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Episode 35:

AJ's Book Monetization Strategies

Mike Michalowicz (00:00):

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. We're recording. And I got a question for you. When does an invasive species-- <laugh> When does an invasive species not become invasive? It's now native. Because everything was invasive at some point, I presume.

AJ Harper (00:29):

I, you know, I, I didn't even pass, I don't think. I'm pretty sure I passed biology

Mike Michalowicz (00:34):

For plants. Because I'm kind of into it. There's invasive, non-invasive, exotic, non-Native, native. It's in all these different categories. And I wonder what the differences, I guess invasive is where it destroys the native planet.

AJ Harper (00:50):

Right. So it's gonna choke out. (Yeah.) Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz (00:53):

So you, you pointed out those purple trees because I was talking about that one episode outside our window here,

AJ Harper (00:57):

And it looks just like wisteria. I

Mike Michalowicz (00:59):

Thought it was hysteria. You're like, it's not. I did too. It's an invasive species.

AJ Harper (01:01):

Yeah. And we have it over in New York too, where I live. It's taken over the, you see them dotted everywhere and it looks beautiful. Beautiful, beautiful. They're, they're not purple right now. Because it was a spring thing. Correct. But then I learned, I don't know the name of it. But sure. It's, I kept thinking, well, what, why didn't I notice these before? Yeah. Because they weren't there.

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

That's fa It's just a few years ago. And they're everywhere.

AJ Harper ([01:27](#)):

Yes. Everywhere. Dotting the entire Well, you, I'm pointing at a window, which of course, yeah, I know. I'm like, display. I, I'm like Vanna right now. We were just talking about Vanna. I'm displaying this beautiful picture window where Mike lives and where I live is, you would think being in the New York metro area, that it would just be urban sprawl. But no, we live in a beautiful,

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

It's beautiful. You can see, uh, I guess those are mountains in the distance, way. The distance. New Jersey mountains. So not massive. Or they're, they're big hills.

AJ Harper ([01:57](#)):

Yeah. And I live in the lower Hudson River Valley.

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

You know where you live is gorgeous.

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

Gorgeous. And we always see our trees. And lately we have invasive species that look like hysteria.

Mike Michalowicz ([02:09](#)):

Yeah. I, I guess thing called burning bush as it's the Home Depot. The Home Depot. I get burning bush, which in the fall, the colors are bright reds and stuff. Beautiful. It's like, all right, I'll get this bush because I need a bush. I plant it. My daughter's like, that's invasive. Sure enough, it is. She's like, return it to Home Depot. But why would a store sell something that's invasive?

AJ Harper ([02:29](#)):

I don't know. I gotta tell you a little thing. I just had to spend three grand digging up my backyard. What? So the previous owner of my house had put a bamboo--

Mike Michalowicz ([02:40](#)):

Oh!

AJ Harper ([02:41](#)):

Fence. "Fence" in quote marks. Yeah. To block the, a neighbor on the other street.

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Mike Michalowicz ([02:48](#)):

<affirmative>.

AJ Harper ([02:49](#)):

And I'm a don't know what do I know? Yeah. So we've been trimming it, taking care of it. Well, it started popping up all over the yard and into my neighbors. Poking through their driveway. Oh, yeah. So I have this landscaper come out and he's like, we gotta dig up the whole yard. The, so now I just, this weekend, my whole yard got dug up.

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

Oh my gosh.

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

I hope it works because--

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

What, what about the driveway, your neighbor, do they threaten or anything? Is it, is it cordial?

AJ Harper ([03:22](#)):

Mean, I just said, just send me a bill.

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

Oh

AJ Harper ([03:24](#)):

My God. You know, what are you supposed, the only thing you can say to a neighbor is send me a bill. Like, it's not, you know.

Mike Michalowicz ([03:29](#)):

Not our old neighbors, uh, lived in Succasunna, out west of here.

AJ Harper ([03:34](#)):

It sounds like a made up town.

Mike Michalowicz ([03:35](#)):

I know it's an Indian name. Like there are a lot of them.

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

Are I Oh, we have, yeah. Everyone has them. Yeah. But it's still, it does the, because of the word sucks.

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Mike Michalowicz ([03:42](#)):

It sounds like Widgy Wa or wherever you went to.

AJ Harper ([03:44](#)):

Widgiwagan.

Mike Michalowicz ([03:45](#)):

Widgiwagan. Yeah. Yeah. So a tree fell from, uh, the neighbor who was not nice to the other neighbor who was nice onto their, the nice neighbor's property, uh, destroying a fence, destroy other things. So they go to their neighbor and they say, Hey, could you, you know, clean something, get repaired? They said, no. It fell on your property. So how the law is, is where the tree fell. I can't remember what the nuances were, but legally bad neighbor was in the right. Good neighbor's property was destroyed, but bad neighbors said, screw you. Even though it was their tree. Because it was, it was <crosstalk>.

AJ Harper ([04:23](#)):

And that's why they're called bad neighbor.

Mike Michalowicz ([04:24](#)):

Bad. Yeah. Yeah. And it did not, it was not, did not go well.

AJ Harper ([04:26](#)):

I, I'd, yeah, I'd rather be on speaking terms with my neighbor.

Mike Michalowicz ([04:29](#)):

Talking about good neighbors. AJ Harper's here. Yeah.

AJ Harper ([04:31](#)):

I'm a good neighbor.

Mike Michalowicz ([04:32](#)):

Yeah, I think you are. And you're known in, here's what another thing I admire about you, you know, your neighborhood. So yes, when we go to Nyack, you know, all like the nuanced spaces, not just, you know, we'll go out to eat or something. But like the library and the, and that one session we did together where we you rented a coworking space. It's just, you know your community so well. And there's like these little nooks and crannies and it inspires great conversations. I think if we were in a standard brick building, like a school or something like that, the dialogue would be different than some of these really, sometimes eclectic spaces.

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AJ Harper ([05:11](#)):

Yeah. Last time we met at Didier Dumas, which is our patisserie in Nyack.

Mike Michalowicz ([05:16](#)):

Yeah. (That was fun.) Yeah. That was amazing. It just inspires great communications. Sometimes there, there are active spaces and you see like this variety of the community coming you through. Uh, one time there was some, I think we were in the library. Some dude, like in the room. We were trying to work in <laugh> I think. So he wouldn't leave or, so he just like reading.

AJ Harper ([05:34](#)):

We did. Sorry.

Mike Michalowicz ([05:35](#)):

Yeah. He was fine. But that inspires, you know, the space you're in inspires different experiences. Conversely, just to give a comparison how good you're at this, I pick a space and we, we do a retreat there. And it's like this 1970s dungeon. Um, remember that crappy house? It was like in some really sketch neighborhood?

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

That was in Warwick.

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

In Warwick. Yeah. So

AJ Harper ([05:56](#)):

I think, think I might have picked it though.

Mike Michalowicz ([05:59](#)):

Oh, I, I want to blame you, but no, it was me. I think. Whatever.

