

don't write *that* book!

Episode 43: “Introductions”

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. We're gonna talk about, don't write that introduction. And I wonder, AJ, if we're gonna get into a little bit of a, of a debate. I don't know.

AJ Harper ([00:00:38](#)):

I don't think so.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:00:39](#)):

Yeah, I'm, well, you know, I'm on the fence sometimes. I'm totally pro introduction other times, like, these are such a waste. I'll give you both my reasonings. Um, I do want everyone to know, you probably hear it in our voices. We are, uh, remotely connected today. It is just a confluence of events. And we were, I was intending to be back at the studio this morning. Um, but I file my foot <laugh>. I stepped on a metal object and I got six stitches, um, which prevented me from walking much. And the other thing is, there's massive storms coming up and down the East coast. I was in Nashville. Uh, now I'm in Topeka, Kansas. I have a speaking gig here Friday, tomorrow morning, and decided, you know what? It's, it's not worth the risk of I was gonna head home and then come back just because of the storms. But secondly, I can't walk much. And I'm like, ah, if I'm moving around more airports, it's probably a bad move. So I, I'm, I'm living out of my suitcase. Pro tip. Always bring two spare pairs of undies. It's, and that's what I have. It's just gonna get me by, I think .

AJ Harper ([00:01:44](#)):

<laugh>, You know, you can inst, you know, you can just Instacart at Target also. We'll drop it off.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:01:49](#)):

Are you serious?

AJ Harper ([00:01:50](#)):

Yeah. Just go, go to Target and they'll come, they'll drop it off at the hotel. Like that day.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:01:58](#)):

Did not know.

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AJ Harper ([00:01:59](#)):

Get on it.

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

Did not know. I'll get on. Yeah. I actually make a, uh, clothes shopping. 'cause I don't have my typical attire for a presentation. Um, but I have a, after we're done podcast recording, I have a half day of free time, so I'll get some clothing. Um, I, I do want to share one other thing before we introduce each other. It is really sad news. Um, but it, it's just the reality. And you and I were talking offline about, you know, what happens in life. So we had the author event at Don Miller's place. It was August 1st and August 2nd. We're recording, recording this around the, uh, 10th of August. This won't broadcast for a while, so this will already be public news. It's an amazing event, by the way. And I have so much to share, and I learned so much. One fellow who couldn't make it was John Rule, and I was kind of busting his chops on the phone.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:02:48](#)):

He decided to go on a family trip. Um, it was already scheduled and said, I'm just gonna miss it this year. But my family's trip is most important, John Ruhlin. And sadly he passed away on, um, Sunday, uh, unexpectedly. He collapsed, and they were unable to resuscitate him on Saturday. I, I was busting his chops for not coming. Like, oh, you're a weak, you know, blah, blah, blah. In a kidding tone, And, and he busting back. Um, but gosh, I miss him. He's, he was such a great friend. He's the author of Giftology. Um, the, the, the shock is, is reverberating through the author community. And again, by the time it's broadcast, it's, it's, I'm sure public knowledge. The organization already made an announcement about his passing. And, um, yeah, just wanted to share. We, we lost a, a great one.

AJ Harper ([00:03:37](#)):

I'm so sorry, Mike. I know he was a friend to you.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:03:40](#)):

Yeah, a great, a great friend. And, and, and the shock value I had, excuse myself. Uh, Sunday, I was in, uh, a meeting, uh, dinner with some folks. And when I heard Hal Elrod, he's the author of Miracle Morning, gave me a call, and he is, he is all choked up. He told me what's going on. I excuse myself from the room. It's, um, and just sit for about 30 minutes, just contemplating. It's, this is the first time in my life I experienced something shocking, where you're talking to someone, you know, 24 hours prior, and they're so vibrant. They're so alive. He sent a picture, this beautiful picture of him and his family. He's got four daughters. And, um, and then second later, it says, the, the story comes to an abrupt end. It's sad. There's real shock value there.

AJ Harper ([00:04:28](#)):

Well, not shock value. You were shocked. And the value, I was shocked. The value of the shock for you was the contemplation that it gave you.

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Mike Michalowicz ([00:04:38](#)):

Yeah.

AJ Harper ([00:04:39](#)):

Yeah. But yeah. That's horrible. Oh my gosh, that is so sad.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:04:44](#)):

Yeah. It's so sad. It's so sad. And he's, and he's working on a new book, um, about referrals. And so, um, I think his team in is intending to carry it on, but they're, you know, it's, it's so close to the incident. Who knows how that'll play out.

AJ Harper ([00:05:00](#)):

Yeah, of course.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:05:02](#)):

So, yeah, sorry, start on a bummer, but it's just the reality, uh, of what's going on. I, I want to dig into today's topic.

AJ Harper ([00:05:11](#)):

Wait, let me let stop you for a moment. Yeah. 'cause I'm struck by you were talking to him the day before. Hal Elrod is the one who gave you the news. And I just think, you know, we talk a lot about literary citizenship and author community, but what I'm getting from the story is the power of author community and how the, your, your specific, because everybody has a different author community, depends on the genre, et cetera. But that's your community and how... Those are real relationships.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:05:49](#)):

Yes.

AJ Harper ([00:05:50](#)):

You know, forged in a very unique experience of becoming an author.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:05:55](#)):

Yeah. I, I think we should definitely dedicate an episode to this. It, it's interesting as you're sharing this, I'm on my iPad and, uh, surrounded by pillows. I sent you a picture of it, how ridiculous this looks, just to make sure the audio doesn't get all echoy, but the texts are popping up. Just another one. Michael Hyatt, very popular author. Uh, they're all talking about John right now and what we can do, um, Todd Herman, who wrote The Alter Ego, um, he was, he texted me first before Hal called me. And we had, what was so interesting about this community is we have 35 folks that showed up in this room, mostly the same folks from the year prior. But we expanded. Um, the group and the relationships are, are unique in that, at least in my past business experience, is when I had, you know, my computer tech

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company, if I felt I was in a room with other computer tech people, I felt to a degree threatened that I had to compete.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:06:56](#)):

That either I won the job or they won the job. And I may have said this before in the podcast, what's so unique about authorship is that every time Hal or Todd Herman or Michael Hyatt or anyone sells a book, if that book is of great service to that reader, the reader is by default encouraged to read more books. So the more great books that are out there, the more great books that are consumed, the more will consume great books. It's an upward spiral, and it's the only industry I know of or experience that's like this.

AJ Harper ([00:07:33](#)):

Yeah. I, uh, thanks for sharing that. I'm so sorry, Mike.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:07:38](#)):

Thank you. Thank you. But, but the essence is let's all write more great books.

AJ Harper ([00:07:43](#)):

Well, and let's all, let's all connect with authors and, um, focus on friend support, focus on support and friendship, and less on networking and what, you know.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:07:54](#)):

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Less on the what can I get out of this relationship and more to what can I contribute into this relationship? How can it be a relationship?

