

# don't write *that* book!

## Episode 30:

### The Truth About Amazon Bestseller Lists

**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](#)):

Whew. We are doing back to back to back. Usually we take a little longer breaks. We're just going,

**AJ Harper** ([00:21](#)):

We're going for it. Because I have to teach.

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

You've got to teach. I've got to do a keynote. Do you notice how much clearer our voices and throats were in episode two compared to episode one for us in this recording session?

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

We should just call that episode the Taylor Ham Sandwich episode. <Laugh>. I know

**Mike Michalowicz** ([00:37](#)):

Taylor Ham and Cheese, just so you know, you have to say.

**AJ Harper** ([00:39](#)):

I'm sorry I'm not from New Jersey.

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

I know, I know. I get it now. I think this is gonna be like a diatribe. You seem a little bit fired up about Amazon bestseller lists and the truth.

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

Look, let me just...Okay. <Laugh> qualify qualifier. Yeah. If you hit Amazon bestseller with your book, I think that's awesome. I think it's great. You should announce it. Take a screenshot, put it on your social,

**Mike Michalowicz** ([01:08](#)):

Tell your mom.

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

Tell your mom, get some cake. <Laugh> But I just think we don't, we put too much stock in it. (Yeah.) It's an ego trip. And I think people don't read, I think also because people don't understand what an Amazon bestseller really is in terms of what goes into getting one and, and how many books you need to sell to do it. They put too much stock in it. So if you're a newbie author, and let's say that you signed up with some sort of company that helps you do that, then you don't, you think that's gonna mean my book is going to be a success. This is what I'm worried about. People who don't have knowledge to say, okay, that means I sold this many books in this timeframe, but it doesn't mean my book is automatically gonna be a success. I cannot tell you how many organizations, companies that are designed to help you publish your book, whether they're self-publishing services, coaches, whatever, tout all of our books were Amazon bestsellers.

**AJ Harper** ([02:18](#)):

Okay. Now go look at those books and how they're doing. (Yeah.) They're not selling, they have very few reviews. This is not a book that people are reading. And this the whole point of this podcast. (Yeah.) Don't write that book that no one reads. And I think if people, I hope in this episode not to detract, I like, great, if you got it, it's wonderful. But I, I don't want to detract from that. But I want you to be, have the knowledge so that you have an understanding of what actually went into that so that you can be realistic and then also continue to market your book, but also when you're vetting opportunities or not opportunities publishers. And that's their big, you know, wow. All of our authors were Amazon number one bestsellers in an obscure category. This is not a, this is not a selling point.

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

A hundred percent agree.

**AJ Harper** ([03:15](#)):

I'm controversial about this. I know, but it's not what you think it is. And as long, and it's great when it happens, but let's not put too much stock in it.

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

Well, that's what we're gonna do today. We're gonna dispel a myth. I love that you went into a diatribe already. Her name is **AJ Harper**. She is--

**AJ Harper** ([03:30](#)):

I have feelings. .

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

Yeah. I noticed. Co-Host this show and has written something that's even is far more important than a Amazon BSR. You've written a category defining book, *Write a Must-Read*, and I'll tell you how you can tell from Amazon. Just read the reviews, just read what this has done for other people. Ask people

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who've read this book, how it's served them. And I think you'll find that you have perhaps one of the most extraordinary writers in the world on this show with me right now. **AJ Harper**. There you go.

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

Thank you. And there's **Mike Michalowicz**, author of 10 books, actually, 11, including *My Money Bunnies*, the children's book I'm always mentioning

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

You promoted so much and I wonder it's selling so well. <Laugh>.

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

Listen, I think it's great and I love that. I I love talking about the book. I didn't have anything to do with, you know, I think it's, it's important to mention that, but also I feel that you, you are such, you're so smart about really assessing all these bestseller lists and being realistic about it. We've talked a lot and then last few episodes about how your ego has led to some challenges. <Laugh>. Right?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([04:37](#)):

Totally does.

