harper ([18:32](#)):

But he's not the only one. I mean, all the editors have had that stance. So it's like some sort of—

Mike Michalowicz ([18:36](#)):

Oh, no, no, it's not Noah. And Noah's pretty liberal about that. Yeah,

AJ Harper ([18:40](#)):

Yeah. No, I, he's, he's great. I just, I wonder if there's an actual company policy or an unspoken policy.

Mike Michalowicz ([18:48](#)):

Now, community is not just authors. There's other folks, agents, publishers. How do you get in front of them and what's the value in collaborating with them?

AJ Harper ([18:59](#)):

Well, it's, it's not that they're your collaborators, it's that the people you're collaborating with can get you access to them. (Okay.) So this is just looking at, you know, so if you have a community of authors that are your peers, you know, understanding, oh, who, who do I need to talk to? Who's a good agent for this? Understanding what's happening in the industry, getting your questions answered. So it's not so much collaborating with those people. It's collaborating with other authors so that you can get the inside information you need to make good publishing moves.

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

Okay. So we know now how, at least one way to connect with other authors, but what other benefits or wins are there by connecting with other authors? It's not just growing readership exposure through their channels.

AJ Harper ([19:46](#)):

No, I mean, I think having that community allows you to get your questions answered. So, is this a good deal? Who is this agent, a good agent? What are publishers looking for?

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz ([19:59](#)):

Could I, as a first time author, get that kind of information? Do, do you think I could reach out to other authors?

AJ Harper ([20:05](#)):

For sure. I think you should. The best way for you to figure out if a publisher is right for you is to talk to some of the authors who they published. And the same is true of agents. I mean, there's, there's sites that you can go to if you want to vet various options, various opportunities. But ultimately this is, you know, this is also a way you can build community, by the way. So it's a benefit of having the community, "Hey, let me check, is this a good deal? What do you think? What are you hearing about this?" Getting that inside baseball information. But also by asking an author to share their experience, you might begin a relationship with them that leads to a collaboration. So it's a chicken before the egg kind of thing. But I think there's a huge value in having a community you can go to, to get advice about your professional career.

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

Yeah. And if you go to or build a community with other authors, it's shortcuts and access to these people. because If you try to solicit an agent or connect with an agent directly, or a publisher directly, it can be much harder because you come with no qualification, so to speak.

AJ Harper ([21:09](#)):

Right. So we've been talking a lot about Noah. Sorry, Noah. If I message Noah, which I've only done a couple of times in this respect, and I say, God, I have a great author, a speaker. (Yeah.) You know, would you take a look? He would.

Mike Michalowicz ([21:24](#)):

He would.

AJ Harper ([21:24](#)):

Yeah. Right. So if you know me, and I'm willing to do that for you, which by the way, don't ask me anyone. because I almost never do it, and I don't do it.

Mike Michalowicz ([21:35](#)):

That's what I was about to ask you. (Yeah.) Do people become too aggressive in their asks?

AJ Harper ([21:40](#)):

Yeah. I, I really, I'm for me, no one should ever ask me. I do it of my own accord. I've never done it because someone asked me, and I won't do it when someone asks me. (Yeah.) But I'm a unique person in this because I'm a teacher and a coach and so forth. So that I have ethical reasons behind that. But let's say it's your buddy, you know, if you're ready to rock and they're cool with asking, you can get past

don't write *that* book!

agent representation. You could get a deal even without an agent. (Yeah.) Or you could get access to an agent who will get you a deal simply because they are connected with that person. That's their agent, that's their publisher. And if... the thing is, they don't want to bring something that isn't great, so they might say no if they aren't sure about the quality of it. (Yeah.) But that, you know, publishing is just gatekeeper after gatekeeper. Yeah. That's, 90% of it is getting past the gate. So, oh, I just thought of something cool. (What's that?) You know, all that in all those you know, parables and there's the tr there's the troll at the gate and you have to, and this is the you have to listen to the limerick or the—

Mike Michalowicz ([22:51](#)):

You have to answer a riddle question.

