

# don't write *that* book!

## Episode 41:

### “Are You Qualified to Write Your Book?”

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. So I shared last week in last week's episode with something about your book. I have a special bookshelf at my home. Um, I have a one that says, read R-E-A-D, where I display some of my favorite books next to it. I have the top books that I've ever enjoyed and are autographed by the author. I have six of these books. Write a Must-Read is the first one listed. Is such a good book.

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

Thank you.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:49](#)):

You're welcome.

AJ Harper ([00:50](#)):

Did I autograph it? Okay, good.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:53](#)):

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh, it wouldn't make it the shelf.

AJ Harper ([00:53](#)):

My, my brain is too spinning right now. Did I write it?

Mike Michalowicz ([00:56](#)):

It wouldn't make the shelf. Okay. I also have, um, from, there's a book written by Miles Taylor called Blowback. It's about the Trump administration. He was a whistleblower. It's interesting. Um, I don't really consume political stuff. I definitely don't talk about it. It's just not a space I wanna be in. But I was there the day that book arrived when he opened his box that he took the first one out and he started flipping through it, and he's like, this is mine. And I said that second one, I want to be mine. And he autographed it and he says, congratulations on having the second book <laugh>. So like, that's in there. <laugh> <laugh>, blow blowback. Cheeky, cheeky. Yeah. Um, and then the other favorite autographed book I have is from Will Garra, um, extreme Hospitality, I think it's called. Oh my gosh, I can't remember the name. But he is a Michelin, he owned a Michelin star rated restaurant in New York, called 24th or whatever. And, uh, I can't believe it. Is it Extreme Hospitality?

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AJ Harper ([01:54](#)):

I know you've got me questioning it.

Mike Michalowicz ([01:56](#)):

Yeah. We're gonna have to do maybe a corrections corner at the end of our own episode here. But we were at an event together with the Don Miller event, and everyone had like these chest stickers, you know, with your name on it and, um, like those little sticky things. So he autographed it by, he tore off my chest sticker, stuck it in the paper. So it says Mike, and he goes, I hope you enjoy the read. So his customization <laugh> was using the sticker on my chest. So that's one of.

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

The, oh, it's unreasonable,

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

Unreasonable Hospitality. Not Extreme. Yeah. Yeah. Unreasonable Hospitality. So there it is an autographed book that he wouldn't even put my own name in. He used my chest sticker and put it in there. So it was very funny. So I'm like, that, that, no, it was a joke, obviously, and we were having fun doing it. Um, and that's one of my favorite books too. So there you go. Today we're gonna talk about are you qualified to write your book? And there is this external struggle I've faced. I've suspect you have, too. Am am I really the person to, to do this?

AJ Harper ([02:52](#)):

Do you wanna do intros first?

Mike Michalowicz ([02:53](#)):

Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm going to. So I, I just wanted--

AJ Harper ([02:56](#)):

Sorry, sorry. I was, I'm totally directing you. I just thought you forgot.

Mike Michalowicz ([02:59](#)):

No, no, I hadn't. So I just wanted to hit the title first. Uh, I do wanna introduce my <laugh> colleague.

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

Sorry. I'm always editing you.

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

You're not. No, you're not. But in the books you are and that's fantastic. We're here, uh, my, with my co-host, AJ Harper. Um, let me, I, I often talk about you as a, a person. I wanted talk about you as a

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professional. Um, your drive is extraordinary and different than mine. Mine is just go, go, go. Yours is, I I'm more of a sprinter. And you're more of a marathoner. You're like, you're like, do it and, and, and do it right. And take the time necessary to do it right. So I'm, I'm racing as fast as I can to get to the finish line. You're making sure that every step is taken to get to the finish line. That thoroughness, it's a different type of drive. You have a thorough, every t is crossed. Every I is dotted approach. And I have a just race to the end. I think it compliments without your t's crossed i's dotted passing. All those immutable characteristic test, all those elements, the books would be, they wouldn't even be books. They'd be so inferior. As a result, these superior products come out. That's what I admire about you.

AJ Harper ([04:20](#)):

I mean, the reverse is true. I mean, we talked about this before on the episode where we talked about how we had our creative breakup. Yeah. We were at odds with those different styles. Yes. And then we learned how to respect those. Adapt, be respectful, not try to change each other. But I do think that I get more done because of your influence. And I don't think we would have written, I think we've written 10 or 11. I don't, we wouldn't have had that many if it were left up to me. You know what I mean? You know, so, yeah. So I think it's

Mike Michalowicz ([04:56](#)):

Yeah, yeah. A great, it's beautiful. And, and the books would not be the quality They are, I, I hear over and over again. And, and they keep getting better. I really emphatically believe that they don't necessarily sell better, but I now realize that's not necessarily a reflection of the quality of the book. But God, we, we'll put out the best, the best of us every single time.

AJ Harper ([05:13](#)):

Thank you. I do wanna point out for those people who are listening, that although you're, you're using Dot i's and Cross t's as a metaphor as I am not a copy editor. <laugh>. Yeah. Yeah, yeah,

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

Yeah. Yeah, yeah,

AJ Harper ([05:24](#)):

Just to make sure.

