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Episode 25:

Which Book Should I Write?

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](#)):

You are in for such a good episode today. AJ called it the Wing It/Sing It episode.

AJ Harper ([00:22](#)):

I didn't call it that. I said, "Is this a book or not?"

Mike Michalowicz ([00:25](#)):

No, you did.. But then you said Wing It/Sing It because we have no script.

AJ Harper ([00:28](#)):

Oh yeah. Well, okay.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:30](#)):

So now you know that's to do a big reveal and say,

AJ Harper ([00:33](#)):

I'm sorry, I'm always pulling the air out of your excitement. <Laugh> I'm sorry.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:38](#)):

Like having a monster truck.

AJ Harper ([00:40](#)):

Personal killjoy.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:41](#)):

My visualization is like a little Tonka toy or matchbox truck with monster tires that a big truck would have. And it used to go up with a, with a needle.

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AJ Harper ([00:52](#)):

And smash it.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:52](#)):

Smash it. That's AJ Harper <laugh>. She's a great friend. And I, I've got to tell you, we were just talking about some private stuff that we won't share on air, but that was such a funny story. Basically, AJ's challenge of turning a light on when you're in a bed that adjusts automatically.

AJ Harper ([01:09](#)):

Yeah.

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

Do you remember the beds back from the seventies where you put a quarter in it, it would vibrate. I do. What was the intention of that? Honestly? Was that a sleep aid or was that a sexual aid?

AJ Harper ([01:20](#)):

Well, seeing it as I was a child, I really can't speak to that. <laugh>

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

I don't mean from experience. I mean, I just want you to opine.

AJ Harper ([01:26](#)):

I don't, I don't, I don't. How would I know? I don't know. I feel like most of the beds from the seventies were about sex. Think about it. Heart shape.

Mike Michalowicz ([01:35](#)):

Yep. Ugh.

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

Waterbed. (Ugh.) Which is the worst thing ever. And now you're talking about the whole vibrating machine bed.

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

Do you want to know the most disgusting sex furniture from the—

AJ Harper ([01:49](#)):

Sex furniture? Sex furniture?

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

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Sex furniture in the Seventies.

AJ Harper ([01:50](#)):

That's a good band name. <Laugh>

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

Sex furniture. It is <laugh>. It was, there was that resort in Pennsylvania in the Poconos, Mount Airy Lodge.

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

Well, I didn't grow up here, but—

Mike Michalowicz ([02:00](#)):

Oh, well it was for the East coast. It was, it was a famous romantic getaway lodge. Because they'd run the local commercials. And it would end with these champagne glass bathtubs. (Oh yeah.) You've seen those, right? (Yeah.) And my wife and I have talked about that. They're clear. It's like a champagne glass. Could you imagine your bare smashed up against that?

AJ Harper ([02:20](#)):

How do you get out?

Mike Michalowicz ([02:20](#)):

How do you get in? Yeah, exactly. How do you get out? But what if someone walks in the room like you're, you order room service, and they see these two bare asses, this kind of squeezed, oh, it looks like, it looks like horror.

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

This is a really bad start to this show. Yeah. And this is what happens when you wing and sing.

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

Alright, so that's us. Let's get right into it, if that's cool with you.

AJ Harper ([02:38](#)):

Yes. But we, the wing and singing part is, we don't have an outline for this one.

Mike Michalowicz ([02:42](#)):

Correct. But the topic is so critical and why you said this might be of interest is because it's a struggle that you're facing right now. Yeah. And our listeners are really engaged in our episodes around struggle, perhaps because that's what our listeners are facing too.

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AJ Harper ([02:57](#)):

Maybe they just like to hear us struggle. <Laugh>

Mike Michalowicz ([03:00](#)):

<Laugh>. So what's going on?

AJ Harper ([03:02](#)):

What's going on? So, you know, actually it mirrors yours. I think actually we're simpatico right now about it. You think this is the book idea? This is the next book. Yeah. And then you realize, oh, but maybe it's this other book and maybe it's, oh wait, maybe it's this other book. For me, I'm, I've been writing my second book. I did all my due diligence. I did all my, I'm, I'm ready to go with it. I tested all the concepts. I consulted my community, did everything I tell my authors to do, had them vote on which book they wanted next. And I've been writing it. But there's this, there's this other book that I also want to write, actually two more books that I actually want to write. I've talked about this a little bit in my newsletter and so forth. And it comes, comes down to sometimes is it a book or not?

AJ Harper ([03:56](#)):

You know? (Mm-Hmm.) I think we think all of these are book ideas, but maybe they're not. Maybe they're, say, a white paper or a PDF or a class or a speech that doesn't turn into a book. (Mm-Hmm.) And it reminded me of when I was first starting out as a playwright, one of the lessons I got that really stayed with me was to ask yourself, when you're sitting down to write a play, is this a play? And at first I thought, well, I'm in a playwriting class. Of course this is a play. But the point of the teacher was saying, it might be a book, it might be a screenplay. Because a play has specific requirements

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

And therefore a book has specific requirements.

AJ Harper ([04:41](#)):

Exactly. And the, I think a book has not, this is the complicated part. Not just specific requirements in terms of content and what's delivered, but also, is this really something that you want to spend several years getting ready and then several years marketing?