AJ Harper ([00:08:03](#)):

How can it be a relationship? Yes. How can it be a relationship? I had, um, yeah, take joy in each other. I met this author I really, uh, enjoyed Rachel Heron. Um, she invited me to be on her podcast. It's, um, um, Ink in Your Veins. And she talks to authors about their process. And it's fascinating. And I stumbled upon her podcast, and I had been listening to it while I was driving to and from my mom's nursing home in Wisconsin. And she asked me to be on her podcast. And I was thrilled because I had been listening to hers. And we had that kind of podcast conversation where you, it's an hour, but then you keep talking for another hour after you start recording.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:08:53](#)):

Yes.

AJ Harper ([00:08:53](#)):

And I thought, I'm so lucky to meet friends, people who will get you. Because that's the other piece, you know? There, this is a unique, uh, experience. And to be connected to people who kind of are like-

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mindful or just geek out about the same stuff, or share your values or all of the above is so special. And, um, yeah. Yeah. We should do a whole episode on author community versus all this constant leverage that we talk about.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:09:29](#)):

Oh, I agree. I agree. Let, let me officially introduce you, and then we'll get into the topic today about introductions. You know, kind of playing off that author community. You just shared a story. Uh, your, uh, you had someone passing in your family. I, I don't want to share details without your permission, but what was remarkable to me about that story was how Zoe Bird and other individuals showed up for you. And I think the measurement of friendship is who will be for you there, for you in the most trying times? I think, at least for me, that's the easiest thing to naturally step away from. But who steps forward when times are trying? And, uh, you just start rattling off names.

AJ Harper ([00:10:16](#)):

It was, um, it was Zoe Bird and Kristina Paider. Both authors. Yeah. Both authors.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:10:21](#)):

<laugh>, but also Sparrow. You're talking about Sparrow and what he did. Yeah. You know, it just interesting how many people stepped forward. And I think that's a definition of your character. I, I can't speak anymore, uh, highly about your character than through that example. You are there for them. Hence they are there for you. That's AJ Harper.

AJ Harper ([00:10:41](#)):

Aw, thanks. It's the same with you, Mike. Thank you. I <laugh> I yeah, it's the same, it's the same with you. And the way that you check in with me is really special. I can see why you have these close friendships, you know? You are, you check in and you remember, and you want to know how people are really doing. And I noticed a big change in you, too, over the years where you started to slow way down and make that the first priority, you know? Um, and not that you didn't always have it in your heart, but I feel like you, I don't know, I feel like you've really embraced that. That's gonna be your number one priority as you relationships.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:11:25](#)):

Thank you. Yeah. Um, okay. Well let, let's get into it. I, I do have some other

AJ Harper ([00:11:31](#)):

Updates. We're you're getting super, we got super mushy, though, like, that was--

Mike Michalowicz ([00:11:33](#)):

I know, I know, I know. It's good.

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AJ Harper ([00:11:34](#)):

But that's okay. That's okay. There's a place for it.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:11:37](#)):

Yeah, I agree. And I do have some more updates, um, but I'll say save it for the end, uh, before we wrap up so we can get into the meat of the content. That's what I think our listener right now wants to hear. So, um, let's talk about introductions. Um, you have a big, I think starting off the spoiler alert is kind of the best way to start this. You have a big spoiler alert.

AJ Harper ([00:11:58](#)):

Yeah. My spoiler alert is in this, the, the, the crest of this, crux of this episode is introductions are not required, but also don't write a bad one. So when I suggested this topic, don't write that introduction, which is a play off our podcast title. Yeah, I got it. It's not, it's not really to debate whether you should do one or not.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:12:23](#)):

Yeah.

AJ Harper ([00:12:23](#)):

It's too, I don't have a feeling that you shouldn't do them.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:12:28](#)):

I just think, but it shouldn't be,

AJ Harper ([00:12:30](#)):

Shouldn't you shouldn't write them the way you're writing them. <laugh>.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:12:32](#)):

Yeah, no, a hundred percent agree with that. But I think there is certain times where it's not appropriate. I mean, imagine Sun Tzu's, Art of War had a big introduction. Like, there's certain ones where you just get into it. I just, I was hanging out with a guy named Joseph Nguyen and if you haven't heard of Joseph Nguyen yet, by the way, Nguyen is spelled NG, I think YUEN. Um, I probably bastardized that. If you haven't heard of him. Just look up the book. Uh, Don't Believe Everything You Think, uh, over 700,000 copies sold. I spent, he was at this author meetup, the nicest, most, most human human I think I've ever met. Um, and there's no introduction to his book. And his book is 99 pages long, or a hundred pages long. Um, sometimes I think you just get right to it. Does, you know, one thing, what that I've always contemplated is, at least in my own observation when it comes to introductions, a lot of books, I don't read them, I read a little more now because we write them, but I used to say, just give me, gimme the stuff. I don't want to hear the, the build up to it. Do, do you think a portion, a majority, a minority of readers just skip the introduction regardless of the quality or importance of it?

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AJ Harper ([00:13:52](#)):

Yeah, for sure. I think people, a lot of people skip the introduction, but it's a real chicken, chicken and egg question. Do they skip the introduction because that's their nature and they just want to get to it? Or are they skipping the introduction because they've been conditioned over time to skip introductions because they're so poorly written?

Mike Michalowicz ([00:14:11](#)):

Yeah.

AJ Harper ([00:14:12](#)):

You know, like, what is it, is it that?

Mike Michalowicz ([00:14:15](#)):

Okay, well then how, how do you decide if you should do one as an author?

AJ Harper ([00:14:19](#)):

So, you know, I'm gonna always come back to the reader. So I rather, I would say, how do you decide if you shouldn't do one? So you should, you let me, let me just say that. You shouldn't do one if you know your reader well enough to know that they are the type of person to skip it, right? So people who don't have a lot of time. You know, overachiever type, you know, not even... No, type A people will read it. But if you have a good sense of, you know what, my community wants to cut right to the chase, they don't, or they just don't have time for this stuff. I'm lucky they're reading this book at all, then, you know, you should probably skip it because they're not gonna read it. And then if you are putting content in that introduction that you really want them to read, then you have a problem.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:15:11](#)):

Because you're gonna have to revisit it if they do skip it, right?

AJ Harper ([00:15:15](#)):

Yeah. So I mean, I, you know, I think for the most part, an introduction is a great thing to do because it is an opportunity for you to artfully weave in your credentials and share more of your mission and, um, you know, talk about this the problem in a different way, such as the scope of the problem. So that when you get to chapter one, you can go right into this very compelling content, usually some sort of narrative or another way to connect immediately with the reader. Whereas the introduction can be more about the inspiration for the book and who you are, not in terms of your story or your origin story, or your even your core message origin story, but just in terms of qualifications, whatever they are, personal qualifications, professional qualifications, and also to provide some social proof. And I, you know, we can do a rundown of what should go in an introduction, but.

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AJ Harper ([00:16:16](#)):

I do think there's a huge value in doing it, but you first need to decide are, are will my readers skip it?