Mike Michalowicz ([05:26](#)):

Um, okay. Today we're gonna talk about writing. Are you qualified to write a book? I wanna share a little bit of my own story of this curator versus creator experience. I had up to Profit first. We had Pumpkin, Toilet Paper, Entrepreneur, Pumpkin Plan, and then Profit First. I felt that we were creating something, these were ideas, amalgamations of stuff I learned elsewhere. But Profit First was, was I think, truly unique in, in the way it was presented. It, it was, it was fresh and, and I think Pumpkin Plan to, to some degree too. But at certain points, like I can't keep on creating, meaning building something from scratch. And that I need to reframe myself as a curator, someone who collects ideas from others and, and

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packages it in a unique story. But maybe admittedly, it's not necessarily new ideas. It's, it's established ideas presented in a new way.

Mike Michalowicz ([06:28](#)):

And that was necessary for me to have ongoing credibility writing. I, I felt like, and I actually remember having a call with you saying, I feel I'm a fraud. And you said, please, please don't put that in a book. I remember you saying that <laugh>, you go, please don't put that in a book. But I'm like, I feel I'm fraudulent. Like I'm, I'm saying this as if it's fresh from me, that I'm the one who created this, that I'm, this, I had this divine idea. And, and here it is. And then the realization was like, oh, the character I use, like Indiana Jones, Indiana Jones, goes to these extraordinary extremes to find that ark or golden chalice, whatever it is, and bring it back. And I'm like, once I framed that I'm a curator, it gave me clarity and comfort in, in being qualified to write these books.

AJ Harper ([07:13](#)):

Why I, this is, I have such, I have, I have such a, I'm, I'm actually blown about away that you think of yourself as a curator.

Mike Michalowicz ([07:23](#)):

We had this, well, I don't know if you remember yourself, a long time ago was a cur-- this conversation.

AJ Harper ([07:27](#)):

I don't remember this at all.

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

Yeah. So, but I mean, when you-- Well, I thought you maybe remember that fraud part. 'cause I'm like, I think, well,

AJ Harper ([07:33](#)):

You pro you know why I probably said that is because you probably wanted to write a whole thing about being a fraud.

Mike Michalowicz ([07:39](#)):

Yeah. Not being authentic. And you're like, please, please don't do that.

AJ Harper ([07:44](#)):

You can be transparent and that's one of your greatest qualities. You're always honest. But I think probably the way you wanted to go about it was gonna be, be a backfire situation.

Mike Michalowicz ([07:53](#)):

I think it would've been, I I actually know it would've been,

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AJ Harper ([07:55](#)):

But I don't remember you saying this about being a curator. And I would actually argue that I don't think you are,

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

And maybe not, but, but the framing has helped me. It inspires me to go deeper. All In, All In is our best work to date. It was the deepest we've gone and it was the, the most curation.

AJ Harper ([08:15](#)):

Okay. Yes. But you, you test everything. You implement everything in your business. It's not like you're just a true curator.

Mike Michalowicz ([08:23](#)):

That's true.

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

I mean, you're, we don't put stuff out that--

Mike Michalowicz ([08:26](#)):

It's not a museum. Right? Yeah.

AJ Harper ([08:28](#)):

I mean, you don't put stuff out that you haven't implemented. The stories are, I mean, we'll hold off on writing a book 'til you've gone through the whole testing process.

Mike Michalowicz ([08:37](#)):

Absolutely true.

AJ Harper ([08:38](#)):

So, I don't know, I'm in defense of you in this moment.

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

Well, I don't think there is a defense. I, I think it's it when I said, well, I, I, when I saw myself as a creator, it gave me an acceptance. Like, oh, go in search of it redefined me. It made, it made me feel more qualified to write every one of these books.

AJ Harper ([08:53](#)):

Okay. Fair. Fair. But I still have to argue that I do think you're a creator.

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Mike Michalowicz ([08:57](#)):

Thank you. And I, and I thank you, and I think I am too by collecting and repositioning.

AJ Harper ([09:04](#)):

But I can see what you mean about all in it is presented differently and it's more like a collection of strategies versus one system, which is what we had been doing.

Mike Michalowicz ([09:16](#)):

With All In, like, like when I present it too, I say, listen, I, I am not the great leader. Don't, don't aspire to be like me. I feel I've been a meh leader and I'm, I'm aspiring to be a great leader, and here's what I've learned in this journey, and we've deployed and it works. But this is still a journey for me too.

AJ Harper ([09:33](#)):

Yeah. Okay.

Mike Michalowicz ([09:34](#)):

Um,

AJ Harper ([09:34](#)):

So you had to get your head straight is what you're saying. So you could keep doing it.

Mike Michalowicz ([09:38](#)):

It's a big deal. Yeah. It really was a big deal if I felt that I had to have these constant epiphanies and that there was a kind of divine reveal.

AJ Harper ([09:46](#)):

Oh, I see. I, see.

Mike Michalowicz ([09:47](#)):

I couldn't sustain.

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

Oh, I see. Okay. Now I'm, now I'm, now I'm picking up what you're putting down. You were thinking of it as these big ahas that would be category defining like Profit F--

Mike Michalowicz ([09:59](#)):

Never heard of before. Yeah.