AJ Harper ([22:52](#)):

You have answer the riddle.

Mike Michalowicz ([22:52](#)):

Answer the riddle. Yeah.

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

You know what it is? Publishing <laugh>. Okay. This is so dorky. I think you're, this is my dorky. My, this is me, my dorky thought. So the inner critic troll is the first gate.

Mike Michalowicz ([23:06](#)):

Oh, <laugh>. Oh, it sounds like your mindset book.

AJ Harper ([23:10](#)):

See, I last week, and then there's all the other dang gates. And the other gates are agents, publishers, publicists, broadcast media, podcasts, hosts. I mean, there's just one gate after another. So having a, you know, a group of people, authors you can get in touch with that can get you past, it makes it more likely that you might be able to get an article placement in Forbes. Maybe you can get on that super popular podcast because you know, one of the people who was on it, right? So this just helps you open doors. But, you know, there's, and there's all sorts of, there's other gatekeepers you might not think of, like bookstores. So one of the stories I tell, I always love to talk about Julian Winters, who is a New York Times bestselling author, that with my former publishing company, we basically, we published his first book, I, I don't want to say discovered because he existed and he was awesome before that. But we published his first three books. And he's a New York Times bestselling author now with a Big Five. But he could not get, for his very first book, he went to this famous children's bookstore in the Atlanta area. Little Shop of Stories, <laugh>, which I love.

Mike Michalowicz ([24:26](#)):

That's a great name.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper (24:27):

<Laugh>. And he was unknown. And there's not nothing negative about that, that that ownership. They're not, you know, they're going to get hit up all the time from authors that they don't know anything about. And they need to be able to fill the room and for author events. And he wanted to have a, an signing there or an author event for his first book. And he kind of got the party line, you know, it'll cost this much. And it'll be, I think, maybe not a fee so fair to them, but it will, we're booked, basically. We're booked. But then once he had co gained a, a collaboration, more like a friendship, I would say, which is important by the way, you think about these as your peers, your friends as opposed to professional collaborators. I think that mindset is important. But with Becky Abertelli, was a famous author. He, he, that door went swung wide open. Wide open. And then he had an author event there. Now he's hosting events there.

Mike Michalowicz (25:24):

Oh, nice.

AJ Harper (25:25):

But the gatekeepers could also help you get into bookstores, like I said, broadcast media. So it's the connections. It's, there's so many things other authors can do to help you.

Mike Michalowicz (25:36):

And I think the question we always have to ask ourselves is, how am I serving them? If I called you and said, "Hey, AJ, I really need a, I need your help getting connected with a publisher," and you don't know who I am. This is of no service to you. It's actually costing you. I'm asking you to use your social currency. Establish a relationship to do me a favor. And I think that's such a grand mistake. And yet that is the approach I get 99% of time.

AJ Harper (26:04):

Right from the get right, from the get, oh, I barely know you.

Mike Michalowicz (26:07):

I barely know you. Or I've heard of you. Here's what I need from you. <laugh> And so, so here's the grand opportunity. Be of service to that person.

AJ Harper (26:16):

Always.

Mike Michalowicz (26:17):

And you can do it unexpectedly. There's some individuals who have supported me, they don't ask for a favor. They just believe in the mission. They support me. And I find out through the natural occurrence of things. And then I approach them and say, dude, you've been, and it's usually a woman. I call

don't write *that* book!

everyone, dude, like, you've been so helpful. Thank you. I like to help you. And that's how relationships are built.

AJ Harper (26:45):

But you have, you have to do it with genuine interest in helping the minute you're being self-serving about it... It just changes the tone of everything.