AJ Harper ([06:03](#)):

Uh, conversely, uh, this is what it's like to go with you downtown Bunton, New Jersey. Everyone. I, you walk into an establishment and you know these people and it's like you've known them forever. (Wow.) And maybe you have, it's such a lovely congenial familiarity. (Yeah.) With all the little owners of all the little mom and pops. (Yes.) Wherever we go in to get a bite or coffee or whatever, you know, they know you, you know them. Sometimes you're even speaking in whatever language. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz ([06:35](#)):

Trying! <attempts Chinese>

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

But it's true respect and love. Yeah. Absolutely. For the business owners in this town, up and down the street up and down the street,

Mike Michalowicz ([06:44](#)):

There's a woman, I don't know who it is, she screams Profit First! Every time she sees me <laugh>, but usually after I walk by, because I don't know who it is. I don't know her, but I remember I was walking.

AJ Harper ([06:56](#)):

Was she just, like a yells at you?

Mike Michalowicz ([06:58](#)):

Yells at <laugh>, but like a cheer almost. Like, so I was walking by and like, (woo hoo, Profit First?) Yeah. Yeah. Okay. I went by, she goes, I'm like, Jesus, what the hell is happening? I thought someone got killed. And I, I just do a fist pump. I don't even look back anymore. I just do a fist pump in the air. So, um, today we're going to talk about your monetization

AJ Harper ([07:14](#)):

Strategies. Yeah. The last episode was your monetization strategies.

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

Yeah. When did you realize for yourself that there was monetization strategies beyond a book? I assume prior to writing, but maybe not?

AJ Harper ([07:29](#)):

My own book or just in general?

Mike Michalowicz ([07:31](#)):

Yeah. Your own book.

AJ Harper ([07:32](#)):

Well, I knew it before I wrote it. I mean, because that's what I do.

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

<laugh> I understand. But did you get it viscerally? I mean, did you, did you really get the importance of it?

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

Yeah, for sure. Okay. Yeah.

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Mike Michalowicz ([07:44](#)):

I think some people write a book thinking that's their only source of income and don't really consider the other options. And I don't think they go in planned either. If they do discover, oh, you can make money elsewhere.

AJ Harper ([07:54](#)):

Well, maybe, I don't know, my experience is people are too focused on the monetization and not focused enough on royalties and actually selling so that they don't think about selling. Which we talk, we talk about all the time. And again, is the source of, is the reason we do this podcast. But, uh, I do think you're correct in that I don't think people really plan it. So they have some concept. I think a lot of people do books thinking it's just gonna raise their profile, raise speaking fees, get them speaking gigs. Lead gen, lead gen, lead gen. The best lead gen there is, is a great book that you're actively trying to sell <laugh>. You know, but I, but yeah, I think people aren't really, they don't know how to think about the monetization sometimes. And it's okay. It's overwhelming.

Mike Michalowicz ([08:42](#)):

Well, let's talk about, don't write that book specifically. I feel, I want to get your perception on this. If someone writes a book specifically with the intention of marketing that is, it's far less effective than writing a book that's of service. (Right.) That will generate great marketing. What are some of the distinguishing features or elements of writing a great book that doesn't focus on marketing that then markets you well, in your opinion, versus...

AJ Harper ([09:11](#)):

Well, we did several episodes on it. So I'll just say in a nutshell, a book that meets the reader where they are and then takes them through a process that delivers on a promise transformation. Right. Meets them where they are and takes them through a process that delivers on a promise transformation. That's it. That is literally it. The challenge is that takes some doing because you have to think about a lot of things, make a lot of decisions considering the reader the entire time. But if you do that, then you have people who love almost everything you do. If you think about it, just, let me just stop for a minute. Think about it. Let's say you had a mentor just in your life, not even book related. Somebody who really shaped you, helped you get something you want, achieve something, learn something important, overcome a rough time, whatever it is, therapist, teacher, coach. Right. Would you do anything for that person?

Mike Michalowicz ([10:19](#)):

Absolutely.

AJ Harper ([10:19](#)):

It's the same. It's the same.

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Mike Michalowicz ([10:22](#)):

Oh, it's so good, dude.

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

It's the same. But we get so fixated on my book, my stories, my ideas, my frameworks, my, the, my, my, my that first of all, that actually becomes its own problem in getting the book done, because we have so much angst and insecurity around my stuff. But more importantly, it's not actually, that's what true service is, is how can I facilitate this change? How can I make this happen if we do that for, that's why people come up to you, Mike, and say, oh my gosh. You know, that's why some, maybe that's why someone's shouting at you in the street.

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

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah.

AJ Harper ([11:02](#)):

I'm experiencing it now myself in ways that I didn't expect to experience because I really wrote Write a Must-Read so that it would be available to folks who couldn't take my class. That is strictly it. That is, I did not write it. I already have my workshop. I don't need, I don't scale it. I only take 15 students a year. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I'm not, you know, <laugh>, I have this, there's this one. I don't really care about negative reviews. We've talked about that. There's this one negative review on Goodreads that says, Write a Must-Read was to sell my workshop. <laugh> <laugh>.

AJ Harper ([11:42](#)):

It's not an effective strategy when I, I don't scale it. Right. There's only 15. Right. But I did just write it because I thought, oh, there's only 15. This isn't gonna be helpful. I'm trying to change things. I'm trying to make this easier for people. I'm trying to speak to that part of them that knows they can write a book that makes a difference. Yeah. And doesn't the, for the people who see what's out there in terms of writing prescriptive nonfiction books and feel disconnected or deflated by it, because it all, it's focused on getting something done quickly or following some sort of template and it doesn't really speak to their yearning. Right? So that's why I wrote it. I just wrote it because, oh, I thought this isn't right. You've got to, just to almost democratize the knowledge.

Mike Michalowicz ([12:37](#)):

There's three criticisms that any book can receive. It's a glorified brochure. Right? Selling a workshop. Could have been a blog post. You know, summarize it in one sentence or one paragraph.

AJ Harper ([12:49](#)):

In a blog post.

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Mike Michalowicz ([12:50](#)):

Right? Uh, and then the last one is too many stories. Always those criticisms come out. You know, the, the essence of a book is, it better tell great stories. It better brings people through a journey, aka not a blog post. Yeah. And it better be so effective in the prescriptive face that it is a workshop in its own itself.

AJ Harper ([13:09](#)):

Yeah. I mean, the only reason that I talk about my workshop in my book is because I'm using examples to try and be helpful to people. Yeah. Right. So I'm trying to share some of my students' experiences, and I don't, that's, that's what I have to draw from. I can't talk about my ghost writing clients that much, so... You know, that's what I got.

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

So in last week's episode, I was sharing some strategies I use, I would love to hear yeses and Nos on each of these from you. Licensing. Do you use that? (No.) Okay. Speaking.

AJ Harper ([13:39](#)):

No.

Mike Michalowicz ([13:40](#)):

But you kind of do.

AJ Harper ([13:41](#)):

Okay. So anytime. So some people might not know here on this podcast because I, I haven't talked about it that much actually. But I am a partner at Heroic. Michael and Amy Port created this premier, what I believe is the very best speaker training in the world.

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

Agreed.

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

And I'm very lucky to now be a partner and I'm the head writing coach there. And I do teach a class there for them, which is grad speech writing mastery. And I'm-- Love it. It's so much fun. And anytime Michael and Amy say, will you come talk? I mean, technically the teaching is speaking. I guess I would say that. I say yes to them, even though I'm petrified. I never say no to them. (Yeah.) So they've got,

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

But you sit in front of the class.

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AJ Harper ([14:29](#)):

I've done it speaking for them. Yeah. Right?

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

On stage.

AJ Harper ([14:33](#)):

I mean stage, yes. But not like stage.