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AJ Harper ([10:01](#)):

Yeah. But Profit First is your version of the envelope system. It's not--

Mike Michalowicz ([10:04](#)):

Right. And in reflection, it's so funny, when we look back, I thought I created Profit First and very quickly. I said, oh, I curated Profit First. It's the envelope system. It's the Pay Yourself First Principle. Uh, it's its grandma's cookie jar where she hides stuff away. Like it, it was all these ideas that came together. But

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

It was a way that you, it was the way that you, but Profit First is more than the envelope system though, because you, you really were talking about creating a system that worked with your habits. (Correct.) As opposed to asked you to create new ones. (Correct.) So that you didn't have to change who you are. You could just find a way to work with who you are. And that that's actually the true gene. That is actually the part you created.

Mike Michalowicz ([10:48](#)):

Correct. And at the end of the day, it becomes its own creation. Sim- you know, similar, maybe not a good analogy. So I gotta be risky. It's a little risky here, but a museum, they curate all these things, but they assemble it in a way that it tells a story when, when assembled well. And you flow through it and, and you learn there's a journey that presents itself and it becomes fresh. My wife and I went to Tutankhamen. Uh, there was a museum display, uh, and we went through it and it told the history of this individual. And I, I had no idea how young he was, too. Oh my God. He was a king at like, three or something. And, um, it, it just talks about the story. And, and there's a lot of horrors in there, too. I didn't ever, you know, all I knew was Steve Martin's, you know, king Tut thing. Oh my God, do you remember that?

AJ Harper ([11:34](#)):

Yes, of course. That's your reference. <laugh>.

Mike Michalowicz ([11:36](#)):

Well then that's the first thing that came to mind. But it, it presented a whole new story, and it was emotional and moving because they curated it, and then they assembled it. And I think that's what, what gives me comfort, uh, and, and therefore credibility, at least with myself. And hopefully the readers are there. When is credibility important? I assume it's important all the time, but maybe that's a wrong assumption.

AJ Harper ([12:02](#)):

I mean, I, I, well, okay, it is important, but I don't, I think people think they are not credible enough to write a book. And it, they're very often wrong because they equate credibility with degrees, years of experience, um, if they've had their own research, all that sort of stuff. So they've decided that's what

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makes you credible. And there other ways that you can live up to the content that you're putting out into the world. Certainly there are people who are not credible who write books every day, all day and put them out into the world. Um, but let's say if you're writing an academic text, your credentials, your letters after your name matter. You're writing, a sci, you know, something based on science, um, you, it's, you've gotta have your own research. You know what I'm saying? So yes, it can matter for certain types of books and for certain types of genres. But for prescriptive nonfiction, which is what you write and what I help people learn how to write, I think the real credibility factor is less about, do I have a degree?

AJ Harper ([13:22](#)):

Uh, and is this backed by research? You can get research, you can refer to research. It's more about, uh, are you sure that what you are saying is true based on your own experience and, and, uh, your experience helping others with this? I think if you're just putting a theory out there that you have never have no evidence in your own life and evidence, meaning anecdotal, which is not, you know, reliable in a sense of if it was, say, a peer reviewed study. But if you're saying, if you know it worked for you and it's worked for other people, then that can be enough in prescriptive nonfiction. But let's say you're gonna be writing a book on trauma. Um, if you're, if you're not an actual, uh, trained psychologist or a psychiatrist on trauma, I would question your ability to go deep on trauma. But on the other hand, if instead you just wanna talk about how you process trauma, yes. Then you just have, it's how you present yourself. And then it's being honest and transparent with the reader about how you come to this knowledge and how you're bringing this book to the world

Mike Michalowicz ([14:33](#)):

Pen with Purpose. We're working with an author, Melissa Dugalecki, who's writing on trauma grief. Uh, the working title is Grounded by Grief, and the title will actually likely change now. Um, she's not qualified with credentials. She lost her daughter when her daughter was one years old. Um, and has gone through this journey, which has revealed very interesting things. One of the most profound insights I've garnered from this book is that as a griever, you are also responsible for managing the people around you who don't know how to navigate the grief. So you actually have to manage the team. Um, people reach out when you're grieving and say, what can I do for you? They literally ask that question, how can I help you? I'm here for anything. I'll do anything for you. What do you need? And so there's this instant burden on the griever to support the community that's supposed to be supporting them.

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

So she's writing prescriptive nonfiction.

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

Correct.



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AJ Harper ([15:28](#)):

Okay. So, you know, she's sharing her own experience. And, uh, as long as she's honest about that, then that's fine. It's when we make these proclamations that we can't really back up or we lead people to believe that it's more successful than it is. Or you withhold the truth about maybe how far along you really are in the process. And the, the cure for this credibility question. Again, setting aside books that require you to be an MD or, you know, et cetera. Yes. The cure for this is transparency and honesty about where you are in the process.

Mike Michalowicz ([16:04](#)):

Yes. Yeah. And I think when they see that, so just going back to Melissa's book, she's also coached now hundreds of people through grieving. Okay.