**AJ Harper** ([04:37](#)):

But I feel like you're really honest about the lists. Yeah. I don't think you have, you don't get too wrapped up in it.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([04:44](#)):

No, I, I don't, I remember a call that I had with Penguin. This was, you know, Portfolio prior to Noah, and, but it's repeated with Noah, my editor and every editor prior, he said whoever the editor was, I think that this was Kaushiuk. He goes, how important is you know, *Wall Street Journal* bestseller, when that has existed, it's gone now *New York Times* bestseller. I said, I really don't give two F's. I I really don't care. And that's, that's true. I do not care because I don't think it persuades consumption, it doesn't persuade people to buy the book unless it's a perennial bestseller. I think there's a difference if it's constantly on the *New York Times*, if it's constantly the *Wall Street Journal*, there's a reason behind that. And I think readers are savvy enough to know that I think the Amazon bestseller is the ultimate bastardization of the concept of bestseller. So I can't think of any author that I've met who doesn't say I'm a bestselling author, because they were ranked as a number one bestseller in some obscure category on Amazon for a few hours on one particular day. And they just took this on. I think readers are now numb to that, that, but I will tell you on the flip side with Amazon bestseller, *Profit First* has been a number one in a category Amazon bestseller for 11 consecutive years. Every single hour. (Yeah.) For 11 consecutive years, you can go on.

**AJ Harper** ([06:15](#)):

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That's impressive.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([06:16](#)):

Yeah. That, yeah, exactly. I think it is. And I'm proud of that. I'm proud of what we've done, but I think that's something of significance because right now, as you're listening to this episode, whenever it may be pull up *Profit First*, go to the hardcover book, you will see an orange flag next to it. Unless Amazon is no longer doing that. But--

**AJ Harper** ([06:33](#)):

I looked yesterday because I was doing something with one of my classes,

**Mike Michalowicz** ([06:36](#)):

And you'll see that orange flag. Yeah. Number one, number one best seller that I think is substantial. Even that though does not, I think, persuade readers in the way you think it does. And that's why I want to explore.

**AJ Harper** ([06:48](#)):

But it does persuade you've told me before, it builds confidence and trust in the product. (Yeah.) So if you're doing it in the first, usually the best seller happens at launch. We do all sorts of machinations to try and make that happen. The people who are buying it at launch are the people who are already in your circle. Or maybe an influencer told them to buy it, but to get that flag, that number one bestseller flag ongoing for years, that means the book is good. (Yeah.) That means your marketing is working. So it's, it's easy to do at launch, but not so easy to do going forward.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([07:28](#)):

I will tell you how to get, if, if you feel so compelled to get the bestseller stats, the BSR ranking, I'll tell you how to do it in 10 steps and you can get it done within one hour. Step one, call a friend, you know, and say, please buy my book step, you know, buy one copy of it. Step two is call another friend and say, "Please buy my book." Do this 10 times over. So you've called 10 Friends and in an obscure category, 10 books within an hour's time period, will get you a number one bestseller status.

**AJ Harper** ([07:58](#)):

That's it. The key is the category.

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

Yeah. The key is the category. It has to be an obscure category. There's a tool out there and we use it. It's called Publisher Rocket. It's a, a onetime cost of about a hundred dollars, which I think kudos to whoever created this software. They don't have some nonsense subscription.

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

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It's the Kindlepreneur guy,

**Mike Michalowicz** ([08:18](#)):

Is it? Dude. Good. I hope he's listening to this episode. Good on you. It's a cool tool.

**AJ Harper** ([08:23](#)):

It's a great tool.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([08:24](#)):

And the fact that it's a one-time fee yet actively pulls data every minute. It's, it's going on Amazon and pulling data. It's freaking great. So what you can do is you can go into different categories and it shows you how many books need to be sold to get that number one flag status. And the value is this, if you perennially have it, you do get an orange flag next to your book title. So when someone's navigating your book, or it says books like this that are frequently purchased or whatever, however Amazon Categories is, if you have an active bestseller status at that moment, it'll show that flag. And I think that does persuade people. So now you know the hack. If you want to get it for the next few hours, call 10 friends and have them buy the books.

