

don't write *that* book!

Episode 32

“Front Loading”

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**. I'm thinking of setting up a podcast studio at my house. Oh, would you be willing to come there?

AJ Harper ([00:23](#)):

Yes. I don't have to climb up to the top of the Empire State Building.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:28](#)):

Yeah. With no elevator. This is a historic building.

AJ Harper ([00:31](#)):

This is because you're cheap.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:33](#)):

No. What do you mean?

AJ Harper ([00:34](#)):

When you got this office? You said to me, I got a good deal because it's 50,000 flights up. Yeah. No elevator and no parking.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:45](#)):

And no parking.

AJ Harper ([00:45](#)):

You said that to me!

Mike Michalowicz ([00:46](#)):

I did. And is, this is a beautiful space.

AJ Harper ([00:49](#)):

Look, I'm, it's a beautiful view. Yeah. If anybody has thoughts about how New Jersey isn't beautiful, if you were seeing the NYC right now, you'd say that's beautiful.

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Mike Michalowicz ([00:58](#)):

That's, that's, that's

AJ Harper ([00:59](#)):

Misinformation

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

That produce purple trees are wisteria out there. Yeah.

AJ Harper ([01:02](#)):

It's

Mike Michalowicz ([01:02](#)):

Gorgeous. You can see this New York skyline from here. This is the tallest building in Boonton, the town of Booonton. Okay. Um, but I'm thinking about moving into my house because it can be a lot more comfortable and we can set up video cameras. So this can become a YouTube channel, too.

AJ Harper ([01:15](#)):

I'm hearing that that's what we should all be doing.

Mike Michalowicz ([01:18](#)):

We've been investing a lot of effort into YouTube and it's paying off.

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

Oh, yeah?

Mike Michalowicz ([01:23](#)):

Yeah, yeah.

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

How, how is it paying off?

Mike Michalowicz ([01:26](#)):

We're getting inquiries from people that have not been familiar with the brand before, saying, oh, I just discovered your book now. (On YouTube?) On YouTube. Yeah. So my keynotes, what we done is we take those and we post the full keynotes, which could be an hour to an hour and a half. We splice them into pieces. So you have the little,

AJ Harper ([01:45](#)):

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Well, like 10 minutes piece?

Mike Michalowicz ([01:46](#)):

No, no, no. Like, like a one minute element. Oh, a topic. Uh, we do shorts and other complimentary videos that explain it further. Um, we've done deep dives. I record it in front of a camera, but it's into a, a solo. It's just me to the microphone. So it's like a solo podcast, if you will. And, um, yeah, it's, it, it's garnering momentum, but it, it's exposing me to an audience that I don't typically have access to or haven't historically.

AJ Harper ([02:13](#)):

Interesting.

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

The second thing is, we may have figured out Amazon ads.

AJ Harper ([02:17](#)):

What?

Mike Michalowicz ([02:19](#)):

And maybe it's own episode.

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

It certainly is.

Mike Michalowicz ([02:22](#)):

Yeah.

AJ Harper ([02:23](#)):

Let's do that next, after this next, uh, next

Mike Michalowicz ([02:26](#)):

Recording session

AJ Harper ([02:27](#)):

Session to the next recording session. Okay. Yeah. I want to hear all about it.

Mike Michalowicz ([02:29](#)):

We brought an expert. I'll reveal that expert's name, um, who's invested a lot of time in figuring this out. The short answer to that real quick is don't run the, ultimately, don't run the generic. Let Amazon figure

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out where the ad placements should be. But perhaps that's the starting point. And then you can start crafting which ads work and which ones don't.

AJ Harper ([02:50](#)):

I mean, that's one area I don't have any expertise in because I block it out.

Mike Michalowicz ([02:55](#)):

We are, we're two months into experimenting with it, and we just turned the corner. It's net, cashflow positive now?

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

Okay.

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

Yeah. So whatever. Cool.

AJ Harper ([03:04](#)):

That'll be exciting.

Mike Michalowicz ([03:05](#)):

Let me introduce my, my writing partner, <laugh> and buddy, something that people comment on. I, I wanted to hold this off because you've heard this before, but I haven't talked about the show is your voice. You have a very appealing, pleasant.

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

My speaking voice?