Mike Michalowicz (26:54):

I was reading an article blog by Tim Ferris on his celebrity-ship and the cost of it. It was actually a pretty draconian. And in there he talked about these people who pose as friends and serves to be of service specifically to get something out of him. And it's manipulation. And he's like, I now have to be so cautious. Because There's some people that are really good manipulators. It seems so real. And then the hook is set, and they try to pull it. Don't do that. My God, please don't do that.

AJ Harper (27:24):

I mean, yeah. I think transparency is maybe also helpful. So first of all, be of service. But let's say you really do need some help with a book launch. Could you maybe just be honest and say, can I get all of you in a Zoom room for 15 minutes to gimme your best ideas about what you think that I could do to make this book a success? And I just, I just want to gimme your best ideas. 15 minutes, 10 minutes. Be transparent about it.

Mike Michalowicz (27:57):

When making an ask, be absolutely transparent. I call it the selfish ask. Yesterday I had a call.

AJ Harper (28:02):

You do you always say, here's my selfish ask.

Mike Michalowicz (28:05):

Because that's, I can't think of a better word. That's exactly what it is. Yeah. So yesterday I had a call with a business group that's growing in the United States. They're big in Australia. It's called B Exponential BX, and then Exponential. And they were trying to grow in the United States. And so they said, we're talking about collaborating. I said, well, why don't we just put our selfish asks on the table. I want to move more books and mass for small business owners and serve them. What do you want? They said, well, selfishly, we want more membership. And it, it was a great conversation. And then, is there a collaborative thing? Can we both come out winning and the community being served better? And that was the whole conversation. We started that way. There was no dancing around like, Hey, we're really big fans and we maybe this, and maybe that it was, is put the selfish ask on the table. So when it comes to the ask, being transparent, be transparent.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper ([28:53](#)):

So this is, yeah. So it's the difference between the transparency of the ask and literary citizenship. Literary citizenship is, you know, as an author, being a good author citizen for other authors. So being part of that community, meaning you are going to, when you see an author needs are promoting something new, you just get in there and do it. You get in there and you do the review. It's getting yourself in a rotation of I'm just going to automatically support these people. I'm going to show up for their stuff. I'm going to be useful and supportive. It's a lot of work to do that. But I think if you just have the attitude of, this is who I am now. Like, can we just do that for a moment? I'm an author now. It's not just about me, myself and I, and how all these people can help me.

AJ Harper ([29:43](#)):

I'm now part of a community. We started by talking to the C-word, community. What do I need to do to help support the community? What can I do that no one has to ask me to do? And just get yourself on a regular rotation of paying attention. Oh, so-and-so's got a book launch. What can I do? Let me just do it. Lemme just do it. And that's, I think, you know, anything I do for other authors, I don't have a list of what I did. I'm not banking it. And then I'm, you know, I don't think about like that. I think the moment you are trying to think about how this can be currency, you lost the point of it.

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

I agree. By the way, at our house, when someone uses the phrase the C word, it's not about community.

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

Listen...

Mike Michalowicz ([30:27](#)):

<Laugh> So

AJ Harper ([30:29](#)):

Is it cash?

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

It's cash. <laugh> Top Three Book Workshop. You have a community of authors there. How are they supporting each other? Is there insights if we can glean from that?

AJ Harper ([30:39](#)):

Yeah. So I mean, right away I'm always telling them, "Hey, communicate with each other. How, how do you have shared audiences? How do you have crossover topics? How can you, can you interview each other for your books? Can you be on panel discussions? Can you help with each other's launches? At a minimum, you know, you should all be reviewing each other's books. "<Laugh>. Maybe you want to be beta readers. Maybe you can connect people in useful ways. One of the things we do in, I have Author

don't write *that* book!

Collective, which is for alums of Top Three Book Workshop. And we'll do these marketing brainstorm sessions. This is one thing you can do with your collaborators too. Just like I said earlier, the outcome with, it's based on the Idea party from Barbara Scher. She wrote *Wishcraft*. And then within *Wishcraft* is the Idea party. And then she wrote another book above the Idea Party.