Mike Michalowicz ([04:58](#)):

Yeah. Do you want to devote yourself to it? (Yeah.) Are you willing to share what the prior book that you were working on was and what the new concept may be? .

AJ Harper ([05:07](#)):

So yeah. So my first book is *Write a Must-Read*. And when I initially did the outline for that, I had a chapter called Test Drive Your Content. And this is a program that I created. It's multi-video series that teaches people how to make sure their content works for readers. So really specifically do the processes, systems, frameworks. Does your whole thing you teach actually deliver what's promised? But then also

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to test the content to see where the bumps, where do people give up? What are their challenges? How could you change the way you deliver that content? And then as a result, also get, this is what I love about it. In that process, you are building advanced demand for the book. Because with the people who are participating in the test drive, and this best part, you are getting anecdotes, stories, case studies, naturally through the process. So I created a little video course, which is fantastic. I love it. And I thought, oh, let me put this in my book, *Write a Must-Read*. But then I yanked it because it just felt like its own thing. Yes. And too much for the reader. Yep. Just way too much for the reader. I

Mike Michalowicz ([06:29](#)):

Want to emphasize that point is, what I found is killing the darlings or, or removing stuff that's highly important, but not relevant to that book is one of the most important things to do because it becomes a distraction. It becomes burdensome. And that's what it sounds like you did.

AJ Harper ([06:46](#)):

I did, I, I mean, I wrote the whole thing, and then we yanked it in the developmental edit. Well, actually in the substantive edit, we just yanked it.

Mike Michalowicz ([06:53](#)):

You, you remember Paul Schneider? He's the owner

AJ Harper ([06:55](#)):

Head top leatherwork.

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

Yeah. I was just talking to him a couple weeks ago. I love him. And I, I've lost regular contact with him. But we're, you know, you pick up where you left off type of situation. Yeah. And one thing he did with his leather products, and what I'm hearing, you're, you're doing with your book with this kind of co-creation almost, that's not the right word, but Paul would have a sheath idea. He made sheaths for knives. They, they're called bush crafts. These are bush crafters people that go out in the woods for the weekend. That's their joy. And he would go out to his community of consumers, past consumers and say, I have a new idea, but it's not done yet. What's your input? So people say, oh, I wish it had a flint on it. I wish the design was more like this. And this co-creation came out of it when he ultimately brought to market. Maybe six months later, the people that participated in the creation of it were inherently now über fans buying a unit for themselves instantly but buying some for their friends and then going on like YouTube and stuff and saying, Hey man, I co-created this, this product. Do, do you notice? Does that happen when a reader goes through this content considerations, gives feedback, test drive, test drive. Yeah. Okay. That's good. And gives feedback on the test drive. Do they feel that they're part of the development? They feel in ownership?

AJ Harper ([08:11](#)):

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I think so. Yeah. I mean, the best thing about the test drive is there's many benefits to it, but, but you need to do it in a really specific way that's geared for the book. (Right.) So it's not just, oh, I, you know, you might be thinking right now, if you're listening to this, oh, that's a beta, that's a beta class. That's a beta program. Yes. And there's a way that you structure it so that you can track how is this landing? And then there's a way that you take that data and use it to modify what you put in your book. So a test drive is really, really helpful. And then, you know, this is, I call it a seven-for in my video. You know, like a two-for? <Laugh>

Mike Michalowicz ([08:51](#)):

Yeah.

AJ Harper ([08:52](#)):

Because there's so many cool aspects and benefits of doing it. Okay. Yeah. Is you get so many rewards if you do it the right way. But there was one that I didn't put in. It's really an eight-for.

Mike Michalowicz ([09:04](#)):

Oh.

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

And that is that feeling you have of who's going to read this book? Who cares? Who am I to write it? It gets quieter when you do a test drive because now you know, you have created your own evidence that it works. Mm. And so you can take that confidence forward so you can finish the dang thing. So it's actually an eight fur. So that's one book. So I thought, okay, I think maybe I need to do a whole book on this to break down all those eight components.

Mike Michalowicz ([09:39](#)):

And I just want to make sure I'm clear. Did when you were doing it for *Write a Must-Read* that chapter? Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Did you have people do the test drive?

AJ Harper ([09:48](#)):

Oh, I had already had people doing test drives

Mike Michalowicz ([09:51](#)):

And, and that content. How was it received?

AJ Harper ([09:54](#)):

People love that. Okay. Yeah. Okay. Absolutely. I teach a live class about it, but there's also the Evergreen video series anyone can do anytime. And, but I wanted to do a book because I could give elements from the live class I teach where I give people scripts and ideas and make it easier. You know, I'm all about, let's make this super doable. That's my jam. So, okay. That's one book. Then there's this book that's truly on my heart.

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Mike Michalowicz ([10:24](#)):

<Laugh> Oh.

AJ Harper ([10:25](#)):

Look, I could take my own advice. Yeah. I, this is usually when I'm talking to people who might want to join my workshop, and then they say, well, there's this book I'm going to do that's super practical, and I should probably do it.

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

Yeah. But.

AJ Harper ([10:36](#)):

And then there's this other book on my heart. And you like, your voice changes. (Yes.) And then, yeah. That's the one you should write.

Mike Michalowicz ([10:43](#)):

Yep. Well, what's on your heart?