Mike Michalowicz ([03:18](#)):

Your speaking voice, huh. I've had a few listeners specifically say, she has such an inviting, pleasant voice. It's so engaging. Aw, <laugh>. Then I say, oh, what about the other person on the show? They're like, well, you know, it's a little nasally <laugh>.

AJ Harper ([03:35](#)):

Now you're making that up.

Mike Michalowicz ([03:36](#)):

No, they, they just don't comment on my voice at all. You have a very approachable voice, which I, I'll tell you, is an important element of accessibility, of, of learning.

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AJ Harper ([03:47](#)):

That's so nice.

Mike Michalowicz ([03:48](#)):

I remember in college, I had this one professor who had a very difficult accent, uh, accent to understand. And while he was I'm sure very knowledgeable on the subject, it was indigestible. I, i, i, I could not approach it <laugh>. So, voice matters.

AJ Harper ([04:02](#)):

That's nice. Yeah. I don't have anything to say about your voice. I usually try and counter it. <laugh>. Oh, yeah. Yeah. With something complimentary.

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

You sound like our listeners.

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

I'm just, oh, I don't.

Mike Michalowicz ([04:14](#)):

Well, let me say one more thing. You've written the must-read book in the space. It's called *Write a Must-Read*. And if you're a listener to the show and you don't have 10 copies, <laugh>, please go out and get 10 copies. What, why, what? I only need to read one. You need it. Everyone in your circle, anyone that's helping you with cover design, anyone that's helping you with the formatting of your book, your publisher, if they haven't read it, get 10 copies.

AJ Harper ([04:36](#)):

Thank you. That's so nice. You're welcome. Uh, I do want to introduce **Mike Michalowicz**, who is an author of many, many books. I think it's important to understand that you are a person who just wants to help people. Now, I know that we say this all the time, but anytime I ask you. So anytime I ask you to do me a little favor for one of my authors or something like that, your answer is always, "Absolutely." That's the word you use. Absolutely. And usually with an exclamation point. Right. That's meant a lot to me. But you care about authors, you care about entrepreneurs, you'll go out of your way and you don't have to. That's something I really love about you.

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

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. So let's talk about front loading and this concept. Can you first explain what front loading is? Yes. Just so we have set the stage.

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

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So <laugh>, I'm feeling, I'm feeling cheeky all of a sudden, but I think it's because we just recorded an episode and it was a little bit like a warmup. And now I feel like, okay. Yeah, I'm ready to go.

Mike Michalowicz ([05:41](#)):

You were on fire. I can.

AJ Harper ([05:42](#)):

I don't think so. Yeah, I wasn't.

AJ Harper ([05:44](#)):

All right. It was good content. Regardless. Yes. If I'm being cheeky, I would say front loading is giving people the book they asked for <laugh>, because what we do, and I, I know why we do it. I know this, I know why we do it, because of all my years of watching people do it. But we tend to write all these sort of runway chapters like getting there. Okay. Now I'm almost there. Yeah. Okay. But first you need to know all these other things before we say here's the solution and the way forward. Yeah. And the reader's like, where is it? Turn frantically turning pages. We think we need all this buildup. We think we need to give all this context. And the reader is bored out of their skull and trying to find the good stuff. So front loading is give them the good stuff within chapters.

AJ Harper ([06:41](#)):

I would say the first two, potentially three. Sometimes you just can't give all the good stuff in chapters one and two. But try. That's front loading. It doesn't mean that now you never go back to those topics. If you, for example, share the goods in the beginning, you can get deeper later in the book. You can also back up and say, here's the goods, and now let me tell you why. You know what I mean? You don't have to do "why" first. So I think people get stuck on the flow of information. It's almost as if we can't get out of this linear mindset. And I want everyone to get out of their linear mindset because people are bored. Yeah. So front loading is giving people the book they want right out of the gate. And that's what we're talking about today in chapter one and potentially two.

Mike Michalowicz ([07:37](#)):

So very quickly, give them what they want. What's the reason behind it? I know that's what they want. Is it because people have a short attention span?

AJ Harper ([07:45](#)):

That's part of it. Yeah. People have a short attention span. You're competing w with a lot of other media, other books, yeah. Things people listen to, watch, consume.

Mike Michalowicz ([07:55](#)):

I think they want to validate this stuff works.