AJ Harper ([31:28](#)):

And basically you gather a group of people. You come with, this is what I want, this is my, this is where I'm struggling with it. And then the whole group brainstorms solutions, just rapid fire and then also connects. Hmm. So if they do have a person they could connect them to, or an organization or a skillset, they, it isn't just that moment. There's also a next step for those who can actually help facilitate. And you can get a lot done in that way. And we do that in Author Collective. But you can do, you know, replicate that. We get a group of, and it doesn't even have to be, it can be authors of any experience, just get people in a room to give ideas.

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

So with Pen With Purpose, that's our, it's kind of a hybrid, but it serves as an agency component. But it's book optimization and marketing, you know, book launch, book evergreen, all packaged together. And we have many authors in the grief space. Started off by chance. But now it's deliberate. And we have maybe six authors we're working with actively. And one of our missions, perhaps the biggest is for them just to start having dialogue. Just, just talk with each other. And let's just see what happens. You find some common ground very quickly. "Oh, we know the same people. Oh, we go to the same events. Oh, I never ran into you here." And you start building that common bond, and then naturally things will flourish out of it.

AJ Harper ([32:56](#)):

So, I'm curious though, Mike, you said you want to really focus on collaboration in this sort of revamp of your marketing methodology. Do you have any ideas about how you want? Oh, let's, anything you want to share?

Mike Michalowicz ([33:10](#)):

Yeah, of course. So the most effective hands down way to grow your readership with other authors, and this is a win all around, is live webinars. And I'll give you the exact details of how we run it. I just did one with MBS, Michael Bungay Stanier and Joey Coleman. Those guys are great buddies and they have great rapport. Joey's book is how to *Never Lose an Employee Again*. He also wrote *How Never Lose a Customer Again*. But his newest book is *Never Lose an Employee*. Michael's book is *How to Work with Almost Anyone*. And then we have *All In*. So they're all on the subject compatible. All compatible. So find compatible books. We host a webinar. Michael promoted it to his community. Joey, his mine, ours. We collectively had three to 5,000 people sign up for this. Now we both all have pretty sizable lists, but these people signed up. We then share the list with each author. So everyone is getting exposure to who signed up. And you can, Hey, do you want to be part of my community now? And theoretically, if it's

don't write *that* book!

balanced, one third of the community was generated by me. But two thirds are new to me. And that's the same for everyone.

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

Did you get a bunch of folks from that?

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

Oh, totally. Totally. Then we host a webinar and it's free, and we just hit on all the topics, our best stuff from our books. So it's very complimentary. During the webinar. I, I usually will, well, if I facilitate, I'll host it. Michael and Joey are the main stars. They're the ones to give me all the content. I'll, I'll, I'll insert a couple thoughts, but it's, it's about them being the stars. Then I'll stop about halfway through the live webinar and we will get 500 people on there. You know, the turnout's like 10 to 20% of the sign up. So maybe a thousand people. And I'll stop and say in the chat, are you getting value out of this? Yes or no? And what's, if you are, what's the best takeaway? Because other people should see what your takeaway is. because It may trigger spark thoughts. All these comments.

Mike Michalowicz ([35:11](#)):

And then I say, I want you to know that Michael and Joey and myself, we're volunteering our time here. This is totally grasping. We hope it serves you. I do have a selfish ask. And say, would you be willing right now to purchase a copy of Joey's book and a copy of Michael's book and my book together? And then I tell them the reason. And it's important. You have to tell them the reason by buying the book is the greatest way we can serve you. It's all of our knowledge. I believe in these books more than anything. And it serves us because when a group of people have surge demand for a book, and we're buying them collectively, particularly through Amazon by any platform, the algorithm kicks in and says, there's a lot of demand for these books together. And starts co-marketing the books together.