AJ Harper ([10:44](#)):

So, and I'm actually my, my students and people in my community will probably, if they're listening, they're, they already know what I'm going to say. As a former ghost writer of self-help books, you can be sure. I did not want to write anything that could even be considered remotely self-help <laugh>. Right. And I think that it falls into that category.

Mike Michalowicz ([11:08](#)):

Oh my, this is the big reveal. So what specifically is it?

AJ Harper ([11:12](#)):

I feel like most of my job since I started teaching, even when I was a ghost, it was the same when I was a ghost, but especially since I started teaching, most of my job is getting people not to quit. Most of my job is getting people to stay in the game. You know, in from the time they have the idea all the way to after it's published, so that they don't give up on selling it. And 20 years in publishing and many more years as a writer before that, that truly is the distinguishing factor between those people who are successful as a writer and those who are not in its perseverance. Hmm. But most people can't stay in it due to many complicated factors, which are honestly centered around mindset. And I can't stand it because <laugh>, I don't want to write about mindset. But here's the thing that it's, I really don't, I don't even know how much I've written about mindset as it goes.

Mike Michalowicz ([12:09](#)):

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You don't want to intellectually, but your heart's calling you to do it.

AJ Harper ([12:11](#)):

But I don't even think mindset's the right term. I see. I maybe need to come up with something else, because it's not about, oh, let's think differently about, you know, let's tell ourselves we're great at this. Let's tell ourselves talent doesn't matter. Let's, we can do it. Yeah. It's none of that nonsense.

Mike Michalowicz ([12:29](#)):

I, I remember you saying once to an author, I was attending a workshop and they said, I'm hitting writer's block. And I don't know if you said there's no such thing.

AJ Harper ([12:38](#)):

There is no such thing.

Mike Michalowicz ([12:39](#)):

Maybe that was the word you said, but you're like, just write a word. Just get anything done today. Even a, a small piece. Even if you only write a hundred words, say, or 50 words today.

AJ Harper ([12:48](#)):

Yes. Mm-Hmm.

Mike Michalowicz ([12:49](#)):

<Affirmative>. And it's that momentum. Does, does that speak to that? Is, is this keep going it to it-ness?

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

No, it's so deep. This is a deeper thing. Okay. I think that we can try to will ourselves to finish and stay in the game and be the kind of author we really want to be and rise to the occasion and market the heck out of our stuff and all that. But honestly, we are having to overcome so much misinformation and disinformation. We already have an inner critic troll that's thanks to our parents, or our English teacher or our friends or whatever. But actually, what's really, really, really the problem is everybody has this skewed view. Not everybody. Most people have this skewed view of what is a reasonable expectation of themselves, whether it's creatively or in terms of book sales. (Mm-Hmm.) Most people don't really understand the industry. Most people have bad information. (Yeah.) Whether that was given to them intentionally for that person's personal gain or just because out of ignorance. But here's the thing, it feeds the troll.

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

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Yeah. It totally does.

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

So now all that misinformation and disinformation is evidence for your troll to say, "See?" Right? And so when I say mindset, I actually mean, did you know, like, let's get you some accurate information here and reframe your idea about what authorship is, what publishing is, time, like all this nitty-gritty stuff

that maybe on the face of it seems boring, but actually can kill that troll that day. Because they come, they keep coming back. But it's, I feel that if all of this misinformation and disinformation and unrealistic expectations and comparison and all of this stuff is just, they're all lies. (Yeah.) And you're letting lies kill the dream. So that's what I'm talking about. That's the book on my heart is to say, "Okay, let's, this is how we stay in it." And it's also about creative process, because creative, the thing that's mystifying to people when they're starting out is how is this ever going to work out? <laugh>

AJ Harper ([15:18](#)):

And so I want to write about that. This is how you can know how it's going to work out. (Mm-Hmm.) And what's the difference between craft and talent and just all this stuff so that people feel like, "Oh, I could actually do this. And I could actually realize this dream instead of dumbing down the dream." It's probably not the right term. It's probably another word I shouldn't be using. But you know how it happens. You've seen it with authors Right. And want to write a book almost immediately. They pull themselves back. Oh, I could never do that. Yeah. If they make it so far to, okay, I am going to start, then someone tells them something. Right? That's incorrect information. Or just trying to be helpful maybe. And then they pull back, "Oh wait, I'm not going to go for a deal. Oh, I really probably won't sell any. Oh, I'm not going to sell anything. Oh, I just need to get it out. Oh, okay." So pretty soon now, you've taken this big dream you had, and you've modified it to what you think is acceptable for you or possible for you based on incorrect information. And then the whole thing ends up being so dissatisfying that you never want to do it again.

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

So you're doing what's called micro expressions. This is in body language. There's a little, we can't help. It's subconscious, but a little bit of a smile. So I was reading a book about how to see where someone's interest really lie if they're telling the truth if they're not, or whatever. And you look for micro expressions in the eyes and the mouth. And when you're talking about this book, you can see these micro smiles popping out and, and your energy's elevated. So I know you're speaking from your heart. I know. Have you heard of, I'm sure you have. There's a behavioral theory called confirmation bias. (Yeah, of course.) So Krista and I were flying back. Oh, dude, we saw U2 in concert. Oh, I forgot

AJ Harper ([17:13](#)):

Oh, I forgot to ask you!

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

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Holy cow. It's worth doing.