Mike Michalowicz ([14:38](#)):

You know? Okay.

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

Yeah, sure. Not like you. I know I should.

Mike Michalowicz ([14:44](#)):

And, you know, you could,

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

I think I would be good at it.

Mike Michalowicz ([14:47](#)):

I think you'd be great at it.

AJ Harper ([14:49](#)):

And to be frank, I'll just be honest. It's because I have, you know, I, because of my weight. I'm not even really that concerned about what I look like so much. I'm used to people sometimes having looks at me and comments about me. And I'm working really hard to change it. In fact, I just started working with a trainer. Right. (Nice. Nice.) Yeah. But it's actually, you know, I don't know if I, frankly, if I have kind of the stamina for an hour-long performance. Yeah. So that's something that I would like to do eventually and I think I will be able to do eventually. But right now it's not part of my, it's certainly not anything I'm monetizing.

Mike Michalowicz ([15:31](#)):

I'm getting a little emotional. Because you said something, we were in Louisville together outside.

AJ Harper ([15:36](#)):

Yeah. For Kasey Compton's book release event.

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

And we had a really heartfelt conversation. And you said, uh, I wish I was invisible. I wish I could be invisible.

AJ Harper ([15:44](#)):

Well. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz ([15:44](#)):

And I was like, holy cow. Holy cow. That just affected me. Uh, and touched me so deeply, your journey and what you're experiencing. And it's such a shame that there's a resistance to speak because you are so good at it. We, we did an event together here in the author office in that conference space. You know, the, that big room, this has many years back.

AJ Harper ([16:05](#)):

Oh yeah. This is before it was the very last thing that happened before the covid. We all shut down. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz ([16:11](#)):

People were coming in with masks.

AJ Harper ([16:12](#)):

It was the beginning of March and we shut down in New York and New Jersey. I think it was like March 16th or 20th.

Mike Michalowicz ([16:18](#)):

It was touch or go if we should still do it. And we, we decided to do it. People, their jaws were dropped when you were speaking. Like, it was such a profound, heartfelt presentation. You're so good at it.

AJ Harper ([16:30](#)):

I mean, I think I'll do it. I just need to be a little stronger. (Yeah.) And I'm working on it.

Mike Michalowicz ([16:36](#)):

Yeah. Well, I think just sharing your stories too, just

AJ Harper ([16:39](#)):

I'm being more open about it. I know. I, I'm talking, I'm, I'm talking more about it also because I feel that, I don't think people realize how people of size go through the world.

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Mike Michalowicz ([16:51](#)):

You--

AJ Harper ([16:52](#)):

You know, and it's, I think I, I'm, if most people my size don't do anything in terms of just getting out. (Yeah.) You know, I always go. I just got back from a fantastic event that Jen Kem had. Um, she has an a book coming out next year. I'm super proud of her. I almost canceled it three times. Yeah. Because it's a big chore for me to go through the airport Yeah. And do all this stuff. And then you never know when you get to the events, is it gonna be comfortable for you or is it not gonna be comfortable? And so I'm working to change that right now because I, that's what I want, is I just want to be free.

Mike Michalowicz ([17:28](#)):

I'm so proud of your openness.

AJ Harper ([17:30](#)):

I'm trying to be a more open about it. It's not, you know, it's, I think it's helpful for people to hear. You

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

Are an effing good speaker. I remember also at Kasey Compton's event, there's about a hundred people there.

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

Oh my God. She did that to me. She's like,

Mike Michalowicz ([17:40](#)):

Hey, I hope you don't mind, AJ. Here's a microphone. And you're effectively delivering a 10 minute presentation. Impromptu in front of a hundred people. And it was moving and powerful. All right, so let's talk about more monetization of things.

AJ Harper ([17:53](#)):

All right. Thanks for that. <Laugh>

Mike Michalowicz ([17:54](#)):

Yeah. There, there we go. Thanks for that. Uh, starting a business. Have you monetized your book that way?

AJ Harper ([18:00](#)):

I mean, I think I already had the business, so it's really not, it's not something I started because of the book. The book wasn't... Came from the business.

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

Right. Live events. Yes. I would say, well, you're doing the workshops. I know that was

AJ Harper ([18:13](#)):

Yeah. I do live events.

Mike Michalowicz ([18:13](#)):

Live events, live edits. You do, you do these interesting reads. Uh, you started that, um, the Sprints organization. Swag. Are you doing swag?

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

I give stuff away. Okay. I'm, I, I think

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

I'm What would be some swag items you give away?

AJ Harper ([18:28](#)):

Mugs. T-shirts. I'll probably do. I'm working, I have some ideas for some journals and things that I think would be cool.

Mike Michalowicz ([18:37](#)):

Okay. Oh, that's cool.

AJ Harper ([18:38](#)):

But. Uh, but at right now I'm not.

Mike Michalowicz ([18:40](#)):

Okay. So then let's talk about the things that you are doing. How do you plant seeds for revenue generation outside of your book? Do you do it in your book?

AJ Harper ([18:51](#)):

No, I do it in the book. And I think this is an important topic. I talk about this in my workshop, I think a mistake authors make, is that they don't consider this while they're writing the book. So therefore they either put too much in the book that's monetization, that they actually can't, they actually don't want to do or doesn't work out or they do nothing. So they miss an opportunity to plant seeds. And I don't know if you remember this, but back in the day, we were doing that actively with your books. It's not needed in the same way anymore because you handle things a little differently. But you're thinking about your own monetization while we're writing it. (That's right.) We talk about it. If you're gonna have a licensing

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licensee, we get that person involved. We'll have interviews with them. We'll look for opportunities to weave them into the content.

AJ Harper ([19:42](#)):

Sometimes they shape the, help shape part of the content. Like, uh, Danielle for All In. She was very active in that. Adrian Dorison, very active in the revised version of Clockwork. So we're thinking about that really early. But even if that you're not doing a licensee model, I think it's important to think about how you might monetize it so that you can then plant seeds for it. So an example that you might not remember is I used to ask you, okay, what are you hoping? What are you going to, how are you gonna leverage the book, this book, this one? And you would tell me, okay, I'm really trying to expand this. So a really good example of this is Profit First. Actually. So Profit First was book three, right?

Mike Michalowicz ([20:29](#)):

Sounds right. Pumpkin Plan was two. Yep.

AJ Harper ([20:32](#)):

At the time. So this would be the self-published version. At the time. I said to you, what are you hoping to improve? And you said, "Speaking." And I said, okay, great. So then I asked you, we, I want this kind of story. I want a Profit First-related story that is centered around a speaking engagement. You had meaning did you talk to someone and they shared something with you?

Mike Michalowicz ([20:58](#)):

Yes. I do remember you asking that.

AJ Harper ([20:59](#)):

Yes. So what I, my strategy is this, and I recommend for everybody that it's in the intro, not the, not the chapter one. It could be chapter one, but I think intro is better. So if you're trying to call something forward, choose an example, okay, from that shows you as that person

Mike Michalowicz ([21:18](#)):

Freaking brilliant.

AJ Harper ([21:20](#)):

Yes.

Mike Michalowicz ([21:20](#)):

How... Didn't--

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

That's why they pay me the big bucks.

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Mike Michalowicz ([21:22](#)):

I <laugh> didn't appreciate that when you were doing that. So I said, oh, this is a good story.