Mike Michalowicz ([00:16:24](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. And I, I do want to go over those qualifications. I will tell you this, AJ introductions are being read, and I'm putting air quotes around "Read" at the highest rate ever because of audio books. You know, audio books are a linear consumption. It is much more difficult when you purchase it on whatever platform and start listening to skip the introduction. The tools exist that you can do that, but people are thrown into the introduction. And therefore, I think it represents an opportunity, like, if, if you nail this introduction, um, and it doesn't have to be a full chapter length. In fact, I'd argue it shouldn't, um, it can engage in a unique way that's independent of the book. It's kind of like at a concert, the opening band, like it can get the, the main stage band, um, with an emphatic audience. They can rev 'em up. I saw, uh, guns N Roses, but, uh, the opener was the Pretenders and the Pretenders knocked it out of the park, and, and the audience was so engaged. And therefore, when Guns N Roses came on stage, the audience was going crazy. I, I wonder if it would've been a little different with a cold open. I mean, I think that's what the introduction can do.

AJ Harper ([00:17:36](#)):

Yeah. So it's, it's, again, don't write that introduction is about: don't write a crappy introduction, you know? No write--

Mike Michalowicz ([00:17:45](#)):

Be a great opening band.

AJ Harper ([00:17:47](#)):

Yeah. You need be great, great opener. Yeah, definitely.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:17:50](#)):

So let's talk about the mistakes. Maybe the stuff that makes a crappy, uh, opener, a crappy introduction. What are the stuff we should avoid?

AJ Harper ([00:17:58](#)):

So, some of the common things I see, uh, they're too long. Uh, they go on, on and on and on. Um, people tend to dump their life story into the introduction. I once had a, an editing client back in the day, and their introduction was 30 pages.

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

Okay. It sounds long.

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AJ Harper ([00:18:19](#)):

Yeah, it's a little long. And it had, um, their entire life story in it. And then in the rest of the book, they never mentioned anything about... No personal anecdotes or storytelling in the whole rest of the book. So this is a <laugh>, this is a no-no, we don't dump our whole story in the open. I would say that's one I see commonly. Because also by the way, when we dump our whole story, we're not thinking about what part of our story is in service to the reader. We're just dumping it.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:18:56](#)):

And is it typically that I'm trying to show my qualifications. Why is, what's the propensity for people to do that?

AJ Harper ([00:19:03](#)):

I think a lot of people are reading bad introductions and modeling their introductions off those introductions. <laugh>. I think that's part of the problem.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:19:13](#)):

Okay. That makes sense.

AJ Harper ([00:19:14](#)):

But I do think people think, where should I put my story? I hear this all the time. How much of my story should I tell? Where does it go? And it's just, if you're not an, if you're not a person who writes books, if you're just kicking it off, you, you aren't sure how to break up that story and figure out which part of it is useful to readers and where to put it. So you just do what you know to do, which is tell the whole dang thing and put it in the beginning. And now everybody knows, and you can, you kind of have this attitude of like, okay, now we can move on. But that's, this is not interesting to readers at all because they care about themselves. Right? So they want to know that you're qualified to write it, that you have life and or professional experience that makes you somebody, they, that is, they can trust, but they don't really want to hear all your stuff.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:20:09](#)):

Right?

AJ Harper ([00:20:10](#)):

Yeah. So, and certainly not in, you know, it, it's as if you were sitting down with a, with a date. Okay? So you're on a first date and that person talks for, you know, 30 minutes before letting you utter a peep and never asks you anything about yourself. It's kinda like that.

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Mike Michalowicz ([00:20:28](#)):

Yeah, I'm out, I'm out. There's that saying that people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. I think in an, in an introduction or throughout a book, is this is where you make the reader the hero. This is where you show your care for them. You know?

AJ Harper ([00:20:45](#)):

I mean, it's one of the, yeah, you should be sharing it on every single freaking page, but for sure. Yeah, for sure. But that, but that dump the life story tells them that you care more about yourself. And you, I don't think that you most authors intend that. It's just they don't know what to do with the story, so they dump it. Another one is people get in the weeds in their introduction. They get too detailed, they get into teaching points. And it's really, it's really not that, remember it is an introduction. We're not supposed to be doing, we're not teaching, we're not teaching.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:21:20](#)):

But by the definition of introduction, does it set the stage for what the book's gonna be about?

AJ Harper ([00:21:25](#)):

Yes. That's, yes. This is the book. This is why I wrote it, and this is why I'm the best person, and this is what you can expect from the book. Here's my promise. So we don't want to get into the weeds with teaching, teaching, teaching.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:21:40](#)):

Right. And, and particularly, uh, if people don't read the introduction and you have teaching points in there, if it's not revisited or fully addressed in other chapters, they've missed those teaching points altogether.

AJ Harper ([00:21:51](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. And then, you know, another thing people do is even if they don't dump their life story, they kind of focus on, I'm so awesome, right? I did this, I did this, I did this, I did this. And that's, you know, we don't want that either. You have to artfully weave in what makes you qualified rather, rather than being kind of braggy about it.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:22:18](#)):

I've noticed that when it comes to these brag sheets, I, I'm sure I've said, shared this on the podcast before, and I think it's attributed to Margaret Thatcher who said, if you must say you're a lady, you're not. And I, I love that quote so much because I see it and I catch myself. When we feel compelled to show that we are something of significance, that means we're missing that. Um, and, and that's how it's received. If, if I have to compel you that, you know, I know everything about business, I'm such a great business person, it, it diminishes my credibility. Um, people value, I think more your, your question of them. Well, tell me about your business. Tell me where you're struggling. That way of questioning and,

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and learning about the other person is actually a way to identify your authority. Uh, at least that's the way I've discovered it.

AJ Harper ([00:23:10](#)):

Well, you, you still do need to weave in qualifications. On the flip side, while I see a lot of for sure doing me, me, me, and by the way, I think most people are also doing that. It's just innocent agree. I don't think agree. I mean, I think there are some, um, braggy jerk faces for sure. But my experience with authors is that they just feel a lot of imposter syndrome. And so they sometimes overcompensate. And I don't, I don't think it's, uh, credibility's a big issue. We did a whole podcast on are you qualified to write this book. And, and so sometimes people just innocently trying to figure that out. What is the balance? How do I prove that I can write this without sounding too braggy? It's, it's can be challenging, but an easy way to do it is to just include a narrative story. And we talked about in that episode to include a story or anecdote that shows you in, that ex shows your experience, shows your expertise, rather than just stating your expertise.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:24:19](#)):

I think instead of, me, me, me, it's what do I have that's relevant to you as, you know, as opposed to, here's everything about me, here's the elements that are relevant. Sure. So I Oh, sure, sure. I took, sure, I took a, uh, a car. They had a service pick me up to go from Kansas City to Topeka yesterday, and we're driving and, and, um, the driver was sharing that her daughter was working on a book. And I was like, oh, that's really interesting. Tell me about it. And just asked questions, didn't say anything about what I do. Uh, and she, oh, those are really interesting questions. She goes, what do you do? I said, well, I happen to be an author. She's like, oh my gosh. Uh, I want to ask you some more questions. I, I didn't say, uh, that, you know, I, I written Profit First and I traveled the world speaking, and I didn't go through the, the brag sheet. It's just that one piece that was relevant to her need, and that was enough to identify my qualifications.

AJ Harper ([00:25:13](#)):

Sure, sure. And then at the same time, you do need to include them. I often have a lot of authors who just because they're worried about bragging, and it's, it's across the board, men and women, they omit things that I'm like, Hey, let's, um, let's bring that forward. We can do that in an artful way that doesn't feel like bragging.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:25:33](#)):

People go to the other extreme from the me, me, me, to the nothing about me?

