

# don't write *that* book!

## Episode 44:

### “Conclusions”

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

Welcome to another episode of Don't Write That book. Today, we're gonna talk about, don't write that conclusion. I, I hope you listened to last week's episode. Don't write that introduction. I think these parlays super nicely. I'm joined in studio with my co-host, AJ Harper. Aj good to kind of see you, even though we're doing this remotely <laugh>,

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

We're doing it remotely because you're stuck in Kansas City.

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

Yeah. With pillows all around me. I, it's so funny, but I think it's kind of working. So if the audio quality isn't what you're used to as a listener future episodes, we'll be back in the studio for sure. And I'm gonna start bringing a mobile microphone with me because this is an issue that's gonna present itself every so often.

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

Yeah.

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

Yeah. I wanna introduce AJ Harper, my co-host, my writing partner. We just got contracted to write the next book. I can't wait to get started. And I was just asking AJ if, if the camera was on, and if you've ever seen her present from her home office, she has a photograph of her parents over her right shoulder. And what I just admire about you, AJ, is with all of the twists and turns that life present themselves, what a devoted daughter you are and have been to your family, to your mom and dad.

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

Thanks. Thanks. Yeah. It's nice of you to say you know, we, you just, you always, you always start out with these intros, and I find that what I'm learning in this podcast is how similar we are.

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

Yeah.

AJ Harper ([01:43](#)):

I think I've always said, Mike and I are so different. Mike and I are so different.

# don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz ([01:47](#)):

Me, too. Right. <Laugh>

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

And we are for sure. But I guess this podcast is teaching me how similar we are because you, you throw this stuff out and I immediately have an example that's the same for you. You know, I remember when your, your dad, well, your dad was touch and go for a really long time.

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

Yeah, yeah. Years.

AJ Harper ([02:10](#)):

I, I remember so many texts from you, calls from you, "I need to reschedule. My dad's, you know, we thought, we think this is gonna be it." And then it was a couple years of that.

Mike Michalowicz ([02:24](#)):

Yeah.

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

And how devoted you were to him and being present for him and, and through all of that. Yeah. I mean, I think we're similar. This has been an interesting experience, hasn't it, recording this podcast?

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

It really has been. And not to get too ethereal, but I was watching the Olympics, which is going on right now as we're recording this. I'm really engaged in this year's Olympics. It's so much fun and the commonality between all people. So what's nice is you see all these different countries represented there. Yes, they're all athletes. But you, you see the commonality and struggle the challenges they face, the, the things they overcome, the victories they have. My favorite part was there was this tennis tournament going on, and this one person, the opponent to the server did this like, kind of remarkable move. It was an illegal move. He just threw his racket tore the ground, and it actually hit the ball and it put the ball back over the net and the server ran over and just hugged this guy. And they're laughing and high fiving each other. You know, they're competing at the highest level to win the gold. And they celebrate this like, crazy illegal, funny move together in the middle of a match. Was this, this is kind of cool. Alright, let's dig into today's episode. So we're gonna talk about conclusions.

Mike Michalowicz ([03:59](#)):

You know, I just wanna start off, are they, are they necessary? AJ?

# don't write *that* book!

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

Yeah, I think, I think they are. I think they're absolutely, you should write a conclusion for your book, but when I say don't write that conclusion, what I mean is, please don't write a boring summary conclusion. Please stop it. Please, please, please. <Laugh>.

Mike Michalowicz ([04:25](#)):

Okay.

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

I just...

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

But is, isn't that the intention of a conclusion is to bring closure through a summary?

AJ Harper ([04:34](#)):

It apparently that's what everybody thinks they should do. But I think it's boring, boring, boring. And believe me, I've written a lot of them. So when I was a ghost writer, I definitely, I didn't know what else to do. So I, I did what everybody does. I looked at what other people's conclusions were like, and herein lies the problem. We're just, we're just looking how, how do people write conclusions? And then following that formula. And

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

Which is similar to introductions you were sharing that last week, is we see other introductions and therefore we replicate it and it becomes this downward spiral of just blah.