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AJ Harper ([07:57](#)):

They want to validate that it works. Uh, they don't want to wade through a bunch of stuff. And then let's just be real. If you're taking a bunch of time, if you're do a long runway, it might be that it's also not the best writing.

Mike Michalowicz ([08:12](#)):

Hmm.

AJ Harper ([08:13](#)):

You know, if you can't get there, there's, that's maybe not the best writing either. So there are a lot of factors, but we need to, we need to front load. And this is for prescriptive nonfiction. Let me be really clear. I'm not talking memoir <laugh>, I'm not talking the teaching memoir. I'm talking prescriptive nonfiction.

Mike Michalowicz ([08:33](#)):

There was an author who explained that most people don't finish reading books and encourage people not to finish books. He said, keep reading a book until it stops serving you. Why read? Because there's no mandate. You have to finish. So I heard that. I was like, I don't know if that's really true. So I went through my audible, you know, I don't know, I say a hundred books on Audible. And I looked, how many have completed? I've completed very few. Most I get through, ironically, three to four chapters before I fade out. And I, you can see the time stops.

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

But it doesn't have to be that way. So here's the irony is you front load and now you've given them so much that they trust, you believe you feel seen, see that there's a solution they want to keep reading.

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

Yeah. I'm, I'm reading or did read, and I can't remember *The Gap and the Game*. It's by, uh, Dan Sullivan and Ben Hardy. These two guys teamed up. And I would argue it's front load, meaning the concept of the gap in the game is explained right away. And you get it. And you can start applying it. And to your point, it's like, oh, this is so appealing. And then they give all these specific nuanced instances around it. Yeah. That's the rest of the book. Yeah. We did it with every book we write is front load. In fact, we specify, are we frontloading this enough? Is it the deliverable. We did in *Clockwork*. We're going through the original copy of it somewhere in your desk there.

AJ Harper ([09:56](#)):

Yeah. I have the original, not the, um, revised and expanded.

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

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We, and we talked, I think in the episode, uh, last week we talked about pain. Starting off with pain and promise. Uh, we talked about the reader journey. Is the reader effectively completing their journey within a chapter or two? Have they solved their problem?

AJ Harper ([10:14](#)):

No. It's just, here's, here's what the, here's what this is. To get practical application, like you said earlier, nuances to get, maybe it's a detailed how to, it just depends, you know, that's the rest of the book. But you want to get the gist.

Mike Michalowicz ([10:32](#)):

When it comes to writing and front loading a book, is it necessary for us, for an author to write the entire book and then figure out what is the meat?

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

No.

Mike Michalowicz ([10:41](#)):

So how, how do you know what to front load with?

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

So number one, you need connection. So you, that should be on page one, sentence one, you've got to get people, right.

Mike Michalowicz ([10:52](#)):

You do it through pain or promise.

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

You could do it through pain or promise. Okay. Humor also works. If you're not gonna do a pain or promise story, you could do relatable scenario, which actually technically is gonna be pain. <Laugh> Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So you want that connection. Number one, you want to make sure that you have fully expressed core message. And that means, this is how I figured it out, not just this is what it is. People have a tendency to, if they have a good core message, which they need one. Most people, it's hard. But let's say you got it. You nailed it. They just state it, but they don't say, this is why I know it's true. <laugh> They just state it.

Mike Michalowicz ([11:38](#)):

Ah. So you've got to prove it.

AJ Harper ([11:39](#)):

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Prove it. I mean, it doesn't have to be a thesis, but let's just at least acknowledge, this is how I figured this out. This is how I know it's true. Here's some social proof. Right? Social proof could be your own story. Own story. But really it's more like maybe a summary of say, colleagues, clients, customers, whatever. Yeah. We're not talking a bunch of testimonials. We're not talking a bunch of case studies. Just, you know, uh, what would be good social proof in a Chapter One? Um, you know, I've worked with a hundred people aren't using this same framework, and all of them increase their revenue by 50%. Social proof, right? Yeah. Just something that says, or since I started this, I've had, you know, five fantastic years with my spouse, whatever. Just enough in the beginning to say, okay, this works.