AJ Harper ([00:25:38](#)):

Yeah. That's what I'm saying is sometimes I have to remind authors, let's weave this in. Let's tell people about this. This is, you know, when you show that say 50% of your clients were able to become profitable in a year, or every, you know, most of the people in your class went on to have healthy

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relationships or whatever it is. That's not bragging, that's showing that what you're about to teach them works.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:26:07](#)):

So, but I'm saying in regards to the introduction specifically, so is that if I have a teaching point around this will drive more profitability, I, I, I probably want to show the data there as opposed to necessarily in the introduction, I'm, I'm just trying to figure out--

AJ Harper ([00:26:22](#)):

No, I'm talking about the introduction.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:26:25](#)):

Okay.

AJ Harper ([00:26:25](#)):

So it, because that's part of that can be part of qualifications. Part of qualifications is what you've been able to do. It's in your introductions, you know? Like if you go to the revised and expanded edition of Profit First, and you talk about how many people have been helped because of that methodology that's in the introduction.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:26:46](#)):

Yeah.

AJ Harper ([00:26:47](#)):

So that's part of a qualification. Qualifications, not necessarily what's in your bio. If you're writing a prescriptive nonfiction book, part of your qualifications are the people you helped and some sort of evidence of that.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:27:04](#)):

Okay. So in the introduction, I just want to be to make sure I'm a hundred percent clear, when I do show a qualification, is it to the greater impact of the book as opposed to a specific thing? So I'll use a, probably a weak example here, but with Profit First. One thing is, uh, people confuse when taking a profit first and you don't have enough money for operating expenses, that means you need to cut costs. And that's not true. Uh, you may, but you also may have to increase margin or increase efficiency.

AJ Harper ([00:27:32](#)):

No, you're in the weeds. You're talking about a teaching point.

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Mike Michalowicz ([00:27:34](#)):

Right. Okay. So that, my point is, how do you distinguish, and maybe this is obvious, but how do you distinguish between a qualification for a teaching point versus a qualification to write the book?

AJ Harper ([00:27:45](#)):

Because in, okay, we'll talk about Profit First. In Profit First, we're talking about the methodology overall.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:27:51](#)):

Gotcha.

AJ Harper ([00:27:52](#)):

We're talking about, hey, people who follow this framework, this, these are the results they've achieved. This is what we've been able to do through our trainings, through our classes. And I'm speaking broadly here. However, you as a prescriptive nonfiction author are approaching it, whether it's through client work, programs, classes, maybe you're a speaker. I don't know. Maybe you have, uh, some other way that you're getting information out into the world, part of your qualifications, or what's the impact of that? What's the impact on people? And hopefully it's the results that your reader also wants.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:28:26](#)):

You know, you talk about every time we're working together, what's the promise, what's the promise of the book? And what I'm hearing is, in the introduction, the qualification I should present itself. Is that how I've delivered on this promise? Is that a good framing?

AJ Harper ([00:28:43](#)):

Yeah. And if, and if you aren't a prescriptive, you know, if you're new to it and you don't have a lot of, um, social proof, first I would say you should really try and get some by doing test drives and, and that sort of thing so that you can actually share that. But if it's just on your life experience, which is totally valid, everybody, it's totally valid, then sharing the impact it had for you is, is the way you would go, right? So I have this, I have this belief, I have this message. I have, or maybe you have a whole framework or method, um, whatever it is to show this was because I came to this new understanding, because I followed this framework, because I tried this system, I was able to get these results. Those are actually part of qualifications, by the way.

AJ Harper ([00:29:35](#)):

So we tend to think of qualifications as what we would put in our bio, but it's not, it's not all relevant. I would say for you, back in the day, we would talk about how you had, I think we still talk about it, but to a lesser extent, how you had, you know, three, you started three businesses before you were 30 sold to Fortune 500, right? These are things that we, that we talked about a lot. That's part of your qualifications. But we would artfully weave artfully, weave them in. And what's more, more relevant is the, what you're about to learn in this book that you have experience with, that

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Mike Michalowicz ([00:30:16](#)):

If I have credentials that the entire world should know or likely know. So, uh, former president Barack Obama does, if he writes another book, does he need to, in his introduction, say, I was president of the United States.

AJ Harper ([00:30:32](#)):

Oh no. <laugh>

Mike Michalowicz ([00:30:33](#)):

Right? Because the world knows

AJ Harper ([00:30:35](#)):

No, but he's gonna talk about being president.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:30:38](#)):

Yeah.

AJ Harper ([00:30:39](#)):

Because that's his, that's part of his story, so he can't help but talk about it.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:30:44](#)):

Yeah.

AJ Harper ([00:30:45](#)):

So, but in my, in my own introduction, for example, I used, I used narrative and then my own mission and my own sort of transformation from simply being a ghost to getting frustrated with the industry I was in. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> in thought leadership. I used that to show my level of experience and expertise. So I didn't just say, I've been a ghost writer for this many years, and I worked with these hot to trot authors, which I can't say anyway, and this, this, this, and whatever. I talked about how I, the experience I had transforming my understanding of what makes a good book and what matters. And that then shows the level of my experience.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:31:37](#)):

Experience, okay. I, or I get it now because it's, it's not a, a, a bullet point list like a cv. It's kind of what was drawing my head. It's through storytelling and it's only the relevant stuff is there. I think you have a list of stuff. So what, what else do we not do?

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AJ Harper ([00:31:52](#)):

The introduction, don't make the lofty promises. This comes from fear of not being credible. You might not even be conscious that you're doing it, but when you decide that you're gonna make these big promises to people about your book, they get, a lot of 'em are dumped in the introduction. No one believes this and makes you look silly. Really. We again, you know, comes back to the fundamentals. I teach in my book, write a must read, but you want to promise that you can deliver by the time they turn the last page. Not this big old pie in the sky stuff. No one believes you. So don't do that. So that, I see that a lot in introductions. I think that's a bad move. And then this is one people do when they don't realize they're doing it. And I want it to stop. I'm adamant about this <laugh> too many hedges. So have you, you've read those introductions where people are saying, maybe you got this book because you are looking to get married and you want to find the right partner. Or maybe you have the right partner and you're looking for a better relationship, or maybe you're about to be divorced and you're wondering how you can have a good relationship with that partner. Those are three different books, right?

Mike Michalowicz ([00:33:03](#)):

<laugh> Okay.

AJ Harper ([00:33:04](#)):

Those are three different books. It's not maybe you this and maybe you that, and maybe, maybe, maybe it. All that does is show you don't actually know who the reader that,

Mike Michalowicz ([00:33:17](#)):

That's super interesting. What if I write a book on relationships in any circumstances? Like what if, what, that's the topic. Like great relationships, regardless of the circumstances.

AJ Harper ([00:33:26](#)):

Why would you, first of all, why would you write that book <laugh>? I mean, why would you write that book?

Mike Michalowicz ([00:33:31](#)):

I would never.

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

Well, but what, tell, okay, let me ask you a question. So, um, what, what would make you pick up that book about great relationships in any circumstance?