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

Yeah. We don't consider what the reader actually needs. And then further, I would say we don't really understand the book as a whole. So I want you to think in of your book, like a music composition. At the end, what note will you leave them on? How do you want them to feel at the end of your book? So you've written this amazing book, and then you're gonna close with here's a summary of what we learned today. You know? It's not, yeah, it's this, or worse, you're gonna close with a big marketing pitch and a summary. I mean, the, I just feel we've, most people fail at conclusions. And I wrote a lot of failure conclusions. I'm not saying I didn't, I I, it took me a while to realize, "Why am I doing this? Just 'cause people think I should, just because this is accepted practice?" What's really needed here? And so over time, I developed a new way of looking at conclusions. But first I had to make all the mistakes that everybody makes mistake everybody does in their conclusions.

Mike Michalowicz ([06:24](#)):

I remember, and I can't remember the context for this, but the, the saying leave them wanting more. I, I think it was with theater or maybe it was with music. Do we want in a book to leave people wanting

# don't write *that* book!

more? Or, or has their needs been fully satisfied? Maybe that's not specific to the conclusion, but I just wanted to get your thoughts on that.

AJ Harper ([06:50](#)):

I, no, I don't know what you mean. I mean, I don't think that applies here, you know?

Mike Michalowicz ([06:54](#)):

Yeah. And yeah. Yeah.

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

I, I, I, I hesitate to say yes to that because I hear a lot of authors say, don't give them everything. Otherwise they, you know, they won't--

Mike Michalowicz ([07:05](#)):

Won't hire you.

AJ Harper ([07:06](#)):

They won't hire you. Yeah. The, that, first of all, that's language from people who aren't writing a book to be of service. They're writing a book solely for lead gen. Yes. And the irony there is that they won't get as much lead gen by holding back. You actually get more people wanting to work with you when you actually help them in the book wholly and completely, without requiring them to jump through some other hoop to get whatever, missing link information. So leave them wanting more, I think I would say absolutely. No, but, so they, they will, they will want more if you give them a satisfying experience.

Mike Michalowicz ([07:43](#)):

Hmm. That's a great point. So it sounds like the conclusion, I mean, this is specifically you said it's an opportunity to have that ending emotion, that final feeling. You want people to have that last taste. It's the, it's the, it can be the dessert of a great meal, your conclusion.

AJ Harper ([08:01](#)):

It's that, I think of it like that swell in the, in the music composition, that swelling moment where, where it all comes together. And we, we tend, we tend to just we tend to, well, we don't write that at all. We just write a list of what everybody learned, and then here's how to contact me and here's my pitch. Or maybe we do a rally, you know, you can do it. Go for go. You know? Um I've written those. I've definitely written those, but I don't think we're thinking about what the note we wanna leave people on in that moment. And that's what I'm hoping people will do. But more than that, I, I think there's a different goal that we need to have, at least for prescriptive nonfiction. But, you know, we have, we have to realize why it doesn't work first. You know, we have to think about why don't these standardized conclusions work? And by the way, wait a minute. By the way, I gotta tell you, I have students who kind of follow

# don't write *that* book!

what I take my advice and run with writing a truly spectacular conclusion. And they get a lot of pushback from editors. It's, it's

Mike Michalowicz ([09:19](#)):

Really, this is interesting.

AJ Harper ([09:21](#)):

Yeah. Because it doesn't fit the formula. Right? What are you doing here? Why, why is this happening? And I say, that's a good thing. You can just explain it to them. It's your book. You can do whatever the heck you want. But I think it shows that there's a real problem that with prescriptive nonfiction, there's this expectation that we have to do this thing. And it's not, if it's not in service to the reader, then we absolutely do not have to do the thing.