AJ Harper ([21:25](#)):

So no, I specifically said, wow, I need a speaking story. Yeah. That shows you as a speaker. But it has, it can't just be here's the speaking story. Yeah. It has to actually be a really good story. So we had a couple, and then we've settled on the one, and it's now famous. It's the Debbie Horowitz story for Creative Live. But it's centered around you being at a speaking gig.

Mike Michalowicz ([21:49](#)):

Yeah.

AJ Harper ([21:50](#)):

That you didn't say, I am a speaker who wants more gigs. We opened the dang book with you in a, a authoritative speaker role.

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

So smart.

AJ Harper ([22:01](#)):

So that was intentional at the time, because back then, what are we talking like 2010? No, 2014, you weren't getting the gigs like you are now. And you certainly weren't getting \$45K gigs. No,

Mike Michalowicz ([22:17](#)):

No.

AJ Harper ([22:17](#)):

So we just planted the seed for the revenue, the monetization that you wanted. And that's what I mean by planting the seed. So what I tell my students is think about what you want and then go about planting the seed. But do it in a legitimate way. Don't just say, you can buy my offer. I, I looked at a book recently that legit had <laugh>, uh, had, I'm so mad. <laugh>

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

I wish people could see your face.

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

<laugh> It had a whole chapter about how to do something and it's going to give away what the book is. So I'm not, I'm not saying it because I'm, I'm always respectful. I never want to trash. But it basically said, here's how you do this, but you can't really get the benefit of it unless you work with me. Yeah. Or us.

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Mike Michalowicz ([23:09](#)):

Stick a fork in me.

AJ Harper ([23:09](#)):

I'm done. And I was like, oh my God. First of all, the arrogance. (Correct.) Secondly, the disrespect.

Mike Michalowicz ([23:16](#)):

Correct.

AJ Harper ([23:17](#)):

Because the book is supposed to deliver on a promise. And if you can't deliver on the freaking promise without hiring the person, what the hell? Like, don't get me started on this. This is so rude. So don't do that.

Mike Michalowicz ([23:30](#)):

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AJ Harper ([23:31](#)):

Instead, you know, if you do want them to work with you, then show. And in fact, that book had zero client examples. It says, so they did it the absolute opposite way. Showed a framework, said The only way you're gonna get the full benefit is if you work with me. So now you've turned this into a brochure and did not show one good story and that would've worked better. So if the whole point is I want clients, okay, great. Then let's get some good client stories in here and not testimonials. (So smart.) Not testimonials, actually good stories. Which means you might have to try on a few ugly ducklings until you get the swan. It might be, let's do 10 interviews so we can get two good ones so that you actually find a useful story, a useful story. And that Debbie Horowitz story of you at Creative Live is super useful. Because it speaks to shame.

Mike Michalowicz ([24:25](#)):

Yep.

AJ Harper ([24:25](#)):

Like it was very carefully selected. Yep. You know, but the whole reason that story exists at all in your book is because you wanted to speak more.

Mike Michalowicz ([24:35](#)):

There was a commercial back in the seventies for Connect Four. Remember that game? Yes. And the, (I love Connect Four.) The little brother says to the sister, pretty sneaky sis. Yes. Yes. That's my, that was, that was you, pretty sneaky sis.

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AJ Harper ([24:48](#)):

Sneaky, but also of service.

Mike Michalowicz ([24:49](#)):

Well totally.

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

Of value. Just be, just be strategic about it.

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

Totally. And inspires people to hire you to speak.

AJ Harper ([24:58](#)):

That's what I mean by plant seeds for revenue. Okay.

Mike Michalowicz ([25:01](#)):

Are there other ways that you're doing it for yourself? You're not necessarily seeking speaking gigs currently?

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

I've got a whole bunch of stuff, but if I could just before we move on to share what I monetize. I just have these three questions and I ask these questions in my workshop from my students when I'm asking them to consider this. So when you're trying to decide how am I gonna monetize this book to plant seeds? Three questions. One, what does your reader need? To start with there, what's the value add? How can you help them in addition to that? And, and when you're doing that, consider entry as a point. So for me, I had to think, okay, well I really don't want more people in my workshop. I mean, I have enough. I'm not trying to sell it. What am I gonna do? <laugh>? And I came up with some stuff, which I'll talk about later, but I also needed to think about something just for me, based on my own value system that wasn't super expensive. My class is expensive. It's a big investment.

Mike Michalowicz ([25:58](#)):

What is the class fee?

AJ Harper ([26:00](#)):

So for Top Three Book Workshop, it's a 14 week class and it's 19 five.

Mike Michalowicz ([26:04](#)):

Okay.

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AJ Harper ([26:06](#)):

That does entitle you to be able to take the class forever.

Mike Michalowicz ([26:10](#)):

Nice.

AJ Harper ([26:11](#)):

That also gives you access to the sprint community forever. Gives you a lot of, you know, forever stuff. Um,

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

It's worth every penny.

AJ Harper ([26:20](#)):

Well, you couldn't get me as an editor for even, you could maybe get me on two or three chapters for that amount.

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

Yeah. And we, we did an episode about ghost writers and, and you know, someone will, that's, that's an elite level will charge 250,000 a book or something like that. Um, so one question I have real quick. Is a book you can buy your book for, you know, 29.99 and then--

AJ Harper ([26:42](#)):

27 <laugh>

Mike Michalowicz ([26:44](#)):

But who's counting? And then there's this quote unquote leap to 19,500. Is it necessary, have you found, to have intermediary steps for people financially?

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

No. Okay. But again, I'm not, I didn't write the book to get people in the class, have people since come to my class because they read my book? Yes.

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

Damn straight.

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

Yes. But I did not. And that is not something that I did intentionally and I don't even seek it out.

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

Right. But you knew it happened and, and you afford the vehicle to get there. There's a deliberate path you can follow. (Yeah.) But your book is so good. And if you're listening right now, you haven't read Write a Must-Read, buy it immediately. Um, your book is of service throughout it.

AJ Harper ([27:28](#)):

Yes. I want, I want you to be able to get value from the book without having to talk to me. Got it. But, uh, for me, my personal values, I felt like I needed something that was inexpensive for people to start. So you had been telling me for a long time, these writing sprints are great. So writing sprints are, it's really basic. I didn't come up with it in the sense that I invented it, but it's something that we do all the time in, especially in the fiction world, writing sprints were a bunch of us will get together. Sometimes we write and do it in person. Sometimes we do it on Zoom. Sometimes we just would, back in the days when Twitter was, Twitter would just say, Hey, who wants to sprint? And then we would post our words on Twitter, you know, just for accountability.

AJ Harper ([28:12](#)):

But how I do it is one hour on Zoom, 2 25 minute sprints, a break in the middle for questions. Keep it going. And you found it valuable. You were joining in my sprint community, which was part of my workshop. You said you should just do sprints as its own thing. And I said, who would want that? And then I realized, oh, a lot of people actually would like this. So I made that a mem-- monthly membership. And then important to me, not anyone else, fine. Was to give a pay-what-you-can option. Yeah. Just for me. I just wanted to help folks who maybe couldn't afford--it's \$97 a month. Okay. And you can pay that. Or you could literally just click the other button.

Mike Michalowicz ([29:00](#)):

So let's go through the numbers. How many people are participating

AJ Harper ([29:03](#)):

Right now? We have kind of low. Okay.