Mike Michalowicz ([00:33:43](#)):

Well, I, maybe I value, I'll give you one example, but I think you're, I'm answering your point here, or addressing it, my family, um, there's certain relationships that are required, but wouldn't have those relationships if they weren't family. And so, I, I want to make the best of that circumstance with that

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specificity. Am I writing a book for when, when, you know, blood relationships specifically? Or do you see where I'm going?

AJ Harper ([00:34:13](#)):

Okay. You're getting into the weeds on what, how narrow should your readership be? Yeah. Your readership is really simply what your reader wants and what is standing in the way. What happens is people try and get all these different scenarios, these set of circumstances, and they get in the weeds on that, and then they hedge all of it. Maybe, maybe you're a teacher, or maybe you're a principal, or maybe you're a student, right? <laugh> like, no, it's what you want and what is standing in the way, regardless of circumstance with some exceptions. Okay? There are exceptions where the circumstance is the point. For example, um, I just mentioned divorce, right? Like, you don't, A person who's single and going, trying to figure out how to get a decent date is not the same as somebody who's trying to save their marriage. They're not reading the same book unless they have the same desire and, and, and perceived obstacle.

AJ Harper ([00:35:23](#)):

They could be both. Those people could be reading a book. This has nothing to do with relationships because they have the same desire and the same perceived obstacle. But what I'm specifically talking about is when you look at an introduction, and you, or, or sometimes it's in chapter one, and people say, give all these different reasons why the person is there, why the reader is on that page. And it doesn't make the reader feel seen. It makes 'em feel like they, the, the author doesn't actually know. And the author is trying to make everyone feel seen by doing it. So you're hedging that doesn't work, just take it out. Not maybe you're here for this. Maybe you're here for that.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:36:07](#)):

You know, those profound moments you have where it's like, oh, I remember exactly what was happening. I was, uh, in Disney World. My wife loves Disney. And, um, we were there in Florida. And, uh, I get a text from James Clear, we connected through that author group. How we started this, this, uh, conversation was about the author group. I had a question for him because his book at that point, this is many years ago, but his book was exploding. And, you know, Atomic Habits continues to be a top five book day in, day out. Now, five years later, six years later. And, uh, I said, James, I, I just want to understand what, how do you make your book so successful? What, what is stuff that you put into it? And one thing he shared was he goes write a book where the reader feels and knows this was written for them and only them, and they feel they're the only one that experiences this.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:37:07](#)):

Because there's, this is not always the case, but there's certain circumstances where we feel isolated and alone. And I'm the only person experiencing this problem, even though it's a global problem for all people. And, uh, that's, you know, all people have bad habits or habits they want to change, but most people never speak about that. And therefore they think they're isolated and with profit first. Most business owners think they're the only ones struggling with profit. While it's almost everybody, but

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everybody cloaks it. We think we're this isolated island. And he goes, now you can serve a global need, but have the reader believe they're a one of one. So it's so specific to them.

AJ Harper ([00:37:48](#)):

Yeah. I mean, I, I always tell my authors, I want your readers to feel like they, you somehow got into their, you know, under their bed and got the, and unlocked their diary. You know, like the, you, they should feel like, how do you know this stuff about me? Yeah. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:38:04](#)):

That's so good. And can you, but you, can you deliver that in the introduction? Should you do that in the introduction?

AJ Harper ([00:38:09](#)):

You can give a little taste? It's not gonna all go in the introduction, but what will absolutely torpedo that, what will absolutely torpedo that is if you say, maybe you're this and maybe you're that,

Mike Michalowicz ([00:38:21](#)):

Right.

AJ Harper ([00:38:22](#)):

That's what I'm getting at. Let's not do that. You just go into your introduction or anywhere in your book, search the word maybe, and look for where you're doing that.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:38:32](#)):

You, uh, listed in our show notes here, uh, from our internal notes, a little pet peeve you have with introductions, and this mine too. So I was laughing when I was reading this. Do the big reveal,

AJ Harper ([00:38:44](#)):

Oh, the how to read this book section.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:38:46](#)):

Yeah. <laugh>, I can't stand that.

AJ Harper ([00:38:47](#)):

Please, Lord, let it stop. Please let it stop. It's, I, I'm so sick of this. Let me, let me, okay, this, I am strong on this. Why do we have a section about how to read the book if it's should be pretty evident from the table of contents? Like, if you can't tell what's going on in the book from the table of contents, then you have a problem. Now, there are exceptions in that. Maybe there is something you want to tell people about the book, for example. Um, hey, I want you to take your time with this book. I don't want you to blow through it. This is hard stuff. Or, Hey, I really want you to set up a support network while you're

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going through these exercises, because this is gonna be challenging. That's helpful to know, right? Hey, don't skip the exercises because otherwise this book isn't gonna work.

AJ Harper ([00:39:43](#)):

The, or managing expectations. You're not gonna get this outcome from this book, but you will get that outcome that's helpful. But you don't need someone to say, part one is this. Part two is this. They can flip back two pages to see the table of contents where it should be clear. It should be clear what the freaking parts are. And if it's not clear in the table of contents, you have a problem. And you should make it clear. You might have two, uh, chapter titles that are too clever. You like them, but your reader has no idea what you're talking about. There's absolutely no reason to put, this is my description of what I'm about to tell you. Because also, here's the other thing, the reader will find out when they read it, they don't need it unless they, unless you absolutely have something critical that you need to explain. And then I would argue and say, is your book too complicated that it needs that? Like, if you feel like you have to explain how to read a book, I'm sorry, then you might need to simplify the book.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:40:54](#)):

I, gosh, I wish so much, AJ. We were in studio together right now, <laugh>, because you don't, you don't elevate the pitch of your voice too often, <laugh>. But when you do, you just, I get on that train with you, it's so much fun. Um, I agree. You, you know, one example I think of is, as a kid, I loved Choose Your Own Adventure. I don't recall there being like, this is how you do it. You'll read a page <laugh> at the end of that section. It simply said, if you choose this, go here. If you choose that, go there. Yes. It, it was in the book.

AJ Harper ([00:41:22](#)):

It's like, we can turn a page. We know how to turn pages, we know how to look at a table of contents. We, we know how to do these things. I just, why do we, I don't understand how this started. And now what's happened is it's, people think it's mandatory. It's not mandatory. You have to really ask yourself, why do I need this? Yeah. Is this necessary? And if I do need this, is there something else wrong with my book? Like, it is too, too complicated that I have to explain how to read it. They should just be able to read.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:41:54](#)):

Yeah. Less is more. It is the killing darlings.

AJ Harper ([00:41:58](#)):

And I, I have to tell you that, um, this next one on too gimmicky, I actually pulled the toilet. I haven't looked at the Toilet Paper Entrepreneur in a really long time. Incidentally, we're always trying to remember how long we've been at this. So

Mike Michalowicz ([00:42:15](#)):

There's, oh, yeah. So that, that's the, that's the

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AJ Harper ([00:42:17](#)):

Target. But I have a note, I have my note from you.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:42:22](#)):

Okay.

AJ Harper ([00:42:22](#)):

Oh, did you know that you <laugh>, do you want to hear what you wrote?

Mike Michalowicz ([00:42:25](#)):

Not really, but yes.