Mike Michalowicz ([09:53](#)):

I'm surprised that editors are pushing back because these are professional editors. They presumably work on a lot of, a lot of books and can distinguish the books that work and don't work. So you, I just would think they would support a conclusion that ends on that note.

AJ Harper ([10:12](#)):

Well, it's not, it's not all of them, you know? Okay. But it's, some of them, and I, i, the, the, the, what's common among those who, who push back is they aren't used to seeing it like that. And that tells me this is an editor who is really stuck, stuck in a formulaic way of doing things.

Mike Michalowicz ([10:31](#)):

Yeah. Okay. Well, well let's go through what, what the common mistakes are with conclusions.

AJ Harper ([10:37](#)):

So, summarizing every chapter or every point in the book,

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

<Laugh>

AJ Harper ([10:42](#)):

Boring.

Mike Michalowicz ([10:44](#)):

Yeah. So, so Cliff-noting basically your own book,

# don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper ([10:46](#)):

Cliff note in your book, look, if you think that your reader needs a summary, a quick reference like that, put it in the appendix. Make it a quick, easy reference that they can use. But don't make that the actual conclusion of your book. Move it over where it can be useful if you think it's required. Dr. Bob Baker, you know him? Yes. He wrote the Performance of Medicine. His readers are physicians. They're super busy. And he knew he needed a quick reference for them for the main takeaways. So he did main takeaways at the end of chapters. And in the appendix, he re he created one reference point so that a doctor could just move to the appendix, find all the takeaways, quick reference. That's an example of making a decision based on who the reader is, not based on what you see other authors do.

Mike Michalowicz ([11:48](#)):

Got it. Okay.

AJ Harper ([11:49](#)):

And so he did not have a, a conclusion that was based, that was a summary. Because he put that in the appendix. Not everybody needs a summary though, so you could omit it, for example, we don't have them in your books.

Mike Michalowicz ([12:03](#)):

No. I mean, we have calls to action at the very end of each chapter.

AJ Harper ([12:07](#)):

That's, yeah. But that's not a summary.

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

No, it's definitely not a summary. No. It, it drives home the key point that you should take action on. Without a summary. Yeah.

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

Right. So here's the other, this is a big one that people do they promote something specific or they market some, they some sort of pitch, some call to action that is specific to working with them, buying from them, booking them, whatever it is. And we want to focus on a call to action that is personal for the reader. Meaning something you're calling them to do for themselves, not to purchase something from you.

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

It's the, yeah. It's the worst. This is funny. It's a, it's a parallel story, but I think it emphasizes your point. I was talking with my friend Sandy Wagg who's, who's written a book. But specifically she's doing sales calls. And she says, Mike, I found something that is the most effective sales call by far for her. The, the close rate. She says now nearly a hundred percent, which before it was me, 10 or 20%. So, well, you

# don't write *that* book!

know, what are the magic words? And she said, honestly, all I do is I just do a consultative service and tell this person everything I can to support them. And at the end of that call, I say, I hope I helped you. I wish you the best luck <laugh>. I'm like, that's your sales call. And they, she says, yeah. People say, well, hold on. Wait, wait, wait. First of all, how do I pay you for what you just did for me? And secondly, how do I continue? She doesn't, she basically does not ask for the sale, which is the antithesis of what we've been told on how to sell. And I wonder if it's a similar story that in our books, is that when you are truly of service to the reader, they may seek ways to work with you because they have full trust in you now.

AJ Harper ([13:57](#)):

Yes, you have to deliver on the promise to them. You have got to deliver on that. That's your sole focus. And if you focus instead on, how can I market myself, that is very clear. People know when they're being sold to, and they know when they're being manipulated. But if your sole focus is on, I'm gonna deliver on this promise. I'm gonna give them what everything I can to deliver on this promise, then that is actually the thing that makes them wanna seek you out. Follow you, subscribe to your thing, buy more stuff from you, whatever it is. We just, we're so worried that people aren't gonna contact us, that we then get focused on that. And it's just backwards. It's actually the other way around.