AJ Harper ([17:16](#)):

I'm going.

Mike Michalowicz ([17:19](#)):

Was worth, well, it was the final concert there. Oh. But there's going to be other bands. Like I think The Grateful Dead with John Mayer is going there next. It was so immersive. It was kind of like—

AJ Harper ([17:29](#)):

In the Sphere?

Mike Michalowicz ([17:30](#)):

In the Sphere. It was in the Sphere. And it was kind of like an acid trip. Not saying I know what an acid trip's like or not, but it kind of was. And the, the music was remarkable. I, I'm a U2 fan, like a, you know, like a, a distant fan. Like, I don't know their, their B sides. I knew almost every single song. And the performance was amazing.

AJ Harper ([17:52](#)):

Did they play "Where the Streets (have no name)?" That is my all-time fave.

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

Their hits. Hits. Because I'm the same. They didn't do "Pride," which I was surprised. Oh. But they did so many hits. "One" of course. And, but they, they ended not they ended, but the encore included "Where the Streets (have no name)", and people lost their gorge. Yeah. Go.

AJ Harper ([18:10](#)):

It's a great song.

Mike Michalowicz ([18:11](#)):

So, confirmation bias. So we're returning from this trip and confirmation bias the concept is whatever we believe to be true, we will see it as evidence in the environment around us. Even though there's, there's evidence of anything. (Mm-Hmm.) We will see what we expect to see or want to see, affirming a belief we have and then causing it to go further. While we, we we're at the airport and there's a, where we end up sitting, there's a TV playing next to us, and it's a news station. It was atrocious. The, the newscasters are rolling their eyes. They're asking questions to guests and roll their eyes like it's so biased. But for a

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certain community, it was the, the biggest affirmation of your belief. It just, it comes join at home. And I think, think I actually, I know every news station is this way.

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

Whatever your belief is, there is a news station as an example that will affirm what you believe to be true. And you continue this momentum. (Yeah.) Well, with social media now, it's gotten even further on steroids. I, I clicked on something about books. I was just curious about, you know, books. And it was, you know, "Write a book in 30 days." We, we lambast this stuff. I clicked on it. because I was curious

what the message was. And it, it was grotesque in my opinion. And now all I get is write a book in 30 days. 30 days, 30. All these ads, the social media leans so much into our confirmation bias that the second we make a decision or take an action, that is a belief we have, it just feeds us only that so quickly. And that's, that's feeding the troll.

AJ Harper ([19:40](#)):

Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz ([19:41](#)):

And I'm not surprised that many authors or aspiring authors believe you can write an extraordinary book in 30 days. And then they'll say, here's all the evidence that, that supports it. Here's all the, the ads that support it. Here's all the other authors who've done it. And I think that's so dangerous.

AJ Harper ([19:59](#)):

It's dangerous because I think I, no, I don't think this, I believe, and I believe based on evidence, 20 years in publishing almost, and 33 years as a professional writer, I believe that if you get the idea that you have the ability to write it... Now, you might need to learn some craft. You might have to take a class, you might have to take several classes. It might take you longer than you think, but it's yours. (Mm-Hmm.) And, but we kill it. We just kill it. And honestly, short, changing yourself by writing a book in a couple weeks and then putting it out, I realized maybe there's an exception. Okay?

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

Of course that happens.

AJ Harper ([20:40](#)):

There always is. But this is the default is it's never going to be a fully formed idea in 30 days that is truly useful to readers. So also, you're short changing your own genius because ideas take time to develop. And I think what's so, anyway, this book that's on my heart. (Yeah.) Is I just think I want a book that a person could open and get Right. You know, just get their head right back in the game. Just get their head right back in the game. Because it's not a straight line. It's this, you know, there's this line from an Indigo Girls song that I love. I wanted... x

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

“Galileo”? That's the only song I know by them.

AJ Harper ([21:22](#)):

Of course that's the only song you know by them. You know what, I'm going to make you come with me.

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

I'll go to a concert with you

AJ Harper ([21:28](#)):

To an Indigo Girls concert.

Mike Michalowicz ([21:29](#)):

Me, you and Polly.

AJ Harper ([21:30](#)):

Listen, all we do is... Everyone there knows every word to every song. (Oh gosh.) And sings the whole thing.

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

I want to go front row and—

AJ Harper ([21:38](#)):

Just come with all of the lesbians. <laugh>

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

They'd be so awesome. I'd love their music. They're amazing performers.

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

They're brilliant. Yeah, they're brilliant. But they have a line. Okay. I'm, I'm do, I'm calling you. In fact, there's probably the most lesbianic thing happening here on the East coast, which is Indigo Girls with Melissa Ethridge. <laugh>

Mike Michalowicz ([21:57](#)):

I saw her perform. Holy cow.

AJ Harper ([22:00](#)):

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Oh, she can rock it.

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

I didn't know she plays guitar, drums, I mean Oh yeah. Goes on and on.

AJ Harper ([22:04](#)):

Okay. Digress. We're talking about way too many concerts. Yep. I do want to say that that line is indicative of publishing. The line is "You'll never fly as the crow flies/Get used to a country road."

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

Oh, that is great.

AJ Harper ([22:21](#)):

I know I wanted to put it in my book, but then I didn't have time to ask them permission.

Mike Michalowicz ([22:25](#)):

Oh, that is such a great line.