Mike Michalowicz ([35:54](#)):

It starts promoting it to avatars just like the folks attending. So I'm like, if you're willing to do that right now, please post in a chat that you've bought the books and I thank you for it. And just be prepared for this. People say, I already have the book. And I say, "Before you say anything, if you already have the book, this is the most selfish ask of all, would you be willing to buy another copy to gift to somebody? Or someone on your team? And the reason I'm asking is because it's the best way I think, to serve them. And selfishly, it's the best way to get the adv the algorithm moving in the favor of these great authors."

AJ Harper ([36:24](#)):

Transparency.

Mike Michalowicz ([36:25](#)):

Yeah. And 20% of the audience does it. And I also tell people, don't feel obligated. If, if you are getting great knowledge and you don't want to buy a book, that's okay too. We are grateful that you're here. If you do buy a book, we want to shout you out. And then I say, post in the chat and we start shouting on

don't write *that* book!

people's names and, and thanking them for it. We've done this on you. You and I have done one together. It moves books, but it's also in the spirit that the consumer also understands the impact they're having. And so that's one of the greatest things, other things I've done with authors.

AJ Harper ([36:56](#)):

Can you, do you have a sense of, so you at 500 people—

Mike Michalowicz ([36:59](#)):

Yeah. 20% minimally. So you a hundred bucks will move

AJ Harper ([37:03](#)):

From the like a one-hour deal?

Mike Michalowicz ([37:06](#)):

Yeah. In that moment, you'll see your book, you can do a small event. And, and interestingly, the smaller the events have been, sometimes is an even more engaged audience. (For sure.) So there's actually a higher conversion. When you and I did it together, there was a 95% conversion. Yeah. Yeah. There was I think 30 authors on there. Yeah. So you, so you, now you're moving 30 books. Right. Okay.

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

I have some follow up questions. Okay. So you might say that's a lot of work for a hundred books, but you're also getting the list. (Correct.) Then what do you do with the webinar? Does it live on, so for example, is it on a YouTube channel?

Mike Michalowicz ([37:42](#)):

We don't do that. (Okay.) We don't do that because we want, in part it's scarcity, but we want to recognize the people that showed up. The people that don't show up. We said you missed out on a live event. It was only live, always great tips came. Make sure you don't miss next time.

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

Hmm.

Mike Michalowicz ([37:59](#)):

And if you share it, people don't buy the book after the fact. Now you're encouraging don't attend because now I'm not going to feel that I'm not going to be asked to buy the book live. (Got it.) So we, we generally, there may have been occasions, but we generally don't share it after the fact. But the bigger thing is, even today, I don't know right now, if you go check, but *All In* on Amazon, as of our recording day, which is March 6th, 2024, frequently brought together, it shows *All In*, Joey's book and Michaels's book.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper ([38:31](#)):

So that's the other benefit.

Mike Michalowicz ([38:32](#)):

Yeah. So, and, and you go to their page, you see the same thing. It starts this, this ongoing sales and the affinity, the relationship between Michael and Joey and me. Michael, and Joey said, this is the best thing we've done. It's very efficient, it's very effective. Thanks, dude.

AJ Harper ([38:47](#)):

And so, and it's, it's probably fun because you're, they're having a conversation too, so they're not, it's, I'm assuming I didn't see the webinar. So it's not just like present and now you present and now you present. It's more like a, hey!

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

Kind of got almost like a, the old school news show where like, Hey, we got a panel here and...

AJ Harper ([39:06](#)):

The panel, I'm telling you, panel discussions are where it's at. They are. And it's actually easier to get people when you say, let's all have a conversation. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz ([39:17](#)):

It's got to be facilitated the right way.

AJ Harper ([39:19](#)):

Sure. For sure.