AJ Harper ([16:11](#)):

So then that's, that's a credibility, you know. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz ([16:14](#)):

And she's, she shares that. And one thing that's interesting, uh, just another aside, is that grieving is unique to the griever. She goes, someone that loses a job can grieve as deeply as someone has lost a child, because that could be their identity or what, or whatever. Um, and she also disclosed, she goes, I'm not, which is actually, maybe does this enhance credibility? She says, I'm not a doctor. I'm not trained in this. I have an experience in this and people were asking me about it, and therefore I started teaching them. And here's why I found in my journey. It sounds like that that's the transparency. Yeah. And, and transparency yields credibility. I think it gives the reader also decision saying, do I want to follow this or not? 'cause some readers, I assume demand that you have a certain three letters following your name. Yeah.

AJ Harper ([16:57](#)):

So I'll get, you know, I love this book. Uh, I was really influential in my life called The Obesity Code, and it's written by Dr. Fung. And it helps me, helped me understand why a lifetime of dealing with obesity and weight issues is different for me than say somebody in a Weight Watcher's commercial. (Interesting.) Right. And it really clicked for me to understand the science of what was happening in my body. I need him to be an MD <laugh>. I'm not gonna listen to this person if it's just somebody who has, you know, help some people lose weight. I need, I need to read from Dr. Fung.

Mike Michalowicz ([17:37](#)):

Do you feel same title, same content, but now it's Mr. Fung as opposed to Dr. Fung. Would, would that have influenced your consumption of it?

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

Yes.

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Mike Michalowicz ([17:45](#)):

Interesting.

AJ Harper ([17:46](#)):

Yes. But if I wanna read a book about, say, strategies for, so he recommends, uh, he uses intermittent fasting to various degree. And y'all, you don't need to write in. It's about it <laugh>. Like it's, um,

Mike Michalowicz ([18:00](#)):

We are starting to get those emails too.

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

It,, you know, it's a, a tool that can be used to help people who have lifelong obesity, who have other medical, this is a medical issue, y'all. It's not like a diet. But then I might read a book about a, uh, from a person who shared their personal experiences with it. Right? So we have a collection of content that maybe we need this md and then we need this book, other book over here, which is a person's own journey. So it doesn't, I think it's just we have to be careful with the credibility factor when we're writing anything prescriptive that we have actually ex tried this ourselves, number one, have evidence it works, and hopefully also have tried it with others and have evidence that it works for them. That's what the prescription part is. And if you can't do that, then don't write the prescriptive part, then don't write that part, then make it a memoir or make it, um, um, some something else. Do you see where I'm going with this?

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

I think I do. Yeah.

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

So you don't have to worry about credibility if you're honest and transparent, but you do need to think about, wait, do did I actually, did I do? Am I really sure?

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

Am I That's the acid test.

AJ Harper ([19:18](#)):

Yeah. Is this just a theory? I have--

Mike Michalowicz ([19:20](#)):

Conjecture versus application, perhaps.

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

Yeah. And if you aren't, then either go do a test drive, figure it out, spend the time, take time. Just like you, you have books that we have not even begun to consider that you have been testing for a very long time.

Mike Michalowicz ([19:36](#)):

For a long time.

AJ Harper ([19:37](#)):

Yes. So that's what I'm talking about is let's get, do what we can to make sure it works or don't write the prescriptive part.

Mike Michalowicz ([19:45](#)):

Yeah. It's funny, behind the scenes, I'm, I'm working on, and I have not found the solution, so I haven't written it yet. How to stick, stick with something, you know, stick with it would be, I guess the working title. What is it that triggers someone to stay with something? And I haven't found the solution yet, but I am working on that. And I think when I do, that's when, when enough tests are done and I have the, a proven system that's repeatable, there's credibility. Can you over credentialize yourself? I'll give context. I get emails, uh, occasionally from someone that's saying in the finance space, and after a name it says, you know, three letter acronym, three letter, like seven or eight of them. I'm A-D-M-D-R-S-P-Q. And at a certain point I'm like, okay, I am not gonna work with you because you are trying to prove something and it feels like you're not qualified and you're trying to prove your way through it with these credentials in the, all these certifications. Like you're almost over-certified, which means, eh, you know, all you do is you try collect letters and you actually don't know how to do this.

AJ Harper ([20:48](#)):

<laugh> This is your personal bias.

Mike Michalowicz ([20:50](#)):

But you know, you, you've had to receive these emails, right? When someone has like 50 acronyms behind does that, at certain point there's diminishing returns or negative consequence. I, I'm convinced of at least for me. Hmm.

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

Maybe

Mike Michalowicz ([21:02](#)):

Like, wasn't it Margaret Thatcher said, if you have to say you're a lady, you're not?

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AJ Harper ([21:07](#)):

<laugh>. I mean, sometimes you've gotta say it's gotta be MD man. If you need the MD or the PhD, it's, you gotta put that there. Some people I think are probably required to put some of their letters after their name just professionally in terms of their ethics. So, um, but yeah. Okay. I can see that you could, I don't give, I don't really think about that too much to be honest.

Mike Michalowicz ([21:31](#)):

Does the publisher care about credentials? Qualifications?

AJ Harper ([21:34](#)):

Yeah. I think the publisher does. I think they, they love a person who has qualifications because they know that it can help legitimized the content for the reader.