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

Yeah. So I, I want to, I want to create, that's the book on my heart, which is Let's, I want a book that will help you stay in it. I want a book that will help you stay in it. (Okay.) So that's two.

Mike Michalowicz ([22:40](#)):

Yeah. You, that's a good title. Keeping track. Yeah. Yeah. So yeah. So we have one that's basically co-development. I'm not going to, that's not the right word, but

AJ Harper ([22:49](#)):

It's Test Drive Your Content.

Mike Michalowicz ([22:50](#)):

Drive, test drive. Then you have one that is how do you stay on your game? How do you stay engaged with your own books?

AJ Harper ([22:56](#)):

Yeah. It's more of an emotional, creative process mindset thing. Your

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Mike Michalowicz ([22:59](#)):

Heart's with that one. Is there a third one now?

AJ Harper ([23:01](#)):

Yeah. Oh, and I already have the outline for this, the keynote for this.

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

Oh. You know that before you tell me what it is. The challenge is, this one sounds like it's kind of close to the finish line.

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

It's not. Oh, okay. It's not because I haven't tested to see if my concept works.

Mike Michalowicz ([23:19](#)):

Oh, what's the book?

AJ Harper ([23:21](#)):

So, okay. It's actually tied to all these things. You know, me, I've never been the marketing person. I really, I just, my eyes glaze over. <laugh> I wish we were back in the day where we authors could just be in their office and then the editor would come visit them. Right. And, and it was the same editor they had for 35 years. And someone marketed it. It, but it, we don't, we live in social media time. And this is just the reality of life. But I'm also not the person who really cares about money. I don't, I don't get any ego boost from how many books are sold. So the irony here, okay. But I am, I see that authors, again, due to misinformation and disinformation are not selling as many books as they could. And then they rationalize that. That's not the reason why they're in it to begin with.

AJ Harper ([24:15](#)):

And they say something maybe altruistic. "I just want to help one person." I hear that all the time. That's great. It's admirable. But you could help more if you actually sold it. You could help more if you actually sold it. And then this other side of the industry, which is you can be a six-figure author, but you won't make it from royalties. You'll make it from the keynotes, the programs, client lead gen. And of course, again, you won't make more of that if you actually sell the book. (Correct.) Like this is, this don't make these compromises. (Correct.) So I know you are down with me on this, but the problem is authors do not have a clear idea about how to figure out a sales goal. They don't have...and I figured out how to come up with a sales goal specifically for people who are writing prescriptive nonfiction.

AJ Harper ([25:11](#)):

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So this wouldn't really work as well for fiction, but maybe I could think of maybe a way. But it's primarily for folks who are writing books that help people change some aspect of something. And I came up with a formula for myself to come up with a sales goal for myself, and then a system to go ahead and sell it. And then a way to counteract the way that we, not counteract, a way to supplement the way we currently sell books. We sell books now focus mostly on discoverability. So in publishing we talk about findability and discoverability. Findability is all your metadata. Is that all consistent? So if somebody heard about a book, they could easily grab it. You know, discoverability is, will they stumble on it? Are they going to find it on a bookstore, bookstore table, a book recommendation from a friend on Amazon in a Google search?

AJ Harper ([26:07](#)):

Like, what's, what's the discoverability? We want to raise that discoverability. But it's like we scatter seeds to the wind. (Yeah. <laugh> We and blow it back in your own face.) We just keep scattering the

seeds. And that's launch. Right. Woo. Everything, everybody. (Yes.) Everybody talk about my book. I need more people talking about my book. And then, I don't know, where do they land? There's no, it's all you're doing is spreading seeds to your circles and concentric circles. Yes. You are not actively applying strategy to get outside of those circles in a meaningful way. You just keep throwing the seeds. (Yes.) And you don't know what's happening or if it works. So I came up with a solution.

Mike Michalowicz ([26:53](#)):

Okay.

AJ Harper ([26:54](#)):

I'm, I have to test it, but I wrote have the whole outline for this book. I wrote a keynote for this book, and it's tentatively titled, Please Sell Your Book. (<laugh>) That's not going to be the times that I'm sure a publisher will never let me keep. I love it. Maybe they'll, let me keep it.

Mike Michalowicz ([27:11](#)):

I think it's genius.

AJ Harper ([27:12](#)):

<Laugh>, Because that's what I feel like I say all the time. Please sell your book. Yeah. But I've, I think I've come up with some, I really think I'm onto something.

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

Are you willing to share the formula? Is it simple? And, and is that too confidential?

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

No, at this point it is confidential. Okay. Just because I want to test it.

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Mike Michalowicz ([27:29](#)):

Okay. But you but you have a system to find the exact number.

AJ Harper ([27:32](#)):

Yep, I do.

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

And is it taking consideration, you're a first time author. (Yes.) You're okay. Does take consideration your celebrity status? (Yes.) Yes. Okay. And all these different elements. Yes. And says, this is where you should land. (Yes.)

AJ Harper ([27:46](#)):

That's...

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

It's so great. The specificity. I love it.