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

Um, what was that? Its height.

AJ Harper ([29:07](#)):

Think maybe 50. Okay,

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

Great. So 50 people at \$97. But how many people then chose a lower option?

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AJ Harper ([29:13](#)):

Very few actually. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz ([29:14](#)):

That's interesting.

AJ Harper ([29:15](#)):

Yeah. But it's important to me.

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

Yeah. How do people get the lower option? They, they call you and say,

AJ Harper ([29:22](#)):

Hey, no, there's two buttons on the, on the screen. Okay. It's, I don't want anybody to have to ask me. I don't want it to be a barrier. I don't want them to have to humble themselves in that way. It's important to me. I didn't grow up with a lot. I didn't want, you know, so great. It's just, I had a lot of financial challenges growing up. Yeah. I want this to be between you and whatever. And I don't even pay attention. So I mean, I'll see when it comes through a little bit, but I've got people who are \$5. I've got people who are \$20. You choose pay what you can. But I also have plenty of people who just pay the fee. Because they can.

Mike Michalowicz ([29:58](#)):

But 97 times 50, that's 5,000 roughly a month. Yeah. That's pretty substantial. And what you're doing is you're not facilitating the event so much. I mean, actually you are. Because you're doing the questions and stuff and you can kick it off

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

Well, I'm, I really only do about two or three of them. There's, uh,

Mike Michalowicz ([30:15](#)):

Laura does the others?

AJ Harper ([30:16](#)):

There's 10 a week. There's two, they're twice a day. Laura does the rest. Laura's amazing. She's my dean of students.

Mike Michalowicz ([30:22](#)):

She is a cheerleader.

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AJ Harper ([30:24](#)):

She's hands down the person you want in your corner if you're trying to write anything. Yeah. She's amazing. And so she's got a whole thing, you know, she's got her whole thing. She's, they've got their, what they do every week and how they can help each other and support each other. And I do show up and--

Mike Michalowicz ([30:41](#)):

When we do our new book, I'll be back in the sprints. I, I've taken off about six months now or maybe a little bit longer, but I was the early crew. 6:00 AM The six Amers. 6:00 AM I was getting there at five 30. Starting on my own.

AJ Harper ([30:51](#)):

I just wanted to point out that for me there, I had to, I plan, I chose to start sprints. That was a monetization I chose for the book. Because I felt like, oh my gosh, I can't just have this \$19,500 class. Yeah. And then these, I gotta find something that makes people get a chance to talk to me. Even if I, I only do a couple of those sprints a week, but I'm there to answer questions and help people. And you could get that for \$5 <laugh>. And that was important to me. Yes. So, anyway, that's, so the question again is, what does your reader need and consider their, not just what they need in terms of value, but also what is it gonna, how can you make it easier for them financially? If that's important to you. Number two question is, now that you know what they need, do you actually want to do it? This is the question people don't often ask themselves. Do I want that? We talked about in the last episode? Yeah. You doing things to monetize your books that you like.

Mike Michalowicz ([31:53](#)):

It's gotta be congruent with your interest. Otherwise you'll fail to do it well

AJ Harper ([31:57](#)):

Why? Yes. Okay. And the third one, this is a big one. Is it sustainable? So--

Mike Michalowicz ([32:01](#)):

How do you define that?

AJ Harper ([32:04](#)):

Do you still want to do this three, four years from now? If not, don't put dang thing in the book.

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

Oh, that's a great point. Because that is permanent. I mean,

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

Yeah. I mean, technically you could have a website. I mean, do you really go expect a 15-year-old book to have the same class? You don't, but you, and you could have a website that redirects everybody to whatever new thing you're doing, and that's fine. But really ask yourself, is this just a fun idea for now? Or do you even want to do this a couple years from now?

Mike Michalowicz ([32:33](#)):

I want to add to that point. In Profit First it says, email me in the book first chapter. You know, email me if you're gonna commit to this. It's a great way to build your community and your list. And I told people I respond to each email personally, which I did for many years, but by year five I'm getting an email every 15 minutes, 20 minutes. I can't keep pace with it. So what I did now have someone else doing it. And some readers write back say, you said you'd respond personally, why aren't you? So what I, so that is in there permanently. So now in my email response that Edgar sends, he says, I'm responding on Mike's behalf. I know he said response personally, but that was 10, 12 years ago. Yeah. <laugh>, please know this. And we had to put that in there. Because people were getting disappointed because, because to a book, you know, even if the book is many years old to the reader, this is their first experience with it. So I do think it's

AJ Harper ([33:23](#)):

A mistake. That's why I say you also want to plant seeds for how you want to engage with readers. You need to give some thought. Yeah. Am I gonna be on social? Do I want to give them my email? What am I doing? Yeah, just think about it in advance.

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

Okay. So tell me some things you're doing to monetize.

AJ Harper ([33:39](#)):

Sure. So obviously I have my main class, which is not, which I had before, but I have created additional classes since the book came out. So one of the things I'm super passionate about is editing and really just thinking about, people don't really know what to say about editing, when they should start, what it is, what to do. So it's really more about instead of thinking of it like editing, think of it just like making the book work. Does this book actually work? So I've created classes since the book came out. I have a six-week class that I teach that walks people through my methodology. Uh, and then I've done little classes. Something that I started doing called Mastercraft, which I love. And that's deep dives. Three to four hours on a topic, like just chapter one or just interviewing to pull stories or just, um, I'm about to do one on workbooks. Super deep. And when I teach it is a workshop. So we're, I'm teaching, but we're actually working on it during the class.

Mike Michalowicz ([34:47](#)):

And what does that mean? Have live discussions. You're giving feedback?

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AJ Harper ([34:51](#)):

But all of it. So I'll, I'll explain how to do it and why. And then people will take a pause and do a component of it and get feedback from me and actually make progress. It's my, it's the way I like to teach.

Mike Michalowicz ([35:06](#)):

Yeah. You have a cornucopia of talent. You have such a superhero talent in these live editorial experiences just watching you just with like subtitles. I remember we were doing a session. It was just like tackling subtitles and, and how you were able to nuance it. And to me, the instruction before was powerful, but the "ahas" happened during those live--

AJ Harper ([35:33](#)):

Yeah. So the feedback part. And that's how I like to teach. I don't like to just lecture. So I do these master crafts and, and I, so that's, that's all fun for me is, is doing all of these type of things. Another thing that's happened is, uh, oh Yeah, I'm trying to remember if I talked about this yet. So I also have the, the thing I love to do most is in person editing retreats.

Mike Michalowicz ([35:59](#)):

I don't think you've talked about that. Not in this episode. And I don't know if you've talked about much in the past. Okay. Gimme the deets.

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

All right. So I used to just do this for my workshop students. So you've gone through my workshop and let's say that you wanted, uh, to do a deeper editing dive after class. And you wanted, you were continuing to work on your book. It was actually something I created at the request of Carson Tate, who's one of my clients. Yeah. She wrote Work Simply. And she said, I want author camp. I want you to just like, bring you <laugh>, bring you some. I said, I don't know how to make that. And then I thought, oh wait, I think I do know how to make this. So that was years ago. It's editing retreat, not a fancy name. And it used to be just for my workshop students. And the reason is I really don't want to teach you the stuff. Well, let's get to work on the manuscript. So I review four chapters in advance, of their manuscript, which is a lot.