**AJ Harper** ([09:07](#)):

I mean, you can honestly, you can do it with an eBook. Just, you can, this is an old strategy. Get the, put the list, the eBook for 99 cents. Okay. For a short period of time. Yeah. Even if you don't tell anyone, it'll probably naturally happen for the people who go up and scoop up 99 cents books. But you could also just send a one little email. I said, "My book's available for 99 cents for the next 24 hours." Done. You got the best seller ranking. And if it's important to you to be able to say that you did, but that's not, that's not all that is, is ego. That's just being able to say something that honestly, within our industry, so the average author, not so much, but within the industry, if you want to be taken seriously as an author, speaker, thought leader, people know that's full of a lot of hot air. (Yeah.) So why do it? I mean, it's so easy to, if it's so easy to do, why do you want it?

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

It's interesting how these terms get bastardized. There was a time when being a bestselling author was a significant, because not many people had an argument to say they achieved that. So that was distinguishing. It's kind of like coaches, there was a time back in the nineties that if you were a business coach, it's like, oh, that's pretty cool. Today everyone's a business coach and it's this, it's this bastardize the, the term. So I, I think even being called a bestselling author is no longer a value. When people present me on stage or something like, Hey, **Mike Michalowicz's** coming. He's a bestselling author. I'm like, please don't, let's not even do the bestselling author. I'd rather have a different label to point to credibility. I'm like, if you want to point to the volume of books I've sold, that's significant for your audience. Just say he's a perennial bestselling author. Or perhaps more importantly, just tell how many books have sold say that we have. You know, Mike sold over 1.5 million books in circulation. That is far more valuable as a credibility builder than bestselling, in my opinion.

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

Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([11:01](#)):

Okay. What about the,

**AJ Harper** ([11:03](#)):

But let's explain it. I, I really want to, I want people to understand why, why it works this way. I mean, this is, this is one of the this need to have an Amazon number one bestseller (Yeah.) In a category or multiple categories is part of this, you know, book, "book in a minute," "book in a weekend," <laugh> "better business card" mentality. I call it, you know, the drive-through book, go through the drive-through window or to your book. There it is. When you pull up to the window.

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

Comes with fries.

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

And it's an automatic bestseller. I saw somebody had an opportunity from, I don't know who it was, and I, so I'm not deliberately omitting the name. We're working with somebody to write and publish their book. And it came with an award. It came with an award.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([11:54](#)):

Demeaning <laugh>, I don't know if I really comprehend this yet. Meaning, if you use a service, they just gave you an award because you used the service?

**AJ Harper** ([12:01](#)):

It comes, it comes with an award for your book.

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

Oh my God.

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

That what is that?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([12:06](#)):

You know who it's what's, (Why do you need that?) It's one of those helicopter parents who the losing soccer team got trophies said, oh, I can do this for authors.

**AJ Harper** ([12:15](#)):

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But, see, that person is probably selling a lot of books and or selling a lot of program programs or services or whatever the hell they're doing packages. Because something, a person who wants that just wants the book to exist. And the title of award-winning or bestselling author. But these are hollow victories. Yeah. I am strong on this. Which again, does not mean that an organic number one bestseller isn't something to be jazzed about. But man, let's take it all with a grain of salt. These are... What matters is, are people reading this dang book? Yeah. And is it continuing to sell or was it a moment in time? And I think if you really ask yourself, why am I doing this? What does selling 10 books on a Tuesday have to do with your mission to help people? Not a dang thing. I'm really strong on this.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([13:08](#)):

Yeah. I love your strength on this, because it's absolutely true. And, and it also dilutes the impact that you could have if you're focused on this component, which just satisfies ego. It doesn't move books. It dilutes your impact. You're focused on the wrong thing. Yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([13:24](#)):