Mike Michalowicz ([14:45](#)):

So interesting. And it's the absolute truth. I've seen authors in their books that, you know, they're great service to their reader. And then at the end, they abandon the reader and start talking about themselves. I, I know this is a pet peeve of yours and conclusions.

AJ Harper ([14:58](#)):

Look, we can talk, we should talk about ourselves in our books in the context of, again, being of service. The parts of our story. I've said, I say this ad nauseum, so apologies to our binge listeners, because we have quite a few. But it, you, you choose the parts of your story that are relevant to the reader that are support teaching points that bring help the reader cope, that are serve as an inspiration, that provide clarity. Yeah. We do, we do. Readers do want you in the book, but they don't want you in a way that's saying, buy from me, do this thing with me. And you can put a page at the very end of the book after your bio, after the appendix, after everything. This is, here are the ways to work with me. Or please contact me here. You can book me here. You can put that there. But not in the main body of the work. The conclusion is part of the main body. And so you need to think about that as bringing it home for the reader.

Mike Michalowicz ([16:03](#)):

To me, it's a little bit like a firework show. A firework show will end with this, you know, great triumphant moment in, in most cases. I love that you're pointing out that this is a, it is part of the book. It's not the standalone piece. It, it can, it is the bow tie on the book. It's the wrapping is what?

AJ Harper ([16:27](#)):

It's the finale.

# don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz ([16:29](#)):

Finale. It's the fireworks finale.

AJ Harper ([16:32](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. It is the finale. And in that it is showing, so a good way to look at this, the conclusion is what we tend to do is focus on the author, the author in this moment. And what we really wanna do is focus on the reader's journey. So I'll get more into that in a moment. But that, that finale is about coming to the end of that journey, if that makes sense.

Mike Michalowicz ([17:02](#)):

It does. It totally does. Is there, is there other tendencies mistakes people make?

AJ Harper ([17:10](#)):

That's basically, those are the big ones. You know, I mean, just being too too focused on yourself, too focused on marketing, summarizing, and then yeah, that's it. I mean, I can't even, it's really, those are the big, big offenders. Oh, I also new teaching, so--

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

Oh, that's a good point.

AJ Harper ([17:34](#)):

Yeah. So the, the conclusion is when you're done teaching everybody, so you're not gonna introduce some brand new thing there, and you're gonna want to. <Laugh> it happens all the time. But the, the teaching doesn't go there. You're, you're wrapping it up.

Mike Michalowicz ([17:53](#)):

I also, I, I found that some conclusions that, that I find are not engaging is the ramble ons. It happens with the introductions. I've seen it happen with the conclusions. And I've seen it in, you know, presentations where people are like, okay, so thanks for watching me. And I really appreciate being here. And it's these and ums I see in conclusions, they can be succinct that I think they should be succinct.

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

What's your thoughts? Well, I mean, kind of like when an SNL skit, you know, it needs to be over on Saturday Night Live and it's just goes on and on and nobody knows when to end it.

Mike Michalowicz ([18:27](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. And I think that harms the, the reader because, you know, the, the most impactful moments of a book are, I think there's three parts. Is the open, do you hook them the, in the middle? Do you resonate with them? Is they say something, yes, that's what I was looking for. And the conclusion, does



# don't write *that* book!

it end on a note that that rings in, rings on? But if you, if you end on a flat note, it's like, hmm. It, it just leaves a bad taste in someone's mouth.

AJ Harper ([19:01](#)):

And I, and honestly, all that's happening there is that again, people are stuck in what other people do, or they don't know what to do. So they need an idea of, how do I bring this home? They don't really have a lot of guidance. So fortunately we can talk about that on this call.

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

Your, your perspective of conclusions changed. What triggered that? And what's your new thinking about conclusions?