Mike Michalowicz ([36:56](#)):

Of every participant? Whoa.

AJ Harper ([36:57](#)):

Yes. And then at the event they work on that and whatever else they want to work on. Using the methodology that I teach in a workshop environment. It's hardcore. It's so amazing. And we have these insane breakthroughs, like really crazy breakthroughs. Wow. Because we're together. I don't do more than 10 people. So it's a very tight group. And now since the book came out, I'm realizing, you know

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what, I can't make that so exclusive anymore. So now I'm making it available to more people who have had they have-- The prereq though is you have to actually understand what's in my book. You know, you've got to have actually... Because I, we're gonna go fast. We're not gonna go not fast. We're just, I'm gonna assume you know some stuff. Correct. So the thing I'm most excited about now, this is my, just like, I can't, I'm bursting at the seams, is being able to offer these classes now at our property up on Madeline Island. So we actually already scheduled all of them for next year. And we'll do I think about five next year?

Mike Michalowicz ([38:12](#)):

Five retreats.

AJ Harper ([38:14](#)):

Mm-Hmm <affirmative>. Yeah. In the summer and fall months.

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

So gimme some of the stats. How long is a retreat? How many days?

AJ Harper ([38:20](#)):

So I used to do them for three days. Okay. And now they're gonna be five.

Mike Michalowicz ([38:24](#)):

How long is each day?

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

So each day has a workshop component and then also time for you to go edit.

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

So you find quiet space and you start working?

AJ Harper ([38:34](#)):

Right. Because what I do that's different is I, I request new pages every day.

Mike Michalowicz ([38:40](#)):

Wow.

AJ Harper ([38:41](#)):

Yes. I am fully in this so that in the morning I read the pages you did the day before.

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Mike Michalowicz ([38:48](#)):

Oh my God. It's amazing. So you, you still have to limit it to 10 people?

AJ Harper ([38:52](#)):

Yeah. I don't want more than that because, uh, and I don't want fewer than say three or four. Because we need a little group. The dramatic changes there and realizations, and it, it's, it's magic. It is total magic. And now to be able to offer it at our property up on Madeline Island next year, dream for me.

Mike Michalowicz ([39:15](#)):

What do you charge for that?

AJ Harper ([39:17](#)):

So it's six. Okay. Plus lodging.

Mike Michalowicz ([39:21](#)):

Yeah. So they can't stay at your home?

AJ Harper ([39:23](#)):

No, but we are on my property for the workshop part. Okay. And we arrange all the lodging,

Mike Michalowicz ([39:28](#)):

Transportation stuff. Okay. So they're just...

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

No, we don't arrange for transportation.

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

No, no. I mean, I don't mean from your home, but, but inter island?

AJ Harper ([39:36](#)):

Well you have, I mean we, yeah, we'd pick. Okay. We're getting the nitty gritty.

Mike Michalowicz ([39:40](#)):

Well, because people are trying to monetize. That's what we're trying to teach.

AJ Harper ([39:42](#)):

Well. We would pick someone up if we had to, but I mean, most people will have to carpool or get a car to drive to the island.

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Mike Michalowicz ([39:48](#)):

Okay. That's so fascinating. And you're gonna do five of these workshops?

AJ Harper ([39:52](#)):

Yeah. I think I'm gonna do five next year. I think we have five scheduled.

Mike Michalowicz ([39:55](#)):

So that's 25 days for you to rest and recover. What, what's the spacing for something like this?

AJ Harper ([40:01](#)):

So we'll start in June and go through October. So. It's no big deal.

Mike Michalowicz ([40:05](#)):

No big deal. And see it seems--

AJ Harper ([40:07](#)):

Like it's, it's so, it's the most fun.

Mike Michalowicz ([40:11](#)):

I think that's what the lesson is, is here in all these episodes for monetization is you're having a blast.

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

I'm having a blast. It's hard. Believe me. It's not.

Mike Michalowicz ([40:20](#)):

But you love it.

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

It's hardcore. I put everything into it. But I'm, I'm gonna get emotional now. This is the thing. Like I know how to make a book better. (Yeah.) But I also know how to help you do that and have these big moments. In the past we used to go to Mohonk, um, yeah, yeah, yeah. Up in the Catskills. I've been there. We got priced out of that. They increased their, they were already pretty expensive. They increased their rates by 72% last year. (My gosh.) And I was like, okay, we no done was already expensive. We're not ever coming back. But thank you. But this, the books that come out of those retreats, it's, it's emotion. Uh, stunning. In fact, one, one of those books tomorrow, this is June. A Good team, Bad Team, Sarah Thurber and Blair. Blair Miller came out of my Mohonk retreat. One of my favorite books. Street Smart Safety for Women. It's changing. Absolutely. Changing lives. Saving lives. Wow. Anyway, the retreats are my jam. Like that's what I know. I know how to do that and how to facilitate that group. And it's so amazing. So that's, I don't think with the book that I would've done

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Mike Michalowicz ([41:35](#)):

Yeah.

AJ Harper ([41:36](#)):

Opened that to more people. Does that make sense?

Mike Michalowicz ([41:39](#)):

It makes sense. I think the common shift I'm seeing in everything that you do to monetize is does it bring about transformation for the individual? Meaning the reward is people are fundamentally shifted in some capacity.

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

Oh yeah. Uh, there's not a thing that I do that isn't focused on that.

Mike Michalowicz ([41:56](#)):

You do you monetize your newsletter?

AJ Harper ([41:58](#)):

So I'm about, I have a Substack now.

Mike Michalowicz ([42:01](#)):

Oh, that's right. Oh, tell me all about this.

AJ Harper ([42:03](#)):

Yeah, I've been researching it. I think this is a, I love Substack and I think it's great, uh, tool. And I think it's a, there's a lot of people building good community there. So on Substack, I have a free newsletter. It's write a must read, not hard, easy, easy for you to find. And then a paid version. Uh, and so people can sign up for that if they want and the paid version has deep dives into why certain books work. And so how to you, how you can emulate that. So if you love a favorite book, you know, you might find it in my list. It, I'll be building it over time. But every month releasing new super deep dives into very popular books. How, why they work the way they do, and then how you can emulate it.

Mike Michalowicz ([42:53](#)):

Oh, that's so interesting.

AJ Harper ([42:55](#)):

Yeah. That, see, that's, but the only reason I'm doing it is because first of all, it's totally of service. And secondly, I love it. (Yeah.) That is so, I, I'm deconstructing like a detective. Okay. The I, Because I can tell if I look at a book, I can say, oh, that's okay. Yep. Yep. So that's just like a superpower I have. Yes. I'm a

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just a geek about it. I have very few other skills. Everybody like, just <laugh>. That's not true. But No, but I really like, it's concentrated in this one area (Sure.) and honed over time. So I just thought, oh, let me just show you how to do it.

Mike Michalowicz ([43:30](#)):

I, I love that when you have a super skill, I think it's natural to think, well, it's so easy. Doesn't everyone else have at least some of this ability? And we had a conversation a long time ago that you could do editing and certain processes, uh, and you're like, I can't scale this. And my argument was, you, you have a method running through your mind. We've just got to get it onto paper. Yeah. And you do have a process.

AJ Harper ([43:57](#)):

I wouldn't have my class if you had a, well, you were not very nice about it.