AJ Harper ([27:49](#)):

Yes. And it's also rooted in more meaningful, important data than that. So I know I'm being cagey about it, and I'm actually usually not. But there's another thing about when you're writing, when you're considering books, not saying too, too much because then you sort of lose the fire yourself. Yeah. And I'm like that when I wrote fiction, if I knew the ending or I wrote a play and I already knew how it ended, I just, I don't care. I'm not going to write it. (Yeah.) So for me, I have to have some, I have to keep some ideas. I can't talk about them too much. So that's the most I can talk about it. That's the third book.

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

Okay. So you're, you're in a really interesting situation.

AJ Harper ([28:34](#)):

I'm in a tight spot.

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

You got, yeah, you got three great books, but now you're in the struggle and are you feeling the oscillation? Like, I should do this. And you get some energy and it fades. And I should do that. That's what I experience.

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AJ Harper ([28:44](#)):

I know you, I know you do.

Mike Michalowicz ([28:45](#)):

<Laugh> Like, just so our listeners know, I'll call you and say, "Okay, I got it. We're doing the personal finance book, we're going all in on this. There's demand for it, "and I'll start working. I'm like, yes. Yes. And all of a sudden, I, I don't know if it's you and your needle into my monster wheel truck <laugh>, but I go, I'm like, no, no, no. Oh, it's got to be this.

AJ Harper ([29:05](#)):

It's like, what do you think? I'm like, slashing your titers in the middle of the night.

Mike Michalowicz ([29:08](#)):

While I'm sleeping. It's bizarre because I wake up in the morning, what did, how did AJ do this? How did that happen? So, but then I get very frustrated myself because now I'm like, oh, it should be personal finance. Oh no, no. It should be the *Profit First* workbook. No, no, no, no, no. It should be a whole new book in a different category. And now I feel stuck and I'm almost embarrassed.

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

But I mean, the answer is always, what does your reader need next? (Correct.) The answer is always that.

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

Well, is it, but you, you just said earlier, but what's on your heart?

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

Yeah. But the thing is, I, you know, I think my, this is where it, this is where "what does your reader need next?" becomes complicated. Yeah. Because I actually think my reader needs all of those books next. That's, that's when you start waffling around.

Mike Michalowicz ([29:53](#)):

But the one that's most in your heart, does that then make sense?

AJ Harper ([29:58](#)):

Well, okay, let's talk strategy now. So here's where we get into just the business of things. (Yeah.) As I was driving in today, I thought, you know, I'm so grateful someone gave me some universe, whatever you believe, my creator decided, I would also get some good old common sense.

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Mike Michalowicz ([30:13](#)):

Yeah.

AJ Harper ([30:14](#)):

Because I don't know, honestly, I don't know if I'd still be writing because, you know, there's, there's a lot of stereotypes about us writers and our ability to manage our finances. (Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.) You know, and have business strategy.

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

A creative, you're like an artist.

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

Thank, thank goodness I got a little dose of that. Yeah. I was thinking when I came in. Because then there's the strategy. Alright, test drive. That's the book I've been writing. I'll be done with it by the end of April if I keep going. First draft. Anyway, I can sell that. (Yeah.) The book on staying in the game. The sort of mindset. Yeah. Oh, I hate that term. I need to build a bigger audience for that. Because that's any writer.

Mike Michalowicz ([30:56](#)):

Yeah.

AJ Harper ([30:57](#)):

I don't have a big enough audience for that. So, and at least I don't think I do. I think I need to build a larger pool. I have a plan for that. But that might take a couple years. The other one, I just need to test the concept and then I could get it out. So there's also, so what do your readers need next? But then also you do need to think about strategy,

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

You know? Yeah, for sure. You right. It has to be sustainable. Let me give you a thought when you said mindset and you said each time, now you're like, Ugh, that's icky. I would say that has to be the book then. Because the ickiness is not because that term is icky. It's because the original intent has been bastardized by others who've made mindset a form of manipulation. I believe, this is my choice, that there is a battle, if you will, between good and bad intention. I don't think there's such thing as really bad people. There are. But in the author space, there's people with good intention and there's people with not bad intention for the readers, but self-focused.

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

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They're mostly self-focused. Yeah.

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

Yeah. So there's, there's of service and there is the opposite. I believe the mindset space, the self-help space has gone into this manipulative self-serving space for the creators of that content. And what I see is the good people yourself. I just had an author event Dorie Clark hosted down in Miami.

AJ Harper ([32:38](#)):

I still haven't met her.

Mike Michalowicz ([32:39](#)):

You haven't met Dorie Clark?

AJ Harper ([32:40](#)):

I know. We, we know ev... We have so many people in common.

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

What the fudge All right.

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

I need to meet Dorie Clark.

Mike Michalowicz ([32:46](#)):

Yeah, you got to meet Dorie Clark. Actually, I got, I got an idea that popped in my mind if you're interested, if you're interested. So Bob mention off air. So I was with Dorie Clark, this guy Mitch Joel, who is just a fascinating guy. He really is immersed in what the author journey. He's an author himself, but he really knows all other authors that he's a study of, of other authors from what makes work or not. And another author there who said, I don't know his name was Steve. I don't want to say his last name. He says, I don't, I don't know if I if I'm in for this anymore because, because there's so many, there's so much malfeasance out there. He goes, I, I don't want to be amongst that group. And I pull him aside and got a little choked up and angry at the same time. I said, dude, I, I can't have another good guy back out of the fight. We, we can't do this alone. No. And I said, our job is not to defeat people with ill intent or self-serving. Our goal is to elbow them out. Mindset has become bastardized and manipulated to be self-serving for those authors. And I think you the good guy, that's New Jersey talk. The good person needs to step up and elbow them out. The good needs to be more successful, not by beating them, but by recapturing that term. That's my call to arms for you.