AJ Harper ([12:33](#)):

Right? That's what the reader is thinking. And you also, if there is a framework, you got to lay it out. So not everybody has one, but if you have steps, a method, a process of some kind, give an overview so that they basically get it. Okay. Right. Then we also like to have an early win. So an early win would be, and this is very important. It can, it's hard to do in Chapter One, but you've got to do it by Chapter Two. So in *Clockwork*, which you were mentioning in the original, I'd say we had two. But you said one of them was actually hard. So we had it

Mike Michalowicz ([13:17](#)):

And, and it's ironic. I thought it was gonna be the easy one.

AJ Harper ([13:19](#)):

Yeah. So the early wins in the original *Clockwork* were to take one, it was a play on *Profit First*. Because in *Profit First*, the early win does work. Yes. Which is to open a bank account and take 1 percent of your deposits. Yes. And keep it as profit. Yes. That's been a success. So the, we did the same thing in *Clockwork*, but with 1% of your time. Right. So to take 1 percent out of your schedule to reserve toward focusing on *Clockwork* was hard. But there was a second early win, which was operation vacation. Yeah. To set, just pick the date for your four-week vacation

Mike Michalowicz ([13:58](#)):

And tell your family.

AJ Harper ([14:00](#)):

And friends, and tell your family and friends.

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

I'll tell you why that's so important. *Clockwork* has sold over a hundred thousand copies now, and I've interviewed people about the deployment of it. People are not judicious with their own time. So, and, and I know it's my own behavior now in retrospect is I'm, I'm gonna start taking Fridays off or whatever it is. And then when an opportunity or obligation would come up, I would say, "Oh, you know, I can squeeze in on Friday."

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Mike Michalowicz ([14:28](#)):

Erin manages my schedule now, including my personal schedule. Like everything. She protects my time vigilantly. So when someone comes up and say, I need to talk with Mike, it's urgent. She's like, well, he's available on Monday. He's available on Thursday. He ain't available on Friday. He has an obligation. No, I can't break. She protects the time more. So what's interesting about this front loading and the early wins specifically, I assumed, and I was doing it, but I assumed that by allocating 1% a half hour in your car to, to sit and think about your business as opposed to working on your business would be so easy. But people as a general rule, are not judicial. They don't protect their time.

Mike Michalowicz ([15:10](#)):

When we set operation vacation, a four week vacation blocking your calendar because there was this cross commitment to family and others, those people were enforcing the commitment and you couldn't get out of it. Sure. So, ironically, this what I thought was bigger obligation is easier because there's external parties enforcing it.

AJ Harper ([15:26](#)):

So sometimes we hit the mark and sometimes it's harder. But the idea of an early win is that very early in the book, no later than chapter two, you're giving the reader some sense of accomplishment. That then helps them see that, oh, this works. Right? So when they feel, start to feel that, then they want to keep going to do more. So we have a tendency, um, well, not we authors have a tendency to give these action steps and exercises that they really haven't thought too much about how hard it is to execute how long it will take, what resources are available, what is the resistance? And if they've been giving these exercises to others and say a mastermind or coaching, they, they forget that they don't have the ability to actually coach a person through that because it's just written on the page. So people have become over time with prescriptive nonfiction sort of numb to it. Like they don't even take the exercises too seriously. Because who has time to do that? Or we give them an exercise that's fluff. Like, I'm, this is the one that I always say, my students will laugh when they hear this, journal for 20 minutes. Why? To what end? You know, <laugh>. Right. Okay. Maybe there is a really good reason, but you better sell it on me because it's an every dang book to journal.

Mike Michalowicz ([17:01](#)):

It really is.

AJ Harper ([17:02](#)):

Like enough with the journaling. Unless you're gonna say to me, I need you to journal exactly this, because then this will happen. Okay. Fine. I'll do that then. But, so, because we haven't really, people historically have not been thinking too much about these exercises and action steps. You need to be careful about it. Really think, okay, what's gonna give them actual payoff? And in for the least amount of effort. So the 1% in Clockwork, that wasn't working, it does work in *Profit First*.

Mike Michalowicz ([17:38](#)):

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Hands down.

AJ Harper ([17:38](#)):

It also needs to be something that they want. Right. So it can't just be something, it has to solve something immediate for them. Just a tiny little solve. And, uh, sometimes you'll hit it and sometimes you won't, but you can always test it. You know, it can, you can test it with folks and see if that's something that would work by just issuing a challenge or something. As you're writing the book and see if people do it. The early win really gets people excited about what else you have to share with them.