And, and then just from a purely, okay, so you're gonna vet a self-publishing packager, vet somebody who can help you. Maybe it's a, a book marketing team, whatever. And their big thing is, number one, be Amazon bestsellers. This should be a, you need to ask more questions at that point. If that's, if that's the big thing, you need to ask more questions. Well, how many books do these people sell? How are those books doing now? What's going on? That can't be the end. That can't be the evidence that it worked because it doesn't take that much to get it. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([13:59](#)):

You know, the evidence, at least for me, that what we're doing is working. There's, there's many forms of it, but one that I think is really significant for me, and again, ego does play into this, but when I get recognized in a public setting, not going to speaking at gigs or, or online or something like this, but where people are specifically coming because they already know of my books or they are interested in the topic and they, they know that the speaker in this case me, is speaking on this topic, but literally when I'm just out in the wild and someone in the wild says, dude, you're **Mike Michalowicz**. I was coming off an airplane a few weeks ago as, as back of the plane. And as I'm walking off, I don't even know why the dude was sitting there. He was in, sitting in first class and he was waiting for people to come off.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([14:48](#)):

Maybe he has his luggage further back. And as I'm walking off, it's like, dude, you're **Mike Michalowicz**. He's like, *Profit First* changed my life. And just said these super nice words. And I'm like, there's a validation that *Profit First* has having impact. It's not the bestseller SaaS on Amazon. It's someone, there's enough people reading it that someone out there by happenstance. We ran into each other. And, and then he noted that's me and talked about the impact he did. He did look at me. He's like, oh, you're sitting in the economy. And before I addressed that because I was, he says, living the *Profit First* life. That's right. He said that. And I was like, yes, I am

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**AJ Harper** ([15:27](#)):

<Laugh>.

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

Well, it, it is partly that it's partly I changed flights.

**AJ Harper** ([15:30](#)):

Can, can I, since you said that, I just want to say we have to change the way we measure success. We can't base it on this.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([15:38](#)):

On the BSR..

**AJ Harper** ([15:40](#)):

This is the authors I work with in my workshop, what I want to hear from them, and they send it to me all the time. They'll text me, they'll send me an email, they'll tag me in things when they hear from readers and the reader says that the book impacted them exactly the way the author intended. So we set very clear goals for the book that are not about money. Immutable laws and characteristics, how a promise that we want to deliver on. We set all this intention and I show them how to actually accomplish that with the book. Then they turn around once their book is done and they said, look, this is exactly what I said I wanted to happen. And they also see it in their critical trade reviews. I encourage all my authors to get them. They'll get stunning trade reviews from really tough critical trade review journals.

**AJ Harper** ([16:34](#)):

And it will literally, and I do mean literally say exactly the thing they set out to do. And that reviewer had no idea. And then on top of that, they're winning really prestigious awards. Not the spend a hundred dollars and get a, you know, sticker for your book, but really prestigious industry awards. Those are some measures, right. That where somebody's really reading this book and saying, this is exceptional. Hmm. This speaks to me, whether it's a critical review or a reader review. That's one way. And I'm so proud of that for my authors. Some of them are selling a lot of books. Some of them are not selling a lot of books just depending on how much marketing they're doing, frankly. But their books are remarkable. So we have to think differently. That shortcut to becoming a bestselling author is a shortcut. And it leads to other shortcuts.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([17:34](#)):

Oh, there you go. Let me ask you this. Ignoring opinion technically, can you say you're a bestselling Amazon author if you achieve a number one category in--

**AJ Harper** ([17:48](#)):



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Sure.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([17:49](#)):

Okay. Even if there's 10 minutes. Sure. Another thing, another question is can you or do you know of any data that points that, if you say that, that you're an Amazon bestselling author, that it sells more books? That it, that it triggers any kind of consumption?

**AJ Harper** ([18:07](#)):

IN no. I, maybe there is a study I'm not aware of one. I think it's actually a detractor when you're trying to get out there and do other thought leadership things. If you're just, let's say you're an entrepreneur and you want to have the book and you're not really trying to also be a speaker or sell a class or programs or be considered a thought leader in your space, fine put it up there. Most people don't know. They'll think it's cool. Go ahead. But if you're trying to be taken seriously and you want us do keynotes and so forth, you better not even mention that.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([18:41](#)):

I love that. That's, that's probably the biggest argument.