Mike Michalowicz ([21:44](#)):

Right. The publisher wants to sell more books. Yeah. They know the reader will evaluate that. So it helps in sales. Alright. So what if you don't have the credentials?

AJ Harper ([21:55](#)):

But hang on, hang on. Yeah. I don't want anybody to say, well, I can't get a deal 'cause I don't have the credentials. People get them all the time. You know, so I just, I just wanna before we move on from that. Yeah. People get deals all the time without credentials. It's just, again, how you position the book. You know, it's not necessarily gonna be, uh, your research for example. So it might be presented in a different way. Right.

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

Sans credentials. You do have qualifications, which you can do through transparency (Yes.) Experiential and so forth. Are there ways to build credentials when you don't have, I I'm not an md. Um, I wanna talk about a book on healing, um, can I still be in that space where normally an MD would be the one writing that book or..?

AJ Harper ([22:43](#)):

It's a little tricky. I think you would have, again, it's, it's how, which content you choose to include so you can reference other people's content. Meaning again, you're not plagiarizing it, but you're referring to other studies. We did that. We did that in All In, um, referring to... You can curate, as you just said at the top of the call. You can curate that. Um, but I think you also need to make it pretty personal. And if it's, if you really have no credentials at all related to it, you have to be emphasizing your own personal experience there versus trying to write a book that an MD would write that again is, um, mostly about, mostly science. You don't want to write a book that's somebody else's science that you're kind of

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playing off of. I mean, that, that wouldn't be good. But you could, uh, write your book, reference different studies, reference different opinions, and then you could get an MD to write the forward, for example, to give you some credibility there.

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

You could also interview someone so you have your own exclusive content. So if I wanted to write about intermittent fasting and my own experience, I could then see if I could get Dr. Fong on the, on the horn. And then have a talk with him that was maybe different discourse than had been presented in his book so that you're not, he's not actually competing with himself. It's complimentary. And then I could sort of bring in credibility that way through the, and maybe an extensive interview that then turns into content for the book. That's one strategy you could do.

Mike Michalowicz ([24:19](#)):

I love that. Isn't that very similar to what Tim Ferriss did with the Four Hour Body? I, I don't don't know if you read that book.

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

I bought it and it was hard for me to get. It felt like a lot. It's Do you know how much that book weighs?

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

I know, I know.

AJ Harper ([24:31](#)):

Massive. It's massive. Massive door stop.

Mike Michalowicz ([24:33](#)):

Massive. Yeah. But all his books he wrote, uh, something Titans, it's the same thing. Four-Hour Chef is massive. I bought Four-Hour Body.

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

I did too.

Mike Michalowicz ([24:42](#)):

And what he did in that book, it feels like almost an encyclopedia.

AJ Harper ([24:46](#)):

It does. Yeah.

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Mike Michalowicz ([24:48](#)):

So there's always different sections. And I remember one about sleep. Oh, I thought it was fascinating about sleep.

AJ Harper ([24:53](#)):

I read that part. That's probably the only part I read. I wonder why?

Mike Michalowicz ([24:56](#)):

We both read that.

AJ Harper ([24:57](#)):

Did we? Maybe we talked about it.

Mike Michalowicz ([24:58](#)):

Perhaps. So it was interesting.

AJ Harper ([25:00](#)):

And that weird thing about the time, and I sleep--

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

One hour a day effectively, or Yes, two hours a day.

AJ Harper ([25:05](#)):

My God. I remember presenting it to my wife. I was like--

Mike Michalowicz ([25:08](#)):

Could you imagine doing that?

AJ Harper ([25:09](#)):

I, I studied it. I followed every link he told me. I tried to figure out the maths, like, oh my God, now I can get all my work done. This is going to be amazing. That's why I felt sorry. And I <laugh> You did too.

Mike Michalowicz ([25:19](#)):

I didn't try. I didn't try because was so absurd.

AJ Harper ([25:20](#)):

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I wrote out a whole thing. I did all the math. I tried to figure it out and then I presented to my wife and she's like, you are not like, No. What are you thinking? This is never, this is nuts.

Mike Michalowicz ([25:32](#)):

So just in case our reader, our listeners haven't read that section, the concept was, and and let's talk about how he validated and brought credentials. Because he is not a doctor. Um, but he experiments with his own life. Uh, and so one thing he tried with sleep was the question was how can I sleep the fewest hours but still have maximal performance in my life and output? You know, like I'm fully awake. And what he came across was this rhythmic sleeping where you sleep for say, 20 minutes. Then wake yourself through an alarm. Work for an hour or two and then sleep for 20 minutes. And he goes, rhythmically. And then he and he backed it by evidence. Yeah, this works. And, and you can have two hours of sleep a day and, and be optimal, but you have to stick with his rhythm religiously. And if you fail or flip off it, he said, you, you, you go into this spiral.

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

Like a psychotic state or something. Yeah, I tried. I I did all the math. I was like, I wrote it all out. I studied every, I was so excited. I was like, oh my God, I'm gonna be able to crank on these books now. And then my wife brought me back down to earth. She's like, this will never happen.

Mike Michalowicz ([26:41](#)):

But he is an authority and--

AJ Harper ([26:44](#)):

But he's an authority as an experimenter. So let's be really clear.