Mike Michalowicz ([18:07](#)):

We had an epiphany, and this really wasn't for front loading, but I think the story relates in All In, in making something micro accessible, something that you can easily do. You and I were working on this concept of workshops and basically saying, interviews don't work, have people go through an experience. And the belief is that top performers always want to get better. If you're a great writer, you're gonna go to Stephen Pressfield's course, right? If I like to play guitar, I'll probably take guitar classes. So become a teacher and you'll attract people who want to learn. Learners are usually top performers. And then they demonstrate curiosity, desire, and thirst. And to people have curiosity, desire and thirst are people with the best candidate. So he said, put on these workshops between these training events.. It was, it's a big thing to do.

Mike Michalowicz ([18:50](#)):

And it's overwhelming to a lot of people. Some, yeah. And one day I was, so this is a tip. Start speaking on this. I was doing a speech, and one guy comes up after the presentation, says, dude, do you know the shortest, easiest way to do a workshop? I said, what is it? He goes, go to one that already exists. Go as a student to observe the other students. And I, I called you like, seconds later, I'm like, this dude. I'm like, Hey man, what's your name? It, he must have been like a, an angel or something, because he just disappeared. <laugh>. He vanished.

Mike Michalowicz ([19:18](#)):

But I was like, oh! But I called you. I said, this is it. And we inserted it into the book. And when a reader reads that section, like, holy cow, I can do a workshop just by attending someone else's. We didn't front load that necessarily, but it does show the power of making something super accessible. The first step. It's kind of the Prato principle. What's the smallest thing that 20 percent that gives you 8 percent of the way there.

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

Even just 2 percent. <Laugh>. Like just, yeah.

Mike Michalowicz ([19:43](#)):

Two percent.

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AJ Harper ([19:43](#)):

You get 70 percent. It's a thinker. You know, you're not gonna come up with it right away. For, for my book, I did early wins. I did early wins, but I did a win in each chapter. And what I wanted was, what I see with authors is that they write in the cave. They're very nervous to tell anyone they're doing it.

AJ Harper ([20:06](#)):

And because of that, they don't get any feedback on their messaging or any of that. So they very often miss opportunities to get support. They need to get clarification to get collaboration from other people. So at the end of each chapter, I had a book in the wild section where I asked them to then share something that they had completed in that chapter on social. Or in some way to start getting, and the early win then is they immediately are gonna get us some feedback. They're gonna feel good. . So for me, I was very purposeful. I want them to feel good because authorship can be lonely and hard. It isn't all the time, but it often is. And this way the win is, oh, <laugh>, people are excited about my book. Yay. And so to keep that happy feeling, and I did that at the end of each chapter.

Mike Michalowicz ([21:03](#)):

In the cave, people are afraid to put the word out what they're working on. What, what's the reason behind that justification?

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

Because they, because they think no one's going to, they think, who am I to write this? And who's gonna like it?

Mike Michalowicz ([21:16](#)):

Okay. So there's that.

AJ Harper ([21:17](#)):

And what if I don't finish it?

Mike Michalowicz ([21:19](#)):

Is there also though, if I put this out now, someone else will steal the idea?

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

Oh yeah. There's, there's some of that. There's some of that. Don't worry about it. It's some monumental effort to get a book done.

Mike Michalowicz ([21:30](#)):

Yeah. And I would argue, once you put an idea out there, if it's documented in some form, if it's on a blog or on a podcast, you're showing you're a source of an idea. I we're, we're gonna be working on a new book. I, I already started putting ideas out there. And there's this one, I'll share it right now that is

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landing. I discovered it for myself X years ago. I got frustrated around subscriptions. I have this thing called hydro. It's like a rowing machine. And you pay X dollars a month. Uh, we have, I feel like every TV subscription you can have from Netflix to HBO M'ax to, you got to have Apple because Ted Lassos on there or whatever. And they're on the credit cards and debit cards. And I couldn't figure out how much we're spending in subscriptions. Oh.