AJ Harper ([00:42:27](#)):

Okay. First of all, what, why are you nervous? <laugh>

Mike Michalowicz ([00:42:31](#)):

Well, guys, I have a bad feeling right now, but I'll tell you, the person listening is like, oh, let's spill the tea. Spill the tea.

AJ Harper ([00:42:38](#)):

It's not much tea. We, for context, everybody, this was before we had an actual partnership. So this is

Mike Michalowicz ([00:42:45](#)):

What year was this? Or what, what date was this?

AJ Harper ([00:42:46](#)):

It says October 7th, 2008.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:42:50](#)):

Oh, wow. Okay. So that's 16 years back, roughly.

AJ Harper ([00:42:57](#)):

Yes. Yeah. Okay. So it says Anjanette, which is how you would address me now.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:43:05](#)):

Madame Anjanette,

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AJ Harper ([00:43:07](#)):

Thanks. Bye. Thanks for helping me in writing the best business book of all time. I so value your friendship, professional support, and all around awesomeness. That's cool. Very, very Gen X of you. Uh, here is to your suc, here's to your success. And then this is gonna make you gag a little. So, I'm sorry.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:43:31](#)):

Okay, here we go.

AJ Harper ([00:43:32](#)):

Here is to getting rich right.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:43:36](#)):

Hmm.

AJ Harper ([00:43:36](#)):

Yeah, Mike, and then your little scribble scrabble of your Michalowicz. <Laugh> Like, it's just basically an m and then like a circle.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:43:47](#)):

Oh, so this is actual letter I sent you?

AJ Harper ([00:43:50](#)):

No, you signed, you signed the book.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:43:53](#)):

Oh, this is on the book itself. Oh, oh, oh, oh, okay. Okay.

AJ Harper ([00:43:56](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Do you remember writing? Here's To Getting Rich right?

Mike Michalowicz ([00:43:59](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. I do.

AJ Harper ([00:44:01](#)):

You don't? What do you write now?

Mike Michalowicz ([00:44:04](#)):

<laugh>. This is gonna make you gag a little. Here's to Getting Rich, right? <laugh>.

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AJ Harper ([00:44:07](#)):

You still do it

Mike Michalowicz ([00:44:08](#)):

When I sign that book? Yeah.

AJ Harper ([00:44:10](#)):

No, I mean, no. What are you generally signing now?

Mike Michalowicz ([00:44:14](#)):

Oh, when I do, um, wishing no, I generally wish, uh, if I sign up, oh, each book has its own signature. So for Profit First I'll say, take your profit first always. For All In I'll say go all in on them. Um,

AJ Harper ([00:44:32](#)):

Interesting. I didn't know this little fact about you.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:44:36](#)):

Yes. Each book I sign was something that I think represents the essence of the less, the teaching of that book.

AJ Harper ([00:44:45](#)):

But I love that you say to your success. I like that part. See, that wasn't that bad.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:44:51](#)):

It wasn't that bad, but--

AJ Harper ([00:44:52](#)):

It's not, um, I incidentally, this is the only one I have from you, <laugh>.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:44:57](#)):

Yeah. Oh, I get you. I thought so this a corrections corner. I thought I had your signed, uh, Write a Must-Read. I don't, I have it. I have a special collection of First Press, first release autographed books. And I have your book sitting in that. It's not autographed. So

AJ Harper ([00:45:16](#)):

You get auto. I not, I totally signed one to you.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:45:18](#)):

Well, the one I have in my—

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AJ Harper ([00:45:20](#)):

I'll get you a new one.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:45:21](#)):

Display case one, yeah. My display case. And you have to kind of fake it like you signed it when you it came off the press. I

AJ Harper ([00:45:25](#)):

Don't remember. I said something nice.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:45:29](#)):

Well, I don't, I can't find the thing. I'm,

AJ Harper ([00:45:30](#)):

I, I, here's to writing a great book, <laugh> Wah wah.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:45:37](#)):

You said, here's to a great book, comma, right? <laugh> <laugh>. Um,

AJ Harper ([00:45:41](#)):

So, all right. But I, the reason I pulled this out is I want to tell you in the introduction.

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

Yeah. It's gimmicky.

AJ Harper ([00:45:48](#)):

This is, this was, speaks to the next thing I think people do wrong in introductions. They're try to be too gimmicky.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:45:54](#)):

Yeah.

AJ Harper ([00:45:55](#)):

So, um, your whole, the whole intro <laugh>, I, this, this book is so, it's full of so many good things, but this is so funny to me in the beginning. Um, I mean, ah, I love this book. And you still were heavy into the bathroom thing. Yes. So the whole intro is this, um, gimmicky stuff about, um, plays on the word toilet paper, bathroom, crappy. (Yeah, yeah.) Um, you're describing, you do a whole play by play about getting, like, not having toilet paper.

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Mike Michalowicz ([00:46:31](#)):

Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>

AJ Harper ([00:46:33](#)):

Um, like really in depth.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:46:36](#)):

<laugh>. Yeah. It's, yeah. I fell.

AJ Harper ([00:46:40](#)):

What? You, you got, I mean, like, you're mentioning a cute A Q-tip. <laugh> a Q-tip.

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

Oh, yeah, yeah. The extreme circumstance.

AJ Harper ([00:46:48](#)):

But what I'm saying is like, that's not what you would, we would do today, right? So we get a little stuck in, um, that's a great book, by the way, everybody, it's a cult classic, Toilet Paper Entrepreneur. I take, I take the out of it a lot, but p it really changed a lot of lives. And, but I'm just saying the gimmicky part can be off-putting to people. It

Mike Michalowicz ([00:47:08](#)):

Totally can be off-putting. Let me ask you kind of a, a book has been very successful and is a gimmicky is The Subtle Art of Not Giving an F. And when I read that book, it is, you know, every other time, I think it was Mark, I can't remember his last name, Manson, no, I, I can't remember. But the author uses F bombs and S bombs and probably a CBO throughout the book is, and this wildly successful book, is that gimmicky or they found something? And, but it worked, but it's not too gimmicky.

AJ Harper ([00:47:44](#)):

Yes. It worked. And there's also people who will never read it.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:47:48](#)):

Read it, yeah. Yeah. Because it's so off putting for them.

AJ Harper ([00:47:51](#)):

Yeah. So I think let's, you know, again, that's reader focused, right? Yes. So you have, you have to make, have to make a decision of, I, I think this is funny. I think this is cool. I think whatever, but is my reader, is this work for them? Is is all you need to do.

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Mike Michalowicz ([00:48:09](#)):

I want to share one last little topic on gimmicky, uh, as I shared at Don Miller's place, and he helps businesses in their marketing. I, it is his zone of genius. He was talking about, he was working with a gardening company who's called Gardenerly, and their taglines, we make gardening ordinary. And he simply said, I, I have no clue what that means. Um, and they were explaining and arguing it, and he said, why don't you just say we start a garden for you, <laugh>. Like, he goes, that's what you do. And they changed it to, We Start a Garden for You and their leads lead flow. Um, maybe it's a little bit of conjecture, but it sounds like it's doubled or tripled. It, it's been extraordinary. And his point was simply, it, it's, it's this, the salesperson's nature to be clever because you understand intimately and so you want to put a little life into it, but the consumer just needs a, so it's consumable. And he pointed, he pointed to the caloric burn. He goes, if you make me think, my brain is like, I don't want to think because it, it costs a lot of energy and time. I, I want to simply consume. And the more understandable it is, the easier it's to consume, the more we trust it. So the gimmicky starts losing the trust and disengaging people.