Mike Michalowicz ([26:48](#)):

That's how he does it, right?

AJ Harper ([26:49](#)):

Yeah. So his qualification is, I am a curator of life.

Mike Michalowicz ([26:54](#)):

Okay.

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

He is, he's a life hacker. Right. So he, and he's, his credentials are that he tries it and studies it. So readers trust him because they know that he's a) passionate about it. He's gonna do a, the deep dive they don't have to do, he's gonna try it on himself. And that they, that's his qualification. Yep. And then he puts, uh, then he's referencing other science.

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Mike Michalowicz ([27:19](#)):

And that's the credentials.

AJ Harper ([27:20](#)):

And then he's bringing in those credentials, which you can do. But he never pretends to be the authority on the body. He only pretends, he only says I am, my credentials are my approach to life, which is I want to find the best and most efficient way to do everything.

Mike Michalowicz ([27:40](#)):

Well, it was cool, I was listening to Peter Atias podcast, um, drive, which it's a health podcast. He references Tim Ferris, which is so interesting. Because so Dr. Peter Atia, um, focuses on different components of health and he, on his podcast reference, him and Tim Ferriss and a group of some other people went somewhere to do an experiment on themselves. Uh, something like this. The sleeping, I think it was, uh, it was something like cold exposure or something, which then further enhanced to me, Tim Ferriss's credibility. It was a validation, what he already said. He was being transparent. And then I heard this external source validate that. I'm like, oh my God, he is the life hacker.

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

He is. And he's, he never pretends to be anything but a student of life. So it would be, that would be, he would, that is how he is handling the credibility piece.

Mike Michalowicz ([28:29](#)):

Do I have to interview the doctor or someone that's credentialed? Is there other ways to use or point to credentials? Without going through an interview or forward having the radio forward?

AJ Harper ([28:42](#)):

Yeah. Just, just, you know, refer to the study and then, you know, in your own language. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz ([28:49](#)):

Is there a way to prove that the credentials are significant to my readership, to the people I'm following?

AJ Harper ([28:56](#)):

Whose?

Mike Michalowicz ([28:57](#)):

Well, if I'm writing on, uh, whatever the subject may be, and I want to?

AJ Harper ([29:01](#)):



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Sure.

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

My reader, uh, sees credentials as significant or not, is there a way to test drive something like that?

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

You mean if you always say referring to say Dr. Fong in the Obesity Code? If you want.

Mike Michalowicz ([29:13](#)):

How do I know that's, that's important or significant? I just trust my gut. Or is there...

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

How do you, wait, I'm trying to--

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

You, the author. You the author. How do I know that is important to my readers?

AJ Harper ([29:24](#)):

I still am I'm trying, trying to follow you a little bit. Is it, how do you vet research or are you asking me how to dis how to write in the book to show readers why this person is worth listening to?

Mike Michalowicz ([29:37](#)):

Yes. And do my readers even care?

AJ Harper ([29:40](#)):

I think readers do care. And I think, but how--

Mike Michalowicz ([29:43](#)):

Okay. Do I know? But do I, do I have to test to see what they care about?.

AJ Harper ([29:46](#)):

No. Just say Dr. Fung, the foremost researcher on, um, obesity. And intermittent fasting, blah. Done. Author of the Obesity code. Done. Conductor of the study on blah, blah.

Mike Michalowicz ([30:02](#)):

Okay, well that makes it simple.

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

Yeah. It's simple.

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Mike Michalowicz ([30:05](#)):

Um, do I have to, if I reference Dr. Fung and I haven't spoke with Dr. Fung, I've read his research, do I need to notify when I cite people, uh, that you've been cited in a book?

AJ Harper ([30:19](#)):

No.

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

Okay. I've had people contact me, say, Mike, I like to reference Profit First and share some of the techniques.

AJ Harper ([30:26](#)):

Well, okay. Wait.

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

So is that different?

AJ Harper ([30:28](#)):

That, so referencing you is one thing, sharing this is the concept of profit first is one thing. But then laying out, say the entire plan <laugh> is you would need permission.

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

Okay. So let's distinguish those things because I think this is important. If someone says, this is how I feel. If someone just reveals the Profit First Strategies and, and presents it as a, as their own, I think that's, that's fraudulent.

AJ Harper ([30:56](#)):

Well, of course.

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

Right. If someone references "take your profit first, that's how you become profitable, because you're treating profit as an expense." All stuff that I teach and, and developed,

AJ Harper ([31:06](#)):

They should, they should source you.

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

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Okay. Um,

AJ Harper ([31:09](#)):

But let's say that they want to take people through an instant assessment. Yeah. And they're modeling after your instant assessment. They need your permission. They could, however, say Mike in his book, Profit First, has an instant assessment and this is how he goes about it. Just real quick, one sentence I took, this is my riff on that. This is how I think it's good to assess where you are. Now you're good.

Mike Michalowicz ([31:36](#)):

In Profit First we referenced, uh, Dave Ramsey's work particularly around the Snowball.

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

Snowball, yeah.