Mike Michalowicz ([22:14](#)):

And we also, my wife and I make a monthly donation to a, a charity that my father benefited from before he passed. And so I said, we're, we're gonna get one credit card just for subscriptions. Every subscription's gonna go on there. So one statement's gonna come in every month. It's only our subscriptions. And I did that about a year and a half ago. And the first one came in, I almost had a heart attack, how much we're paying in subscriptions. Wow. It brought such clarity to it. And we're like, we don't need this. I don't need the hydro subscription. I don't need that. We were able to cut it in half <snaps> like that. Because the clarity, I've been sharing that. And you can just gauge people's response to an audience. All of a sudden, like the light bulbs go and there's people taking notes and, and committing to doing this. When you discover something that's working, is that something that should be, that's a tactical component. It doesn't speak to the framework of what we're gonna be writing, but it's a very tactical aha moment. Is that something that should be front loaded because there's an early win?

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

I mean, it could be. I think you just have to decide, what could I give, what could I ask my reader to do that's gonna give them some sense of relief? Make them feel like they're making progress. Help them feel good. Whatever you want them to feel. So first you have to decide what I want them to feel. Then you need to figure out what's gonna get them there with the least amount of effort. I mean, if you give them an early win that takes them a whole weekend to do, that's not, it's not gonna work. It needs to be quick.

Mike Michalowicz ([23:40](#)):

Instantaneous, if you can. Does it need to be irrevocable?

AJ Harper ([23:45](#)):

No.

Mike Michalowicz ([23:45](#)):

Okay.

AJ Harper ([23:46](#)):

No. It just needs to make them feel like they're making progress in some way toward the thing, whatever the thing is. And the thing could be an emotional thing or it could be tangible. It just depends on who you're writing for and what they want.

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Mike Michalowicz ([24:00](#)):

Last question I got for you is, if I put it all, if I front load everything, they may not read the book.

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

Meaning they'll just read the first two chapters.

Mike Michalowicz ([24:11](#)):

Yeah. First two chapters. Is that a good thing? Is that a bad thing? You know, I, at the end of the day, I want to impact as many people as possible. And I have this compulsion, like if they're not finishing the book, I'm not of service. Another quick story, this is years ago, Toilet Paper Entrepreneur, our first book project together. I'm on M-S-N-B-C in the Green Room. And someone comes up, is like, oh, I know your book. Toilet Paper Entrepreneur. I love it. And I said, oh, thank you so much. It means world to me. What do you love about it? Actually it was, it was *Profit First*. I take it back. It was *Profit First*. Yeah. I know your book *Profit First*. I love it. I said, what do you love about it? And then they kind of looked around and said, well, I, I haven't read it. <Laugh> I'm like, how do you love it? Like, everyone's talking about it. Or I know that.

AJ Harper ([24:50](#)):

Well, the concept is that that works for *Profit First* because the gist is in its title.

Mike Michalowicz ([24:55](#)):

Title, yeah. <laugh>. But it, that is that a win to you win a fan over just because they're, they're moved by it. And maybe they've read one or two chapters, but they'll never read the rest of it. They can be just as big of an advocate proponent for it. So does it matter if they consume your whole book? And maybe it's just the title. Is that still a win? What's your thoughts?

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

I want your readers to read every dang word of that book.

Mike Michalowicz ([25:18](#)):

Yeah, me too.

AJ Harper ([25:19](#)):

Every dang word. But I'm just saying that if you front load it, the folks who don't have time, sometimes it's just you. There's no,

Mike Michalowicz ([25:28](#)):

Yeah.

AJ Harper ([25:29](#)):

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You can't fight sometimes if someone has six kids and this and that, like, what are you gonna do? Right. You know, give them the goods. Give them the book. (I love it.) And then they're more likely to keep reading. There is a craft. So I'm gonna speak to this, actually, let me let me back up. It's okay if your first two chapters are free to, they have the whole thing in it. That's not gonna stop people from buying it. It's not gonna stop people from talking to you and finding you. It's just not, we're so worried with this scarcity mindset about hold everything close to the vest. Don't give people the stuff. No. Give people the stuff. It's, they just want more from you, then. If it's of service to them, this isn't gonna work. If you wrote something that isn't, if you wrote something very egocentric or whatever, who cares? But don't be afraid to, to give them those two chapters. Don't say, oh, I can't give them the goods. Because that's my free chapter. who cares?

Mike Michalowicz ([26:37](#)):

Preach, sister. Preach.