AJ Harper ([34:07](#)):

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Thank you. You know, I don't really have a mind. I mean, I, I think I'm the, my, my big issue with the self-help industry having, and you know, I wrote a lot of them, so I was part of the machine, so I have to just own up to that. But my big issue with all of that was it just felt like it was all rooted in there's something wrong with you that you have to fix. And I have the opposite view. And I'm think I see authors struggle so much with the head game. Yeah. That it's made up of nonsense. And they take it as the holy grail truth. And I just want, I just want to kick their trolls in the teeth. But I don't think they've done anything wrong. I just think that they've been misinformed.

Mike Michalowicz ([34:50](#)):

The fact that you've been inside the machine, you've got to speak from it. There's a guy, Miles Taylor, who was in the prior administration who shared his perspective from inside that machine and, and gave an insight to the people who want to consume that of a perspective. You've been inside the machine. You can give a perspective that that needs to be aired. And this concept of, you know, there's something wrong with you. You need to be fixed. Your concept, there's something right with you. You need to exploit it, you need to, you know,

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

Maybe, maybe I would be okay with it if I didn't have a program or a class or anything related to it. If I just put the book out into the world and I didn't monetize it at all, because I think I could maybe do that, then, yeah. I don't want to monetize it. I just want it to be a book people can get, check it out from the library if you want to, whatever, and just let it be that resource that you keep forever. So it helps you stay in it, it helps you stay in it. (Yeah.) Authorship is such a long, winding, terrible road sometimes. And I always tell my students, you get to the top of the mountain and then that's when you see there's four more mountains. <laugh>

Mike Michalowicz ([36:04](#)):

Right.

AJ Harper ([36:05](#)):

Why would anybody do this? (Right.) For the sheer joy of helping people get what they want. Get relief. Have a transformation. Change the world. (Yeah.) Or maybe you just love writing, but you can do it. You just have to be in, you just have to be in the right head space. So you can be like, all right, four more mountains, here we go.

Mike Michalowicz ([36:26](#)):

Can, can you work? Have you seen authors work on two or three books at the same time and finally one gets to the finish line first? Does that that happen? Or is it really an all in?

AJ Harper ([36:37](#)):

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No. Yeah. I mean, I think we're always sort of developing. You're doing it. I'm doing it. You know, my hero, Steve Pressfield, he keeps his little file of ideas and tries to get one ready to write so that as soon as he's done with one, he starts the very next day. (Yeah.) On the next book. And it's ready to go. I think I've definitely written multiple books at the same time as a ghost, but it's different when it's your own. And I think it would be challenging for me to really devote myself to three books.

Mike Michalowicz ([37:05](#)):

I—

AJ Harper ([37:06](#)):

So it comes back to the original question Yeah. I'm sorry I interrupted you.

Mike Michalowicz ([37:09](#)):

It, it, it just triggered a thought. I interrupted you, but Matthew Kelly, who wrote *Dream Manager*.

AJ Harper ([37:16](#)):

Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz ([37:16](#)):

How he, I never spoke with him. I've never met with him. So this is hearsay. But I do know the company he was working with when this book was inspired, it's called a company called Jancoa. And I know the owner.

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

Yeah. Mary Miller.

Mike Michalowicz ([37:27](#)):

Yeah. And Mary said that Matthew Kelly went to them and said, I think this could be a book. And he goes, and I think I want to write it. He goes, are you willing to let me sit on this? And he said, he's went and prayed. And so that was his approach. He just prayed and he said, he came back and said, I feel called to do this. And that, that became his tipping point, I think in the decision of writing this. He's an author, an accomplished author, writes other books. And, and that became his deciding point. So maybe that's an approach too, is whatever you may believe in is a self-defined whatever. At a certain point. It's like this, this emotion is outweighing any other emotion I've got to commit to it. Yeah.

AJ Harper ([38:06](#)):

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It could be that. It comes back to the original idea for our conversation, which is, is this a book or is it something else? Because I could, here's a strategy. I could finish the test-drive book, make it just a PDF that people can grab. (Yeah.) So that they have it. Because this is me, this is how I operate. I want everybody to have this stuff. (Yeah.) You know, but I don't want to wait for people. I don't want people to have to wait till 2028 to get all these books.

Mike Michalowicz ([38:37](#)):

It could be a great blog post, right?

AJ Harper ([38:39](#)):

Well it would be a pretty detailed blog post. Oh yeah. Maybe, maybe it would be a white paper. Maybe I'll sell it. Maybe I won't. (Yeah.) That could be what I do with Test Drive.

Mike Michalowicz ([38:49](#)):

You, you know, blogs.