**AJ Harper** ([18:43](#)):

You better not.

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

Because the people who are uneducated on the topic, the, if the fool, if, you know, fool me once type thing,

**AJ Harper** ([18:50](#)):

Or just the average consumer.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([18:51](#)):

That's what I'm saying, the average consumer Yeah. May be persuaded by that. But the educated one, the one who's vetting the quality of the author for their speaking about whatever. They're educated on this. It's a disqualifier.

**AJ Harper** ([19:05](#)):

Exactly.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([19:05](#)):

So it's actually more harmful from that perspective.

**AJ Harper** ([19:09](#)):

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If I see it, I say, oh, this person doesn't really get it.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([19:12](#)):

Yeah. They kind of...

**AJ Harper** ([19:14](#)):

They're not. And I'm, I'm certainly not the only one.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([19:16](#)):

Is there a difference between Amazon number one, overall versus category?

**AJ Harper** ([19:21](#)):

Well, you know, there is.

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

I know, I know.

**AJ Harper** ([19:23](#)):

Yeah. I love how you asked me these questions that you know the answer to.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([19:26](#)):

There's very few I know the answer to.

**AJ Harper** ([19:28](#)):

No, you do. Of course. That's a whole 'nother ball of wax mean. So let's explain what an Amazon bestseller ranking. That's the overall, but let's, most people don't realize, so they think when they hit that number one in the, there's the overall and then there's the categories, right? And the category could be basket weaving you know, tutoring whatever. There's many, many, many, many. How

**Mike Michalowicz** ([19:53](#)):

Many overall categories do you think there are? I don't know. I think it's over a thousand. I think it's 1500 categories.

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

They're always tweaking it.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([20:00](#)):

Publisher Rocket actually lists the quantity of categories

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**AJ Harper** ([20:03](#)):

Then. Yeah. So they would know. Yeah. It's a lot. We, we they are not a sponsor, by the way, but you should definitely get it. Yeah. We don't have a sponsor <laugh>.

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

No. Oh, I thought you were, I thought if they were listening, you should, you were saying to publisher Rocket, you should get it doesn't get a sponsorship with us. I thought, yeah.

**AJ Harper** ([20:16](#)):

I was just trying to be ethical, but sure. Publishers Rocket. Hey, shout out. Yeah. Be a sponsor. But everyone is a good tool so they know, but it's a lot. And they're always changing it and tweaking it and observing what's what buy, you know, that's Amazon's strength is understanding buyers and how they make decisions, sorting their content. So you can be a number one in a category, but still not be selling that many books. What people misunderstand is they think that that number one means you sold the most books out of all those authors. So let's say there's 20 people, top 20. People who are number one think they sold more books than everyone else on the

**Mike Michalowicz** ([20:56](#)):

Historically in the length, the existence of the book.

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

Or just even in that window of time. But it's actually momentum. It's based on your momentum relative to the other author's momentum.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([21:08](#)):

Explain that in more detail.

**AJ Harper** ([21:10](#)):

So it doesn't mean, so if an author is consistently selling, say 10 books a day, and you come in with your brand new book and sell 25 books that day, or let's see, seven books. Even I can't, seven. Yeah. So you're, you went from zero to seven and they just stayed at 10. There we go. Math is not, why did you ask me the math question? We're getting math together. Maybe who should explain it?

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

This is why we collaborate as partnership.

**AJ Harper** ([21:39](#)):

One brain, three quarters of brain. Maybe. The point is it doesn't mean you were sold more. It means that you have more momentum relative to where you started.

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**Mike Michalowicz** ([21:50](#)):

Yeah. I believe it does a ratio analysis. So say you had one book historically, an average to seven, that's a 700% gain <laugh>. And if you went from 10 to 10, that is 0% gain. The 700% gain wins.