Mike Michalowicz ([39:20](#)):

And that's, that's where I've honed the craft for myself. Traditional, not traditional. Many of the panels. I see it's a go down the line with one question everyone answers. It's like a typewriter. The old fashioned typewriter. We have a question of how to run an ad online. Joey, what's your thoughts, Michael? What's your thoughts? Here's my thoughts. <Laugh> Next question. It's the worst way to run it. So how you manage it is I'll say, "Hey Joey, this question came in specifically for you. What's the answer?" And then I keep this kind of high energy going. I'm like, all right, great. We've got to move on. There's 50 more questions that come in. Michael, here's one for you. Oh, here's an easy layup for you, Joey. What is it? Sometimes I'll have both them answer. Yeah. Sometimes they'll jump on each other and, and Michael will say, I got something else to add. I'm like, throw it in quick. We got 30 seconds. And we keep it moving.

AJ Harper ([40:10](#)):

Oh, interesting. Okay.

don't write *that* book!

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

So, oh, ouch. I just smashed my finger. So tons of, of good content. Another great collaboration. Live events. I, I've been talking a lot about Don Miller recently, because that's again, probably one of my strongest relationships. I've been supporting him, he's been supporting me. He said, "Hey, can you come down to my event? You can be a guest. And then I'll, I'll throw you on stage too." So I'm sitting in the audience, he's got a thousand people there for Story Brand. This is many years back pre-COVID. And I'm attend the event, had me as a guest for free. And then halfway through the event, live on stage, say, Hey Mike, come on up. You got 15 minutes. We've got to hear about *Profit First*. And Wow. Wow. What a powerful mechanism. Again, he's, it's the same idea of him delivering value to his members that they wouldn't have a normal access to. So, he gets appreciation points for that, so to speak. And gave me exposure. So that's another.

AJ Harper ([41:08](#)):

So you're going to be focused on webinars and live events. Anything else?

Mike Michalowicz ([41:12](#)):

Book content is fantastic. So we've done this, we've interviewed other authors. !! we've referenced their books in our books we've written together. I can't think of a single book, let alone chapter that goes without highlighting or featuring someone else's book that brings more relevance to that topic.

AJ Harper ([41:31](#)):

What are you going to do differently with that? Anything?

Mike Michalowicz ([41:32](#)):

No, not yet. Not that I've thought of, like kind of new. No, but I'll tell you the one thing that I'm leaning into is not the author collaboration alone. It's now the micro-community influencers. There's a group of 400 people and it's a Christian business group. I'm thinking of a group specifically. And Aaron Walker, he goes by Big A, runs that group. My relationship with him, the selfish win for myself is if I'm serving his community, 400 books will be purchased by his community. And those people are sometimes steppingstones for other authors to get to the really big groups. And I'm like, Hmm. I don't know if there's, if this steppingstone is a right approach, let me just cater to this community. because These, these massive communities, well, they have huge followings seem to have a very surface level influence where Big A?

Mike Michalowicz ([42:32](#)):

That group loves him and appreciates him. Yeah. (Makes sense.)A couple other ways to collaborate on Amazon. You can leverage the engine, you can do it with other platforms. But Joey and Michael, and I've done it with Alan Dibb, actually Alan Dibb is a good example. He wrote the book, *One Page Marketing Plan*. !! he has a brand new book coming out. I'm going to promote his new book. I'm going to be sending people to his Amazon page. And it doesn't sound like collaboration, but when I do, I guarantee more get different books will sell. I guarantee it. It just happens. And I won't even mention *Get Different*.

don't write *that* book!

I'll say I love marketing. This is a book that you've got to read and it triggers it. What will happen likely is when I have my next book out, Alan will mention mine. Yeah. That's the, that's the old school. (Yeah, that's the old school.)