Mike Michalowicz ([31:41](#)):

Which interestingly, he did not develop. Great. Um, but he is the most recognized for it because of the popularity of his book, the Total Money Makeover, which is a freaking great book. Um, I've had people read that and say, oh, you ripped off Dave Ramsey. And I'm like, hold on. I referenced Dave Ramsey specifically.

AJ Harper ([32:02](#)):

Right, exactly.

Mike Michalowicz ([32:02](#)):

And, and saying that, uh, I wanted to give attribution and here's the application of it when it comes to the Profit First method.

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

Exactly.

Mike Michalowicz ([32:11](#)):

How do you, how do we do that? Where we did, we just do, we did it right, so to speak? Just use reference. The other author--

AJ Harper ([32:17](#)):

Yes. You didn't walk people through the entire thing that he talks about snowball in his book. You just explained what he recommends. And then how do it use that if you're following "snowball" in Profit First.

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Mike Michalowicz ([32:30](#)):

Do I have the obligation to, you know, he did not invent the snowball. I I don't, I I can't recall in his book, I don't think he positions it that way. I think he just says this is a method that's been around. So do I have the obligation to do the research of what the original source was?

AJ Harper ([32:45](#)):

Um, I mean, I will tell. I I think it's good to check. Um, but that's a situation where that's pretty common knowledge. Um, I always try and check and I think you should try and see where did this, where did this start? So yeah, I think that's important. But now we're getting into--

Mike Michalowicz ([33:07](#)):

Nuanced components, I think.

AJ Harper ([33:10](#)):

Yeah. I I think it's helpful for you to really understand because not everybody is sourcing their stuff. So it happens a lot with quotes. We think a quote is by Einstein and then he never said it.

Mike Michalowicz ([33:22](#)):

I have one on my wall from Walt Whitman that he didn't write, and I can't remember what it is now. I I have it up there like it attributes to Walt Whitman. And I found out the source was different. So I, I'm like, oh, I think it was off my wall now. Or cross it off. Or

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

I would've gotten to a whole argument with an author who had, um, there's, I don't even know the quote, but it's, you know, there's two wolves inside of you. You know, that, um, it's in a lot of, I'm I'm doing right now while we're talking--

Mike Michalowicz ([33:51](#)):

Live research, she's got forgot the two wolves story. Two wolves. Right. There's gonna be an awkward pause. I'll play music in the background.

AJ Harper ([33:58](#)):

Inside of you. There are to two wolves. It's a meme. Oh no. Now that's, that's a bad one. <laugh>.

Mike Michalowicz ([34:09](#)):

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Well, while you're looking that up, uh, I wanna start building another question, but once you have it, just blurt it out.

AJ Harper ([34:14](#)):

I really am obsessed now

Mike Michalowicz ([34:16](#)):

I, I'm curious about the, the inner critic component of credibility. And so,

AJ Harper ([34:25](#)):

Oh, I got it.

Mike Michalowicz ([34:27](#)):

Okay. What is it?

AJ Harper ([34:27](#)):

I'm interrupting you. Sorry.

Mike Michalowicz ([34:29](#)):

No, no, no. Go.

AJ Harper ([34:30](#)):

So, oh, this is how, this is AI getting it wrong now because I just googled two wolves. One eat because that's all I could remember from it. AI is incorrect right now. The two wolves is a Cherokee or Lenape myth that uses the metaphor of a battle between two wolves within a person to represent inner conflict. The story is often told by an elder to a younger listener. And the elder will answer whichever one you feed when asked, which wolf wins. That is false ai. Oh. So I had an author and I got into a disagreement with that author, uh, because I did the homework. And it's not Cherokee, it's not Lenape, and it's actually not, it's the first mention of it is in a sort of Christian text way back when, can't remember all the details I saw on my computer at home.

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

And it gets, uh, attributed incorrectly. So first of all, you always need permission from any tribe if you're going to use any of their stories, y'all, you can't just take them, even if they shared them, you need to ask permission from any tribe in this country or in, in North America. And I would argue anywhere in the world, but I'm talking just right now about Native American tribes. You have to ask if you're allowed to relay their stories. Their stories are their stories. Even if you heard it, it doesn't make it public domain.

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Mike Michalowicz ([36:01](#)):

Oh, that's a great point.

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

So please don't do that. And secondly, it's not theirs. So don't, so, uh, but the source that this author kept giving me was this blog and then it's, oh, here it's on another blog and here it's on another blog. Why can't I use it? They said it's that. Because they're also wrong. Right? You have to take, you have to do your due diligence. And a lot of people don't want to go to that extent where you need to reach out to the Lenape and the Cherokee and ask, is this correct? And can I use it?

Mike Michalowicz ([36:35](#)):

I heard, and I'm paraphrasing, someone say, when one person says something dumb, it's dumb. When 10,000 people say something that's dumb, it's still dumb. It's still dumb. Just quantity does not mean quality. AI for Profit First explains it incorrectly. So you what's the Profit First method? And this was either on Chat GPT or Google. I saw it, it said, uh, Mike Macow is the author of Profit First says that the formula of sales minus expenses equals profit is the Profit First formula, and you just have to prioritize profit. I'm like, that's exactly not what I say.

AJ Harper ([37:09](#)):

So not only does it get it wrong, it gets the main formula wrong.