AJ Harper ([00:49:25](#)):

Yeah. That's it. You got it. You nailed it. Okay. You nailed it.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:49:28](#)):

Nailed it. All right, let's go into the stuff that you need for an intro. Let, let's, now we know the intro not to write. Don't write that intro. What is the intro we should write?

AJ Harper ([00:49:36](#)):

So there's just, there's different components you need and, and it's pretty simple actually. You need to connect with readers where they are. So not where you want them to be, but where they are, their perception of the problem as they understand it. So you've got to get that clear in the introduction. You've gotta, oh, this, the, the intro's also your place to really share the scope of the problem. And I think a lot of people miss this, meaning, um, this is where you can show statistics of how many people are also dealing with this or the impact of the problem. And this really helps, uh, readers to see that they are not alone. That it's not their fault, that sort of thing. Um, they're not the only people who are, who are facing this or to understand what's at stake or the gravity of the problem.

AJ Harper ([00:50:26](#)):

So scope, this is really important in the introduction. It's also where to weave in your credentials and possibly your mission. I think it's a great place for mission. And in fact, if you're getting stuck on how do I start an introduction going for, you know, I often tell students, okay, let's sit down and write your manifesto about what, what really gets your goat around this problem? Or what really gets your goat around in, in your industry, right? Or the way people handle this problem or don't handle it. And that's actually how I started mine. So I was like, I'm going, I'm going from a rant. And it, it didn't end up being a big AJ rant because that would've been a lot of expletives, <laugh>, and maybe some things I shouldn't say, but it, I did start that way. So I think mission is a good mission and credentials.

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AJ Harper ([00:51:17](#)):

You need that for intro. You also need to introduce the core message of your book. So the core message of your book is that transformational truth on which everything rests. It's a mindset shift that you want your readers to make so that, that then facilitates the change. And you want to at least state it, at least introduce it in chapter one. In chapter one, you'll get into how you figured that out. That's your core message, origin story and, and why it matters and how, you know it's true and you'll do more with it, but you at least want to tease it in the intro. And then it's, if you have a framework or methodology, uh, you want to at least show that in this book that what you're about to learn in this book, you have some proof that it works, right? So either proof from other folks or from you or a combo of that. Um, and you also want to, uh, oh, let me give a good example of that in All In.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:52:23](#)):

Yeah.

AJ Harper ([00:52:24](#)):

Um, you know, you were shifting to, you were adding more of a corporate readership to your base. And so we added a specific anecdote about a major company contacting you for advice. And we did that intentionally because we wanted to show that credential and to show that what you do works.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:52:48](#)):

Yeah. I think I, yeah, I that I think that story was powerful because we, we have gotten calls from large corporations now asking me to present on the material. Uh, but we, I also, let's finish this list, but I want to go back to All In because I think that's our best introduction ever. And I've been proud of our other introductions. I want to get your breakdown how we nailed it.

AJ Harper ([00:53:10](#)):

Um, okay. And then let's finish the list though. I want you to also in, I want in every introduction, you want to introduce the promise of the book. That's critical. So it's the promise of the book. Meaning what, what can you promise readers by the time they turn the last page? And that promise should connect to what they want, <laugh> not just what you want for the reader, but what they want. I call it like page one desire.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:53:34](#)):

Oh, I like that.

AJ Harper ([00:53:36](#)):

Their page one desire is not necessarily where they're gonna be at the end. I love that. And it's not necessarily what you think, right? But it's what they would say. It's what's driving them to pick up the book. We can't, we can't skip that stuff. That's part of meeting them where they are, part of meeting them where they are is understanding the problem and the impact of it. And the other part of meeting

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them where they are is understanding their desire on page one. What brings them to the book. Most of the time authors tend to skip ahead and they're not meeting readers in that moment.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:54:19](#)):

And then, yeah. And that, that, that moment, you know, I say this, uh, to anyone that reads the books we've written together, I'll hand them the book or, or give them the book. If they just purchased it and, and they wanted me to sign or something, I'll give it back to them and say, um, if this book doesn't catch you in three pages, it's not a good book. It's not for you. And I mean, that emphatically when I, when I return that to him, and, and there's often this kind of surprised response, deer in the headlights sometimes, because I think some authors say it, the answer is somewhere in here, go on a treasure hunt and keep digging endlessly. And you may just hit that treasure box. Um, and I think that's a big mistake.

AJ Harper ([00:55:07](#)):

I would, I say, say it's, it's should be page one.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:55:10](#)):

Yeah. I, I agree. I give, I say three pages just to give us a little buffer. <Laugh>

AJ Harper ([00:55:14](#)):

Okay. And then finally, if you absolutely must explain something about how to read the book, like I said earlier, should they take it slowly? Will they need support? Do you need to manage their expectations? Um, that type of thing. Um, you might include that as well. And those are the elements. Connect to them where they are. Describe the problem as they understand it, the scope of the problem. Weave in your credentials and your mission. Introduce the core message. Provide some sort of summary of proof. So again, I'm not, I'm not talking about a detailed story about somebody benefiting from what you're about to teach. I'm talking summary, right? Introduce the promise, the page one desire, and then anything absolutely necessary that you need to state about reading the book.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:56:03](#)):

Now you have a mega tip, but don't share it. Yeah. This, this is the hook. Like this is such a great insight, but don't share it. First I want to ask about All In the introduction. I would argue it is the best introduction we've ever done, and I'm very proud of the introductions. Why I, I don't know if you feel the same way, but what's your breakdown of the All In introduction, why it works so well?

AJ Harper ([00:56:26](#)):

Um, I, you know, I don't, I'm proud of all of our inter, I mean, I don't know, man. I think you love,

Mike Michalowicz ([00:56:33](#)):

It's the one I get the most feedback on from readers saying, my God, really just, yes. Yeah. And when I ask the why, um, it's the, the, uh, the story, the juxtaposition of the two stories, the museum and the

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employee who is directed on what to do, uh, forced to comply with certain rules, and he defies in such an extraordinary way. And then the other museum where the employees embraced and encouraged to give direction and how they, because there's many guards then that can evolve, elevate this museum.

AJ Harper ([00:57:08](#)):

So the people love that, that story about the, the, it's an anecdote really about this Russian guard in an art museum who drew eyes on a priceless painting. And, uh, that's compelling. You know, if you've got an interesting hook, people are responding to that. Right? And then we lucked out that I found that the corresponding story, we just got freaking lucky. I mean, we weren't lucky. I was, you know, I pay attention and kind, you know, so forth. But, um, so that was, that's prob, you know, that's the big part of it. But also it's articulating the problem as they understand it. You know, the other thing is right, it's, it's it that, that they feel seen in that even that story about a Russian dude in a, in an art museum is so totally relatable.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:57:58](#)):

Totally.

AJ Harper ([00:57:59](#)):

Because whether it's, you know, our employees drawing eyes on a priceless painting, readers can easily translate that to what, what would be the equivalent in their own business.