AJ Harper ([26:38](#)):

But I also want to say, and this is really important, I think a lot of people don't know this, getting people to turn the page and keep reading is a craft. It's a craft. And the way I teach it is about considering what the reader needs at every stage on every page. So you can do it. There's all sorts of techniques. It's not even about talent. It's, there is a craft to writing a book that people want to keep reading. So you can do that. And one of the components of that craft for prescriptive nonfiction is to freaking front load. Because how many times have you read a book where there's like three chapters on mindset before you get to do anything? How many times have you had to go into like chapter eight or nine.

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

Right, to get to the meat? Yeah.

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

I mean, what on earth?

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

It's like, no more salad for God's sake.

AJ Harper ([27:35](#)):

Yes. So you can still, if you need those mindset chapters, you can, first of all, I question if you do.

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

Yeah, I agree

AJ Harper ([27:44](#)):

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<laugh>. Secondly, if you do, you don't, they don't have to be first. You can always back into it. Front loading doesn't mean everything you want to say about your framework. It's just, this is the problem. This is what I think doesn't work. This is what does work. And this is how I know, and this is the way forward. And if you do that, this is what's promised. Bing, bang, boom. Okay, now let's get into it.

Mike Michalowicz ([28:11](#)):

This is a little bit reminds me of, uh, a story about Napster, but I'll first start off with the Grateful Dead. The Grateful Dead famously encouraged people to create these bootleg tapes.

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

Bootlegs man.

Mike Michalowicz ([28:22](#)):

Yeah. And they even had a special section for them, which was the best recording section so people could record the concert and then distribute it. Napster. I was talking with an author who said, uh, most authors like, I don't want, remember Napster was like this free sharing thing. He's like, you know, you're, someone will get your book, they'll PDF it, and then they'll put it on Napster, and now it's getting out there. And that's, that sucks. And this author said, that's what most authors thinks. He's like, you should be so lucky to be on Napster, that people want to rip off your book. That they want to bootleg it because they're, they're spreading the word. So giving away the first four chapters of a book. Honestly, I wouldn't care. I really don't, I'm saying this maybe, maybe I don't mean it, but I feel like I don't care if every one of my books is in PDF format and giving away freely. And the reason I'm thinking I'm saying that is because they all are, you can find them.

AJ Harper ([29:12](#)):

They, they... You can do take down notices. I mean,

Mike Michalowicz ([29:15](#)):

They are, but--

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

They're, they're, but they keep coming. They're

Mike Michalowicz ([29:18](#)):

Gonna keep coming. And, and you know what? It, it just gets the word out. It, it, it, that person who downloads it for free, I don't know what their circumstances are to do that, but I can still win them over and they can become a fan and they can continue the momentum. They can tell other people about it. I think it is actually, if, if someone's boot legging your stuff, it's because it's good enough to be boot leagged.

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

Listen, you're on a mission. It's not, yes, you want to get paid, you want to get paid royalties, but man, you're, you're trying to do something bigger than that. And I, I think that's what our listeners are trying to do as well. I also, I think there's this sense of this is all I've got, you know? Yeah. I've had some people ripping off some of my language, ideas, the way I teach. Yeah. It's happening more and more. And I just think my team gets mad, you know? And I, I get annoyed at first.

Mike Michalowicz ([30:12](#)):

Me too. Me too.

AJ Harper ([30:13](#)):

But I always think, I got more man. Like if you, that's not all I have. Correct. So I wonder if some of that is the issue with front loading too. You know, like I'm, I'm hoarding the good stuff and I'll give it to you when I'm ready. In the book. But then you think maybe they aren't interested in the rest of what I have to say, but they are. And you have more. This isn't it, it's not the only good idea.

Mike Michalowicz ([30:39](#)):

It forces you to elevate the game.

AJ Harper ([30:42](#)):

Yes. I mean, I just, maybe I just know that because this is what I do, but we have more, you know how I know? This is what happens. An author comes into my workshop, I'm only writing one book. I say, okay, great. I'll help you do that. "I'm just doing one." I heard you. No problem. And then what happens? I got another book couple months later. Year later. Hi. <Laugh> Can I come back to class? I have a book two. An example of that is John Briggs who wrote his second book, which is so good. I have to tell you. And I have to text him. I keep forgetting to text him. His book showed up in a book proposal as a comp and--

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

Oh, really? For one of your students? How did you-- Oh, that's amazing.

AJ Harper ([31:27](#)):

Yeah. I was like, what? It's The 3.3 Rule. It's John Briggs 3.3 Rule. Y'all please get this book. It's absolutely, completely changed the way I do my whole life. Yep. Unbelievable book about how to work.