Mike Michalowicz ([43:22](#)):

Yeah. It's old school. It, it's implied, I guess I guess it's implied quid pro quo. But there's something different to it. It's just like, Hey man, I got a new book coming out. Just want to give you a heads up. If you want to support it, great. If not, don't. It's not like, Hey, I promoted your last two books. Do this for me. It's less transactional. Yeah. You know? Yeah. And authors get in front of other authors. Just last night I had a call with, I'm so embarrassed to forgot his name. Scott. He's the author of the *Barefoot Investor*, 4 million books sold. (Wow.) In Australia. In Australia, which has a population of 35 million people. So contextually us has 350, it's 10 times smaller. That's 40 million books, US, just to give context, Alan Dibb connected me with him. He's coming up now. Collaboration. I said, "Hey man thanks for the connection. I want to bring you to our live event. Come on up." He's like, yeah. He's like, who's going to, who's going to be there? I'm like, well, myself. He's like, well, no, but who of significance will be there? And I started rattling off some of the folks. He's like, my God, I cannot miss this. And he's flying up from Australia to hang out together. So authors connect you with other authors.

AJ Harper ([44:32](#)):

For sure.

Mike Michalowicz ([44:32](#)):

Other thoughts you have? I know Publisher's Marketplace you're familiar with far more than I am.

AJ Harper ([44:39](#)):

Well, no. It's just there's, you know, if you might not, you might not, you might be starting at the very base of this. So how do you find your people? Look at books that are so often sold on your topic. Look at bestseller lists for your genre. Obviously you have the books that you love. Ask your community for the books on your topic that authors they love on their topic. You can look at Publisher's Marketplace if, and see what are the books coming out on your topic. If you're just starting from base level of, I don't even know who my people are, I don't even know who to talk to, which is, you know, often the case. You don't want to be that author though, by the way. If we can maybe close on that. You don't want to be that author that doesn't read your genre, you know? Yeah. Like, you, you need, you, you want to read it, you want to understand it, you want to be able to talk about it. Even if you never meet those people, you don't want to be that author that only talks about and knows about your book and can't speak to the, the shelf you live on. So read the shelf that you live on.

Mike Michalowicz ([45:43](#)):

I, I do want to add one last tip because this has been a, a backdoor way to make some connections, is your own readers may actually know other authors. So on occasion, I've reached out to my readership and say, Hey, I'm looking to be connected with other authors in my space, and I don't think I know

don't write *that* book!

everybody. Do you know someone, would you be willing to make an introduction if it serves you? And I've been connected with other authors, that way specifically. Yeah. So your own readership. It's kind of like when you own a business, your own customers can actually sometimes be your best employees. You know, they, they get you so well, they could become part of your company. Your own readers can become your best connectors.

AJ Harper ([46:25](#)):

For sure.

Mike Michalowicz ([46:26](#)):

One last thing. There's a note here about literary citizenship,

AJ Harper ([46:30](#)):

Which we just talked about.

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

Yep. That's a good point. So you, it's being integral and it's about not taking advantage of other people. I just wanted to add and, and reiterate the concept of currency in that there is a cost that occurs or a value to be gained every time a connection's made. And I think it's, it's as long as we lean into are we being of service to our community? Are people coming out with a gain? How are they winning? If, if we ask ourselves in that format, I think it's a much better, it'll facilitate literary citizenship far better than putting expectations upon other people. So just wanted to drive that home.

AJ Harper ([47:15](#)):

Be of service.

Mike Michalowicz ([47:16](#)):

Be of service, man. Be of service. Okay. We hope you enjoyed this episode today. I do want to remind you that we do have a website where we have free materials that we've accumulated for you. AJ's workshop Top Three Book Workshop is amazing. And there's some content on the website that you can get that will help you learn some of the insider access to that workshop. Plus, she has a great book out there called *Write a Must-Read*. You can go to [dwtb podcast.com](#). Don't write that book [dwtb podcast.com](#) to get all those free materials. We'd love to hear from you too. You can access it through us, through that site. And finally, as a reminder, the you have a choice of the book that you're going to write. And we don't want, you, want you, we don't want you writing that book, if you know what I mean. We want you writing this one.