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

I was a little <inaudible> about it. (You were super <inaudible>.) Funny. Because I, because I believed in it so much.

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

You said <inaudible>.

Mike Michalowicz ([44:07](#)):

I just said <inaudible>.

AJ Harper ([44:08](#)):

You covered cursing <laugh>.

Mike Michalowicz ([44:09](#)):

Yeah. I cursed you out.

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

You said no. You, you, you, you actually were very insistent. You were sharp with me. (Yeah.) You were like, yeah, it's, you got a lot of ego going on there.

Mike Michalowicz ([44:17](#)):

Yeah.

AJ Harper ([44:17](#)):

But thank God,

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Mike Michalowicz ([44:19](#)):

Thank God. You know. But I love that you're saying, oh, I have this super skill or superpower to see what's working, what's not. And now I'm walking through that instruction set, uh, and telling people what I'm seeing.

AJ Harper ([44:30](#)):

Yes. It's amazing. And it's my favorite thing to do. So the newsletter is new monetization. Again, I don't think I would be doing that, that if it weren't for the book. So the book does, but I didn't monetize it in the book. It wasn't, the only thing I did in the book was the sprints and then editing certification. And here's the thing. I had intended to have it done. This, this is the part that's not good. Okay. But I didn't have it done. So my life went, uh, kaplooey. You know, as you know, personal stuff, just pandemic was not kind to my family. So my good intentions of getting an editing certification, so for editors to learn my methodology. Right?

Mike Michalowicz ([45:16](#)):

Right. I understand now. Yeah.

AJ Harper ([45:16](#)):

Really passionate about that. Yes. Because actually editors don't really get training specifically in this.

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

Yeah. You just say you're an editor. Well,

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

It's not exactly like that. You need a degree. But ultimately, you know, this is very specialized training in prescriptive nonfiction. And I had a lot of people asking me about it and I couldn't complete it. I took a class on how to do it. (Oh wow.) Shout out to, well actually I didn't even go to the class. I bought the class. Tina Forsyth, she's amazing. Sure. Certification. Do you know Tina? Yeah. Yeah. She's amazing in teaching people how to do Did

Mike Michalowicz ([45:51](#)):

Not know that. (Didn't you know that?) No, I did not know Tina did that.

AJ Harper ([45:53](#)):

Oh my gosh. She's the one to teach you how just to create this certification. Paid for her class could not do it. So it's in my book as a footnote. It's not a big marketing thing, but it's a footnote. I had intended to monetize in that way. That was part of my value system. Let's get some editor training going now it's finally happening in 2025.

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Mike Michalowicz ([46:17](#)):

Okay. Oh great. And you have a membership. Am I conflating things here? What's the membership exactly?

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

So, um, this fall I'll actually have a membership. So, uh, Jen Kem, uh, I don't know, do you know Jen?

Mike Michalowicz ([46:29](#)):

That, that doesn't sound familiar. No.

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

So I need to introduce you to her actually, because you know, your book is the one she really, really loves Profit First and she has a book coming out next year that is gonna be amazing. So Jen Kem has been advising me and she recommended, you remember I said I have all those classes and I have the Mastercraft. Yes. She's like, can you roll all that into a membership and just make it simpler?

Mike Michalowicz ([46:54](#)):

Oh, I got it. That's so smart.

AJ Harper ([46:55](#)):

So she was right. I'm going to roll all that in. Because the cool thing is, the hard thing on my team is that we're always launching a class. So her idea is don't, just have a membership and then just play in there and do stuff all the time that you want to do.

Mike Michalowicz ([47:11](#)):

It brings continuity. There's predictability in that revenue. Membership is usually monthly.

AJ Harper ([47:14](#)):

Yeah. So I'm just gonna make it an add. Um, um, a membership that people can join if they want to come keep

Mike Michalowicz ([47:20](#)):

It's take an all you can eat type thing?

AJ Harper ([47:21](#)):

It's an all can eat buffet of AJ's little workshops.

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

It's Ponderosa is what it is.

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AJ Harper ([47:27](#)):

Yeah. It's a, it's, uh, Ponderosa.

Mike Michalowicz ([47:31](#)):

You ever, you ever eat that?

AJ Harper ([47:31](#)):

I think it's the East Coast restaurant. I feel like we had old, we had an Old Country Buffet.

Mike Michalowicz ([47:36](#)):

Oh, I never went there. Yeah.

AJ Harper ([47:37](#)):

We had Old Country Buffet. You didn't, you didn't have old country buffet?

Mike Michalowicz ([47:40](#)):

No, no. When my parents would drive me to college, uh, it was in the South. We'd go to a Ponderosa was typically it.

AJ Harper ([47:46](#)):

I've never been to Ponderosa. But I know what it is.

Mike Michalowicz ([47:49](#)):

You didn't miss much. You didn't miss much.

AJ Harper ([47:50](#)):

Yeah. I'm gonna make Old Country Buffet.

Mike Michalowicz ([47:53](#)):

Okay. <laugh>, can you overdo promo books? What are the common ways to overdo it? I, I know you can, but what are the common ways that people over promote all their stuff?

AJ Harper ([48:01](#)):

Well, if you're talking, if they're talking about it all the time and then you talk about it overtly. Yes. So this is key. You know, I, I can, you know, "for 9.99. But wait, there's more," you know, it's like that. It's, um, let's plant the seeds in an elegant way. Is what I think we should do. Another tactic we use in your books, and I did it in mine and I recommend people do it, is if you really want to point out that there's an availability for a product or service, do a little footnote related to that content. (Yeah. That's smart.) Just elegant. Then in the back, you can put whatever you've got.

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Mike Michalowicz ([48:42](#)):

We put ads in the very back.

AJ Harper ([48:43](#)):

You can do ads. I, I, one example I I like to say is, um, Michael Bengier staying. Michael Benge staying,

Mike Michalowicz ([48:50](#)):

He's a tough name. Right. That's why he goes by MBS.

AJ Harper ([48:53](#)):

Really, really nice guy. He's amazing. I don't know him personally, but he sent me a nice message on LinkedIn to say he liked a podcast and that was so nice. And we--

Mike Michalowicz ([49:01](#)):

Listen, Michael listens to the show?

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

I got a message on LinkedIn and he's so, was so nice. And we actually should have a conversation because we were at the same publisher. We know a lot of the same people. But anyway, great book The coaching habit at the back you'll see, you know, mentions, not in ad form. Like these are all the opportunities. So go, go check. That's a really good example to get the coaching habit and take a look at how he has that all sorted in the back. I would like to encourage everybody to avoid doing it in the front. I've seen this a lot. Yeah. I still see it. Why are people doing this? YDon't do it. If you want to tip a person off that the book was made so that this for lead gen... Look, no one cares about your lead gen. You care about your lead gen. The author, the reader just wants to get, somehow.

Mike Michalowicz ([49:57](#)):

They want to be transformed. Yeah.

AJ Harper ([49:58](#)):

And so you're immediately turning me off. You, it's like having a sandwich board and standing outside your book. Like get your, get your hot dogs here. <laugh> two for 25. I, that, that book that I, I'm serious. It just really pains me that book I mentioned where the person was just saying you could only really get this, had an ad in the front and in the back. Ad in the front and in the back. Tips me off immediately. No, I don't want this.

Mike Michalowicz ([50:27](#)):

I like, uh, the list of "also by this author." Yeah. That's a great way to sell more books. So it's just a list.