Mike Michalowicz ([31:44](#)):

Yeah.

AJ Harper ([31:46](#)):

And he was adamant that he was not doing another book. And it happens all the time. I think there's something in us with the book, first book. We think this is the thing. This is, I've got to put it all in. I don't

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have anything else. You know what? Just front load it, write the rest of it. You probably have another book. That's, anyway, I I, I think there's just fear. There's just fear in putting it all out there in the first two chapters.

Mike Michalowicz ([32:16](#)):

Yeah. I totally agree. And I just, I want to add to your point with, um, when you put it out there and other people start replicating it or using it, I think we have to realize we've also replicated and use other stuff. We, we are all a student of our life's journey, which is inputs from all over the place. So everything we create is just a amalgamation of what we've discovered and learned. This is our own presentation of it. So that's natural. I look at musicians and it, like the first person that came out with rap music was interpreting maybe R&B or some other form of music. But then everyone starts replicating that and then it's always derivatives of rap. It's just this normal ongoing kind of transformation. Could you imagine the first rapper said, I'm never gonna just rap because I don't want anyone to discover this. I want it to be me. Uh, if they didn't put it out there, we wouldn't have this new genre. And when you do put it out there, to your point, you have to elevate, you have to play at a new level and discover new things.

AJ Harper ([33:12](#)):

Yeah. So front loading is what I advocate for. Prescriptive nonfiction.

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

I'm a massive believer in it. So do it. <Laugh>

AJ Harper ([33:20](#)):

Yeah. I mean, what you could do, you could say to yourself, I haven't thought about it. I just thought of this. Now you could say, what if I only have three chapters? If I'm only allowed to write three chapters? Yeah. What would that be? And then you might have your first three chapters.

Mike Michalowicz ([33:36](#)):

That's a great frame.

AJ Harper ([33:37](#)):

That's a good, yes. Make your, I love constraints. Just as an exercise. What if, what if I only had that? How would I do? It allows, frees you up so that you say, okay, if I only had that, what would it be? And then you're getting to the essence of it. You don't have to stick with that. But the constraints help.

Mike Michalowicz ([33:57](#)):

You just invented something on our show here. (I did.) You have a workshop called the J three C, just three chapters.

AJ Harper ([34:02](#)):

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<laugh>. Like, you almost do the, you are obsessed with acronyms.

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

J three C!

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

You can't, you're, you have an addiction to them.

Mike Michalowicz ([34:10](#)):

I do. But it brings it up a little bit of mystery. What's a J Three C? You don't know the J three C. It was invented by **AJ Harper** on the, on the show.

AJ Harper ([34:15](#)):

It sounds like something from like bible camp.

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

It does. A little bit. Yeah. What would J three C do? <laugh>. Alright. Thank you for listening to the Don't Write That Book podcast. Our website has free materials for you. You can join our email list. We'll give you updates. What's going on? I want one day for me and AJ to be in a, uh, live audience like a studio or in a theater doing a live broadcast.

AJ Harper ([34:41](#)):

<laugh> Who's gonna come to that?

Mike Michalowicz ([34:43](#)):

Whoever's on our email list.

AJ Harper ([34:44](#)):

Bunch of authors would.

Mike Michalowicz ([34:46](#)):

That'd be badass? We would have so much fun. So if you want,

AJ Harper ([34:49](#)):

I would do it.

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

You would. Wouldn't that be great? And there's some podcasts. Do it. Why not?

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AJ Harper ([34:54](#)):

Oh yeah. They're giant. Like murder podcasts. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz ([34:57](#)):

But why not an itty bitty book podcast? <Laugh> If a giant murderer can do it. So go to [dwtb podcast.com](#), join our email list. Hey, you may see us live. Also, we'd love to hear from you. Emails at hello@dwtbpodcast.com. AJ and I both get those emails. It goes through Adayla. She sorts it out for us and she forwards it to us. But we've been getting great feedback. We really appreciate it's inspiring us to do more. We want to hear your stories and also what makes a bestseller, what would help you make your bestseller. We want your suggestions, your questions so we can help support you. Thanks again for listening to today's episode. Start front loading now because we want you to write the book of your dreams. As always, don't write that book. Write this one.