**AJ Harper** ([22:02](#)):

Yeah. So the in the, there could be a number five or six in the category that sold more books than you did that day.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([22:08](#)):

But it's not the only factor. No. Because there are commonly books ranked number one in the category that sell the most volume. So pro, I'll give you *Profit First* as an example. It sells about 200 units per day. It's consistently number one in its category. And there's other people that come in that category and go from zero to seven, but *Profit First* we'll still have it. So part of the weight is momentum. Part of the weighting is quantity too. It's, it's a blend.

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

So yeah. So, but that's why you can be succeeded at. Correct. Yeah. And it's also why you might be disappointed when you see your royalties come in.

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

Right?

**AJ Harper** ([22:47](#)):

<Laugh> like, I thought it was the best seller. No, you sold seven books. This is a coffee. We, I can buy you coffee today, but not a latte. <Laugh> So competitive categories are hard to achieve, and that's why people look for these obscure categories to try and achieve this kind of "game the system."

**Mike Michalowicz** ([23:05](#)):

In the last year, I've noticed the new release, I'll say number one, new release, maybe it's been about round for two years, I think it's relatively new. These are flags. So you see next to your book, there is this triangle of purchasing considerations. Amazon's very effectively designed to maximize the, the buying choice. They, they want to optimize around that. So they'll have a picture of your book, they'll have quantity of reviews. That's a big influencer. The more reviews you have, the more likely someone's to buy it. It invokes trust. The star rating you have. And the other one, the other part of that triangle is a flack. So you can have a number one new release or bestseller. And I would argue having that at any given time, all those things increase the odds of someone buying it. What's the difference between the number one new release, which I can see stick with the book for a few weeks or even a month, versus a number one category bestseller?

**AJ Harper** ([24:02](#)):

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Well, it's brand new number one. Okay. <laugh>. So it's gonna, it's it's

**Mike Michalowicz** ([24:07](#)):

It's published within the last few months.

**AJ Harper** ([24:08](#)):

Yeah. And it's or even a shorter timeframe. And then, you know, it's got some, it's got some juice because you're doing these launch initiatives. So it's climbing, it's again, that momentum and volume. It's gonna register as this new book is performing well. And they also have hot new releases now, another new list.

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

Oh, hot new release. I didn't know that.

**AJ Harper** ([24:34](#)):

It's always changing. Yeah. Yeah.

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

Amazon is changing so much that if you do what we refer to in the last episode, or maybe it's two episodes back now, I don't recall when we talked about, just log into your Amazon or log onto your Amazon page every day to see what your status is. Because if you see a big jump in a natural jump in your BSR overall it could be an indicator of something. Where was I going with this? Oh, I lost the train thought.

**AJ Harper** ([25:02](#)):

Well, it changes so much.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([25:03](#)):

Okay. I got you back.

**AJ Harper** ([25:04](#)):

Okay. Okay.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([25:05](#)):

Okay. Here's what I noticed. If you do that every day, scan the entire page, and you'll actually see Amazon dynamically changing your page over time. You'll get used to it. They added, there's a section called "from the publisher," which gives you the ability to put an HTML code onto your own page so you can have pictures. If you have a compendium of books, you can have your other books listed. Well, and they're encouraging this. Amazon added an add to cart button below the images. We did not put that in the code. You were not allowed to. They've added an add to cart button. So now I had a picture. If you,

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if you're looking at the *Profit First* page below it, you'll also see Get Different and Clockwork and All In. And it just used to have just the pictures of the books.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([25:45](#)):

That was all that was permitted and a link to the Amazon page that was permitted. But no buy button, they've added an add to cart button. So they're always trying to maximize sales. They're on the same page. They want you to sell books. And I think that's partly why they're giving you these flags and why so many people can earn them. Because it does, I think for, for the standard uneducated user, that flag does have some significance. Okay. So the, I didn't know about know about the hot new release. I wonder what that's all about. But I'm sure it sells more books.