Mike Michalowicz ([00:58:10](#)):

And that's what I was getting to. People say they read those stories, they say, I love those stories. And they're like, I get it. That's what I want them to hear. I get it. And somewhere in between the extremes of Russian guard drawing pictures on, on it was called three figures, was the RPC drew on, um, because of the force compliance compared to the Baltimore Museum of Arts, where guards were now elevated to curator status. They, they land somewhere in there and they say, I get it, and I want to move to the, the elevated status, or I want to move my people to elevated status, but they can see themselves. I think it was just a really tactful, artful way of showing promise and pain.

AJ Harper ([00:58:52](#)):

Okay. But it's, we did. But that's actually, I think the reason that this works is because that's just the beginning of introducing, because the, the, the Baltimore Museum is an example of when employees are all in, which is the title of the book. That's right. And so then the, the introduction goes on to, you know, the relatable part is you talking about how when you started your business, you had absolutely no idea what you were doing when it came to building a team. And, uh, how badly you wanted a team that cared about your business as much as you did. Just like the guards did in the Baltimore Museum. And what happens in the introduction is you reveal that you, your lead up to core message about how ev you have to have ev everyone has to be treated as having A player potential. Um, you humble yourself very quickly. It's not a long section, but it's how you used to believe in the A player. And then you came to

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understand that you everybody could be an A player, and that was the switch that it, but you had to be the one that facilitated that.

AJ Harper ([01:00:02](#)):

And then, uh, it goes, it goes into, you do actually have mission in there, so you'll see everything I just show <laugh> laid out. If you go read it, Mike, after this, you'll be like, oh, dang, that's everything she said. Um, and then, you know the promise, but it's actually really short. It's only a few pages. And I think that's another reason why people like it.

Mike Michalowicz ([01:00:24](#)):

Um, one last question before I want you to do the big reveal, uh, is in the chapters, should we refer back to the introduction?

AJ Harper ([01:00:34](#)):

You can. Yeah. If I, I mean, there's really not much need for it as long it, unless you're referring to the, a story. And in our case, we were, we have later in the book and All In a continuation of the Baltimore Museum story, we do a deeper dive that relates to a later teaching point. And so we remind people of that story in the intro.

Mike Michalowicz ([01:00:58](#)):

Okay. Now, I want you do the big reveal. Uh, when should we write, write the introduction.

AJ Harper ([01:01:03](#)):

Okay. So it it's not that big <laugh> you're funny.

Mike Michalowicz ([01:01:06](#)):

To me, it's a big reveal because I, I assumed something that's not true.

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

Really?

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

Yeah.

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

But I've said this to you.

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Mike Michalowicz ([01:01:13](#)):

No, I know. No, yeah. The, the earlier me assumed this to be true. Oh, I hear you. Yeah. We don't do it in practice, but, and I'll give you my reason why, but we could do the reveal first.

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

Uh, write the introduction last.

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

And why is that?

AJ Harper ([01:01:25](#)):

I tell my, I tell my students this because <laugh>, first of all, okay, number one, it's really hard to get right. So here you're gonna sit down to write your book, and you're gonna start with one of the hardest parts of the book to write. And so this is gonna be great. Uh, yeah, you're gonna, it's gonna be frustrating for you. Um, but really it's because your book is gonna change as you write it. And so you're gonna have to go back and rewrite that introduction significantly, perhaps tear the whole thing down. So why waste your time in that way? You just wait until you're all the way done with your book. Or I sometimes will do it three quarters of the way through. I feel like, okay, I've got a handle on this, and it doesn't mean I'm not taking notes and jotting little things down. I very often will outline it just to kind of a sense of what I think I want it to be. Um, so it's not that I'm not tinkering, but I'm not gonna sit down and write that thing until I'm really sure exactly what we're doing with the book, you know?

Mike Michalowicz ([01:02:25](#)):

Yeah. And I, you know, I wrongly assumed write the instruction first. It's, it's right linearly, and it gets your energy going and gives directions to the book. And I was wrong. I, I just heard an interesting interview about, uh, Pink Floyd and an interview with David Gilmore, that book, uh, that book, that song Comfortably Numb. They wrote the chorus separately first with no lyrics. It was just, duh, like, like they just wrote that. And then they wrote, um, they built around it. So once they had the essence of it, and the final component they wrote was the introduction to that song, the, it's a B minor, and this the powerful intro. So it was very interesting, the parallel between music and books. You don't write from start to finish. It doesn't just reveal itself that way. Um, you, you start with the essence and kind of build around it.

AJ Harper ([01:03:18](#)):

Yeah. And I will say, you know, there's always an exception. If you need to write the intro because it's making you feel grounded in the work, then do you, you know, uh, you don't have to follow these rules. Exactly. But I will tell you, even if you do that, you're gonna tear that thing down, you know? Yeah.

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Mike Michalowicz ([01:03:36](#)):

Yeah. Uh, next week we are gonna talk about, don't write that conclusion. It's like a part one, part two. So well done. Um, and I can't wait to dig in depth with you. I do have a, an update. We, we shared, um, I think a few episodes back that we have gone, uh, uh, through the consideration process for our new book. We did not reveal the title of the new book, and we're not gonna do it yet, but it isn't the personal finance space. Um, just so you know, AJ signed the contract yesterday with Page Two. Uh, I can't be more excited. They've just been such a joyous organization to work with. I, I felt compelled to email the lawyer, um, who's overseeing the contract. And I did a comparative. Thank you, AI. Between the page two contract and my prior contracts, the author empowerment.

Mike Michalowicz ([01:04:30](#)):

It's a, it's a multiple, it, it's, it's the, the control and authority that Page Two gives. The author me in this case, and the, the potential and royalties is so substantially better. I wrote back to the lawyer saying, I've never seen a contract that made me smile, uh, uh, as opposed to having to nitpick and really like, try to cover my butt and, and fight for the pieces I wanted. It felt like this was in favor of the author in so many ways. So I'm just excited, uh, extraordinarily about Page Two. And we are in contract and we're off to the races. It's writing season.

AJ Harper ([01:05:04](#)):

That's, well now you, now you know why I chose Page Two for myself.

Mike Michalowicz ([01:05:08](#)):

Yeah, yeah. And I totally get it. And I, I'm so happy I went through the due diligence. We had some other big fishes involved, uh, and that wrote back and said they were interested, but, uh, there was, there was no justification I could find, um, to go with that one but Page Two, so that's where we stand and it's writing season, which means now I, I will dedicate about two to four hours a day of just writing time. Um, so I'm, I'm ready to roll. Fingers are, fingers are loosened up and ready to go. All right. All right, my friends, thanks for listening to this remote episode of Don't Write That Book. Uh, I want to remind you, we love when you go to our website and contact us. We're getting now a regular stream, if you will, of emails and questions. Um, we actually have one email that's driving one of the topics we're talking about where the, uh, author said, please don't share my name. Um, and they had a reason behind that. But we, I want to know about this topic. So submit any way you want the website to go to is [dwtbpodcast.com](#), and you can email AJ and myself at hello@dwtbpodcast.com. Thanks for joining us today. We're looking forward to seeing you next week when we talk about Don't write that conclusion. And as a reminder, as always, don't write that book. Write the greatest book you can.