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AJ Harper ([50:34](#)):

Well that's an, that's an elegant Yeah. Just a little list. There's no nothing. Doesn't even have the subtitles.

Mike Michalowicz ([50:41](#)):

No. It doesn't even have the subtitles.

AJ Harper ([50:42](#)):

That's right.

Mike Michalowicz ([50:43](#)):

What if you have new authors, uh, offers? Can you update your book? I mean, once it's in print.

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

Oh yeah. This is, I'm glad you mentioned this because I think a lot of authors forget to do this. If you have a new offer, you can, and you, if you're self-publishing, you have control much more control. You can change the ad in the back based on the new offers that you have and you can change, add any links that you need to. In the, that's important in the Kindle or other ebook versions to be able to change the links because people will click on links in eBooks, but we forget to do it. We forget to go update. When I had my publishing company, which I co-founded with two other people, we would change the back. Let's say we had an author had a new book coming out. We would go to their old book, their original book with us.

Mike Michalowicz ([51:37](#)):

Brilliant.

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

And then put in a link to the new book.

Mike Michalowicz ([51:41](#)):

So smart.

AJ Harper ([51:41](#)):

So just go back in and change it and then re-upload that. And if you have a publisher, just ask them, you know, just ask them if you can do it. But you have to be cognizant of this. You have to say, oh, I gotta update all my old stuff for the new stuff.

Mike Michalowicz ([51:55](#)):

So smart. Yeah.

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AJ Harper ([51:57](#)):

Do you have links to order your

Mike Michalowicz ([51:59](#)):

Books in Kindle? Now I have to look <laugh>. Now I have to look. I think so.

AJ Harper ([52:05](#)):

I mean, I think you have, I don't, I don't know if you do actually.

Mike Michalowicz ([52:08](#)):

I don't know. We have updated print books. Yeah. So you can update print books like with substantial, I could change the whole paragraph in one section to, uh, address relays, uh, sponsorship for us.

AJ Harper ([52:20](#)):

Okay. So you incorporated the monetization piece

Mike Michalowicz ([52:23](#)):

After the fact? Yeah, because there, it said, it said

AJ Harper ([52:25](#)):

You know, you explain what Relay is.

Mike Michalowicz ([52:26](#)):

Explain what relay is. So we talk about find a bank that supports profit first and here's the way to do it. And then we added a paragraph, asterisk paragraph, like a footnote, basically saying, we found a bank that we love. Truly it's relay, blah, blah blah. And you can check them out here.

AJ Harper ([52:40](#)):

You know what slaves me is how many years it took a bank to figure out that they should take that on. Yeah. All these years with Profit First, we had to write a whole couple sections in the book about how to deal with Cranky Banks.

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

I went to a bank conference. There was 150 banks there to teach Profit First. And zero of them followed up with me afterwards. I said, I said, there's no bank supporting Profit First. It's so easy. And people will fly to you. Relay has over 20,000 people doing Profit First now with them.

AJ Harper ([53:09](#)):

Well that was a good move on their part. Yeah. And so you did, uh, you did add the monetization later.

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Mike Michalowicz ([53:15](#)):

Correct.

AJ Harper ([53:16](#)):

So then everybody, if you're, if you have a traditional publisher, you'd have to wait till they do another print run. But Yeah. You know, that's no big deal. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz ([53:25](#)):

And yeah, and it's not that,

AJ Harper ([53:26](#)):

But if you're self-published, it's easy enough to, t

Mike Michalowicz ([53:28](#)):

You do it instantly. Yeah. But, uh, at least for, uh, with Penguin, think for Profit first at any given time, they're sitting on about 3000 books on profit first in inventory. Yeah.

AJ Harper ([53:39](#)):

They're printing all the time. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz ([53:39](#)):

And that can clear out pretty quickly. Uh, and one technique too is you do a big push to clear out your inventory. Um, you can just announce it. All right. Anything else you want to share before we wrap

AJ Harper ([53:50](#)):

It up? Yeah, I mean, I, I went through the things that matter to me, but I, you know, I didn't, there's more I could have done to monetize if I wanted to, but in the book itself, I mentioned the Writing Sprint community and the certification, and then I, and then also my writing, editing class. Because those are the things that mattered to me. And I, that's again, the point I want to make is that's what I want to keep doing. It's that sustainable piece. And do I want to do it is really important to me. Is this something that I value, I'm gonna have fun doing and keep doing. So I think that's my, my takeaway today is just do the thing that's sounds really cool to you and that you can keep doing.

Mike Michalowicz ([54:31](#)):

So AJ, there's, I know there's someone listening right now says, I want to go to that retreat. Because I, I want to go to the retreat and we never like really promote much on the show. So people are trying to email DWT podcast and, hello? And how did I sign up and I, is there a signup link for the retreats now or?

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AJ Harper ([54:47](#)):

Yeah. So go to [ajharper.com](#). Okay. And you'll, you can sign up. I have the full 2025 schedule. Beautiful.

Mike Michalowicz ([54:55](#)):

Yeah, there you go. So for the person that right now is listening, say, I want to go, I want to go. There you go. Take your action.

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

Yeah. Limited seats available.

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

Yeah. What's at your house?

AJ Harper ([55:05](#)):

Well, it is, well all for me, it's always gonna be limited seats available because That's Right. If that's your style too, too, know what, that's an important last point we should make. Okay. It doesn't have to scale. Okay. I'm the counterpoint to this. I don't care. It's not interesting to me. Like, I don't mind having a lot of people in the sprint community or whatever, but we're obsessed with scaling and I get it. We should. Okay. Yes. Scale makes sense, but I'm not that built like that.

Mike Michalowicz ([55:35](#)):

You care about the impact. You care about being a service. You care about putting an extraordinary --

AJ Harper ([55:38](#)):

I want to folks. I want to talk to folks. It's what I like. So how can I, how could you scale in a way that makes sense? The only way I can scale is with that newsletter because, right? So these are important questions, but don't feel like you have to do the scale thing if it's not you. Because it's not me and I do just fine.

Mike Michalowicz ([55:57](#)):

There you go. Go to [ajharper.com](#). Uh, and if you want to check out Pen with Purpose, that's what we're doing representing authors. Uh, we have new close to the show based upon our conversation. Yeah. <laugh>

AJ Harper ([56:08](#)):

We took us, um, 34 episodes to figure it out. Yeah.

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Mike Michalowicz ([56:12](#)):

So get ready for this big final sentence. I do want to invite you to go to our website. We have free materials there. You can join our email list. Stay up to date with us. It's dwtb podcast.com. As always, you can email me and AJ at hello@dwtbpodcast.com. We'd love to get your feedback. We'd love to hear what's landing with you. And this episode and last week's episode, which was my monetization strategies, came out specifically from an email from a listener who said, I want to know how to monetize beyond the book. So what are your ideas? What do you want to hear us talking about? Thanks again for joining us for today's episode. Next week we're gonna give kind of live updates. What's going on? This is gonna be juicy. It's gonna be Juicy <laugh> <laugh>, Our number one episodes with that, that episode with, uh, Penguin, uh, and when I got the live kind of slap call and, uh, you're gonna hear some interesting subsequent things that were decided to do and what came of that. So we're looking forward to seeing you next week. As always, this is the big close. Don't write that book. Write the greatest book you can.