AJ Harper ([38:51](#)):

I feel like the mindset. So then is it a book? That's the question. (Yeah. Yeah.) Test Drive I think doesn't have to be one. So, this is a good important question. It could be and people would find it useful, but it doesn't have to be. It's already a class. Yeah. It's already a class. I teach live a couple times a year and then also an evergreen class that people can just go do. So that already exists. And if I want to supplement it with the stuff I've been writing, I can just do that. It doesn't have to be a book. It already exists in the world. Mindset that, or whatever I'm going to call it. The Four Mountains Book, <laugh> Never Ending Mountains. Yeah, that's a book. That's for sure a book. (Okay. Why?) This is the question. Reach. It can get to anybody anywhere. Whereas if you know was a video course say that you would have to know it exists. You'd have to find it. You'd have, you know, you'd have to have the technology. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz ([39:56](#)):

So Findability.

AJ Harper ([39:57](#)):

Findability.

Mike Michalowicz ([39:57](#)):

Discoverability.

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AJ Harper ([39:58](#)):

I guess. Well, just the ability to, even for it to exist. Yes. It can be wherever all over the world. And just to hold in your hand and keep it for the days when you, like I said, you really need to stay in the game and you can convince yourself to do it. Yes. So I think that's a book.

Mike Michalowicz ([40:16](#)):

Yes.

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

The third one is *Please Sell Your Book*. (I love that title.) And I, it could, it could maybe not be a book, but I think it would be a good selling book. So strategically, yes. I think it would be a good seller.

Mike Michalowicz ([40:33](#)):

What if... with *Profit First*, the first inception was one or two lines side. *Toilet Paper Entrepreneur*. It got highlighted, referenced it then became an article on the *Wall Street Journal*. And that got the most downloads by far. Could you test the market? Could, I'm just proposing here out loud, and it's being recorded and the world will hear this, but could we do an episode of *Don't Write That Book* about test driving your book and see how much demand is for that episode? Would that be an indicator?

AJ Harper ([41:00](#)):

Sure. We can, we could do an episode about any of these.

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

You heard it first here.

AJ Harper ([41:04](#)):

I mean, you could write the article. I could do my own media article and see how that goes.

Mike Michalowicz ([41:09](#)):

But are those tests of a and express a form of expression You get expressed and see where your heart is and you get to see the data.

AJ Harper ([41:16](#)):

I, I can, yeah. I, I've been testing, "which book should I do?"

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

Well, which one's getting the most engagement from the testing so far?

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

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It was Test Drive Your Content was chosen over the mindset book. I didn't throw the other one in the mix. Because I didn't have proof of concept, so I didn't throw that one in the mix. Okay. I will bet you if I had, they would've chosen, *Please Sell Your Book*. (Okay.) You know, you know. because That's a big pain point.

Mike Michalowicz ([41:43](#)):

It's always interesting. So the data shows test drive, your heart says mindset and your logic says it's actually Please Write This Book.

AJ Harper ([41:52](#)):

Probably.

Mike Michalowicz ([41:52](#)):

Yeah.

AJ Harper ([41:53](#)):

But again, the question is could it, could I just get the content out without having to do three books?

Mike Michalowicz ([41:59](#)):

Yeah.

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

And I, I think the answer is yes on Test Drive. I actually have a contract to do test drive. So I would have to tell my publisher.

Mike Michalowicz ([42:06](#)):

That's great. Are you saying publisher, you know, without...

AJ Harper ([42:07](#)):

I decided to go with the same publisher because they know how to sell my book. Yeah. And I like control. I just have to admit and I like to have more the money.

Mike Michalowicz ([42:17](#)):

Yeah. They're excellent, right?

AJ Harper ([42:18](#)):

Yeah. the best. But I have that contract already. Yeah. So and I have my deadlines and I have my whole schedule, and so I would have to have a conversation.

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Mike Michalowicz ([42:29](#)):

But we've got to start wrapping things up, you know, and it just triggered a, a struggle for me too, is should I stay with Penguin and should I pursue a hybrid relationship going forward? And that's the struggle I'm in right now.

AJ Harper ([42:43](#)):

Yeah. I don't know. You know, we, we didn't have an outline for this episode, but I, I think it's helpful, if anything, to just think about all these, first of all, to see that we are seasoned,

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

We're following the country road writers.

AJ Harper ([42:57](#)):

On the country road. We're probably just sitting by the road right now. Right? Well, I don't know. Let me take a break and see what I need to do. But I hope that a authors who are listening to this can see that we sometimes don't know the next step, but also these are questions to ask yourself. What's the strategy? Do I have the, do I maybe need to hold off on that book till I have an audience for it? Do I have, is it a book? I think this is an, you know, that was why I wanted to do this initially, is this is a big important question. Could it be in some other format? And that's an important question to consider.

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

As it was famously shared in *Young Frankenstein* as they went down the country road. <Laugh>, I think it was. Inga says "Werewolf!" And Igor says, "There! Wolf!" <Laugh>. All right, my friends, you, you listen to, it's such a dork. It's such a dork. It didn't even tie in. I just wanted to say that. <Laugh>, you just listen to, Don't Write That Book. And thank you for, for joining this episode as we sing it and wing it or wing it and sing it. Hopefully you got some insights on your own struggles with the book. And hope you accept that, that's normal. If you enjoy this episode, we want to hear it, I invite you to email us at hello@dwtbpodcast.com. Don't forget, you can get free materials, you can join our email list and we'll keep you up to Day of Cool stuff@dwtbpodcast.com. And we are hearing from listeners, if we haven't heard from you yet, my gosh, join, join us. Write us. Thanks again for joining us for today's episode. We look forward to seeing you next week. And as always, don't write that book. Write this one.