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

I'm sure it does. It's moment in time.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([26:18](#)):

What about super competitive categories? There's some categories that, you know, whatever category James Clear is in, forget it. You're not gonna win that one.

**AJ Harper** ([26:28](#)):

You're not gonna win.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([26:28](#)):

Brené Brown's there, she's gonna roll over you. Do we avoid those categories? Is it irrelevant?

**AJ Harper** ([26:34](#)):

Yeah. You should avoid those categories so that you can maybe try and get that flag ongoing. Yeah. I think that's important in that Publishers Rocket tool is really helpful in that respect. If you have a traditional publisher, though, it might take them a minute to get around to making these changes, or you can try and make them yourself, but sometimes it's more complicated. Takes a little longer than if you were self-publishing.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([26:57](#)):

Is there a way to update the categories or change 'em that you know?

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

Yeah. You know, you do them all the time.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([27:02](#)):

Yeah, I know, but can I just ask you a question?

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**AJ Harper** ([27:04](#)):

You can, I'm just saying you change them all the time. You can go to your Author Central page. If you have, you can also go to KDP. And Kindlepreneur will link to the article has actually a really good article about just how to do it. So please don't pay anybody to run your Amazon.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([27:22](#)):

No, it's so unnecessary.

**AJ Harper** ([27:24](#)):

You honestly, you're, you can do it. It's <laugh>. This is a DIY thing.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([27:28](#)):

Go to author central.com at the very bottom of the page, at least as of today. The very bottom of the page is a little contact us in text. You've got to click on that little button.

**AJ Harper** ([27:39](#)):

They don't want you to find it. They don't want you to find it. They don't want to talk to you.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([27:42](#)):

Then when you go there, there'll be all these reasons to reach out. One of the categories, one of the options I think is Amazon Categories, I think. You've got to find that.

**AJ Harper** ([27:52](#)):

Yep. And then you follow the instructions.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([27:53](#)):

Yeah, then you've got to write in the A SIN or the ISBN and you've got to put in the title. And, and

**AJ Harper** ([27:58](#)):

It used to be that you could give them seven categories. Yeah. So this is another thing is..

**Mike Michalowicz** ([28:02](#)):

It's down to three now, I think.

**AJ Harper** ([28:04](#)):

Did they change it?

**Mike Michalowicz** ([28:05](#)):

Yeah. I think so.

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**AJ Harper** ([28:07](#)):

Well, that's the other thing is I, I'm not, I promise you, I don't even know the Kindlepreneur guy. I should know his name, but he is, I'm on his mailing list forever because he's constantly keeping tabs on all this. So that he's telling you what are the latest Amazon updates? That's a high recommend. And if you, you know, if this is something that's important to you, if you're just gonna leave it up there and you're not really too concerned, you don't want to get that involved or think too much about it, cool. Or maybe give it to an assistant to keep track of these things. Amazon is changing so fast that some of the things we're saying today may not even be relevant <laugh> by the time this airs.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([28:48](#)):

That's a super important.

**AJ Harper** ([28:49](#)):

Mean, not quite. Not quite, but I, I do think it's important. Don't try to make yourself stay on top of it by yourself. Find somebody like the Kindlepreneur guy. I'm gonna look in the show notes. Y'all incidentally, we received a few messages from people who are looking for show notes. They're on the, "don't write that book website."

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

Website.

**AJ Harper** ([29:10](#)):

Website. Yeah. So you can find links to everything we're talking about the books and resources on that page for each episode.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([29:19](#)):

Yes. So, okay. So the Kindle Entrepreneur person. Anything else we need to talk about on this subject? I, I'm just looking through the notes here. I think we've covered

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

No, we covered it. It's just we wanted to talk about this so that people are not caught up in the excitement over that to the, to the point that they're not selling their book or that they take work with a vendor who promises that as if it's some sort of, you know, magical thing that will ensure your book becomes an ongoing bestseller.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([29:50](#)):

And in this similar vein, you can, I don't know how else to put this, you can buy your way on the *New York Times* bestseller. Sure. And it happens regularly. And it's, my conclusion is it's another ego trip in that once you, it's a hollow victory. You, you, you purchase how it works effectively is you, you hire an



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organization, you give them, it's pretty substantial, I'm sure it's probably 50 grand to a hundred grand now.