Mike Michalowicz ([37:13](#)):

Totally wrong. It says the Profit First formula is sales minus expense equals profit. No. Like what? That's that's the, that's the Frankenstein.

AJ Harper ([37:21](#)):

That's, that's the, that's the standard methodology.

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

Correct. And it says this is the formula. Like, my God, I think we may wanna dedicated episode to research because information is so available, we don't qualify the quality of the information. We just get what we see first. And we assume it's right and it, it it's getting worse. Meaning, because it's so accessible, we have to put more diligence on research. So here's the question I I was asking you when you were looking up the--

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

When I was ignoring you, I'm sorry.

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Mike Michalowicz ([37:48](#)):

When you were ignoring me.

AJ Harper ([37:49](#)):

I'm sorry.

Mike Michalowicz ([37:49](#)):

You were buried in the wolf story. Was just the inner critic around credibility. I, you've noticed, I think that when authors have credibility questions, they're really dealing with an inner critic of themselves. And I just wanted to learn a little more about what your thoughts were there.

AJ Harper ([38:03](#)):

I mean, the, the question that I'm asked most often besides which publishing path should I take? Yeah. Is, um, who am I to write this? And that's a deep feeling of insecurity. And so sometimes when we fixate on credibility, we say, I'm not qualified to write it or yet, you know. I will be soon. Oh, I need to wait until I get somebody to write that forward before I can even start. And it's just giving into that feeling of you're not, you are not good enough. The credibility factor is sort of code for am I good enough? Am I worthy of writing this thing that I feel called to write? And it's just your inner critic troll messing with you. If, when I hear people mention credibility, I think that's usually what's happening. Which isn't to say that we don't wanna be credible through honesty, transparency, by getting other, by getting people who do have the authority to support what we believe, what we are saying in the book, et cetera, et cetera. Test drives all of it. Do those things. But I think when you are saying that to yourself, what's really happening is your inner critic troll is messing with you.

Mike Michalowicz ([39:19](#)):

Can you still start writing if you're feeling that? Or is your writing to be...

AJ Harper ([39:24](#)):

You should Well, I mean, listen, this is a false narrative that we are ever gonna write free. Nobody's writing free. Yeah. Nobody's just running through daisies, <laugh> writing, <laugh>, having the muse.

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

I love your visuals.

AJ Harper ([39:40](#)):

The muse just popping in and every word is perfect and I feel amazing. This is false. I I just, I-I-I-I will die on this hill. Writing is hard and it's hard because we are constantly being messed with by inner critic trolls constantly. And the more you handle it, the more creative that, um, inner critic troll gets it. It honestly, it's just keeps happening. So, um, keep yes, write through it. Just like we said in the voice episode

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

That that's what I was saying last week was just exactly what you said. Right through it.

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

Right through it. You have to keep going. But if you say, okay, let me just be honest and transparent in the writing, you can kill some of that noise.

Mike Michalowicz ([40:28](#)):

Anything else on this subject? I got one last story I wanna share before we start wrapping things up that anything else you wanna share on?

AJ Harper ([40:33](#)):

Yeah, I think my ultimate credibility tool is one that usually blows in my students' minds and then show your work. So in school when we have, let's say a math problem, and then you just write the answer, your teacher says, show your work. How did you figure this out? Because why? They wanna know if you're doing it right or maybe if you're cheating. So you have to show how the whole problem, how you actually came to that, uh, the answer to the equation. So I want you as an author to show your work. So when you say "take your profit first," right? You say "the traditional accounting method is killing your business. Take your profit first." I wanna know how you figure that out. Yes. So show your work then is, uh, okay, well I used to be over here.

AJ Harper ([41:23](#)):

And then I came to this belief over there. And then the whole book is based on this belief. That's your core message. How'd you get there? Yes. What happened along the way? Yeah. Now show your work. This is how I figured it out. And when you do that, you become, that is like an instant credibility builder because now instead of presenting yourself as the purveyor of this knowledge, uh, now you're saying, I'm just a person who, like you felt this way, didn't understand this thing, had to solve this problem, and I had to figure it out. Here were my bumps along the way and this is when I finally put it all together, or this is when it dawned on me. And these are the steps. Now you have shown the inner workings of how you figured it out as say a lay person or whatever. And it's an instant credibility builder. Show your work.

Mike Michalowicz ([42:15](#)):

Gold, you just show you are, you're dropping gold. Uh, yesterday I had lunch with two aspiring authors. They are business owners and they're partners and they've discovered in their journey, they have a unique partnership. It's very successful, they're very supportive of each other. And it's been for 25 years. And they say this is atypical. They wanna write a book on it. The challenge they're facing and this plays into next week, is they're running a business right now. Full-time. How do you pursue an author career? Become an author when you already have a busy life? And that's what we're gonna be talking about



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next week. So wanna make sure you join us for that. As always, thanks for joining us today. Uh, our materials, everything you want for the show, past episodes and so forth. And you can sign up for email list is at Dwtb. Don't write that book podcast.com. You can email us [hello@dwtbpodcast.com](mailto:hello@dwtbpodcast.com). And as always, our big reminder, don't write that book. Write the greatest book you can.