**AJ Harper (30:17):**

Oh, no. It's way more.

**Mike Michalowicz (30:19):**

Way more than that now? Okay. And what they do is they take a portion of that for their service. The rest of it's distributed to people throughout the world. And they're told to buy the book at a certain time and they, they game the system. It's a hidden art. The *New York Times*, it's not just on quantity of books sold. There's some other intangibles. I don't know if they're buying people off too. Maybe that's happening. I don't know. Well, I'm not accusing that or, or saying it's even happening. But, but they're gaming the system. And then you get this *New York Times* bestseller, and I've looked at some of these books that earn quote unquote earned it. It's a hollow of victory. And you see them a year later and the book is, hasn't sold a single copy. So it doesn't, it doesn't influence future demand.

**AJ Harper (31:03):**

We can't be transactional about authorship. It can't be, okay, I published the book. I'm an Amazon bestseller. I'm a *New York Times* bestseller, I'm done. This is an ongoing relationship you have with your readers. It's an ongoing creative endeavor. You have to think of the long game when you're in publishing and understand what these milestones actually mean so that you don't get stuck thinking that because you have that other opportunities are in the bag.

**Mike Michalowicz (31:34):**

A couple of our books have become *Wall Street Journal* bestsellers. And those were what's called natural listings, meaning we didn't, there was no one involved in that. It was just, we launched the books and they sold enough volume that the *Wall Street Journal* deemed it. The publisher for those books put a flag on the book cover itself. Said, this is a *Wall Street Journal* bestselling book. I honestly, I don't see any evidence that moves more books or not, but they did add that on. I'll tell you what has not achieved *Wall Street Journal* bestseller, that's *Profit First*. <Laugh>. And it's sold more books in certain weeks in any of my launch weeks. I had one week that when that TikTok video hit, yeah. We sold 3000 over the natural. We sold five or 6,000 books that week. The next week it sold about 4,000 books.

**Mike Michalowicz (32:20):**

Did not get *Wall Street Journal* bestseller. 9,000 books in a two-week period during a launch, historically for us as a *Wall Street Journal* bestseller. Naturally. So it's just interesting. I never achieved it. So at the end of the day, any of these accomplishments, I've never, when someone approaches me, I never say, oh, I'm a bestselling author. I don't say that. I'm just, I'm an author. I never say, oh, and by the way, I achieved the *Wall Street Journal*. I think those things are just of, of very little value except for serving our ego, unless it's a perennial bestselling book, and then it becomes something of significance. That's my final opinion.

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**AJ Harper** ([32:58](#)):

Yeah. Write for the reader, care about that relationship. Market for the long haul.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([33:05](#)):

This is one we didn't debate. I think we're on the same page.

**AJ Harper** ([33:08](#)):

We're on the same page. But I, I've been wanting to say this for a long time.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([33:12](#)):

Good. Well, thank you for saying it. I think our authors need to hear it because they're writing this book. They're not writing all that book. Yes. And oh, one of the things that gets to me is I'm a number one category bestseller.

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

But, but listen, if you got it organically and it happened, and, or even if you tried to get it a good on you, yeah. But keep going. Yes. Don't let that be the thing.

**Mike Michalowicz** ([33:35](#)):

One place to keep going is to our websites, [dwtb podcast.com](#). You have our free materials up there. Our show notes are up there. We'd love to also hear from you. So email me and AJ at [hello@dwtbpodcast.com](mailto:hello@dwtbpodcast.com). Thanks for joining us today. Thanks for joining us. Every time you join us now, go clean your kitchen. That's a shout to you April. And please join us in the next episode. As a reminder, you know it. Don't write that book. Write this one. I.