AJ Harper ([19:26](#)):

So I, I can't remember when I exact, I don't remember where in my ghostwriting journey I actually figured this out. But I became frustrated with these boring summary conclusions I was writing. And I thought about, here's this magnificent book that if readers actually do the thing, if they read the whole thing and they do all the things that are, they're being asked to do, they're not even gonna be the same person anymore. There'll be a new version of themselves with a new perspective. And that's when it clicked for me, oh wait, let's talk, let's highlight that. We're not saying that. We're not actually getting to a point where we acknowledge to the reader and show them how far they've come. That's that reader journey part.

Mike Michalowicz ([20:15](#)):

Hmm.

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

And we're just, we're, we just drop off and we don't say, look at you,

AJ Harper ([20:23](#)):

Look at, look at you now. And so that's what started it. And then I got to think about, okay, so when I work, when I work with authors, when I was a ghost writer, I would be, it would, I would work very hard to get them to think about. And we talked about this on the last week's podcast, that page one desire what the reader wants when they pick up the book. So page one, they want this, but then there's also what the author wants for the reader, what the author wants. And usually the author conflates those two. And they instead focus on what they want for the reader kind of throughout the book. But you actually need to meet them at their page one desire. And I thought, okay, but where does the, what the author wants for the reader come in? And I said, oh, let's combine this. Let's combine, Hey, look at you now on your journey with, hey, this is what I want for you. And that's how, that's how I came up with this new way to do a conclusion. And I call it, I don't even call it a conclusion. I call it call to greatness.

# don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz ([21:34](#)):

That's brilliant.

AJ Harper ([21:36](#)):

By doing a call to greatness, you are showing people how they're different and using that evidence of how they're different to both prove that you delivered on the promise and show them their new perspective. And with that new perspective, you can then call them to the thing that you really want for them, which is bigger than what they could have ever conceived of on page one. So you have to remember, when a reader comes into the book, they don't necessarily believe it's gonna work for them. Especially with prescriptive nonfiction. A lot of, you know, this book didn't work for me. I put that book down, I didn't finish it. You know that that's what they're coming from, you know, a lot of hope and expectation, but also skepticism. And they also have this really specific problem they wanna solve, or this simple desire. Right?

AJ Harper ([22:35](#)):

But by the time they're done with the book, if they've read all the words and done all the things, so again, it's participant, you gotta participate, readers have to participate. They're not gonna get it by just turning to the conclusion. Right? They can't just turn to it. But if they've done all that, now they can, they have more capabilities, they have more insight. Maybe they've had some healing, I don't know. It depends on the book, but they're not the same because you cared enough to make sure that you delivered on your promise. If you've done all that, if you've actually done it, then they're not the same. And so it's so important that you show them that, and that because of they are not the same, they can now dream bigger. And that's, that's very different than writing a summary of what they learned.

Mike Michalowicz ([23:32](#)):

I read, it's so interesting and I don't wanna rabbit hole too much, but I think it's, it's so significant. The page one desire is almost feels like, and I'm, I'm, I hope I put the right words to this, is the, the want the reader has as opposed to the incredible dream that they could have. I read a book, ironically on carpal tunnel syndrome. When I was in the text space, I started to experience this in one of my hands. And it, the, the pain is excruciating. I went to doctors and stuff and they said, well, you can do an operation, you can do all this. So I found a book that literally cured the carpal tunnel syndrome for me. But in the introduction it said what, what I was expecting, my readings book is just reduce the pain. And by the end, the, the author's dream for their readers was to be lifetime free of this.

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

But it was, it would be unbelievable to start the book that way. So it's through a journey. And it was through this thing called micro fascia movements, like these imperceptible slight movements as exercises, which it just seemed so crazy and so unbelievable. But by the end of the book, it cured carpal tunnel syndrome for me. Now, now I can't remember the title I, but I had this book stored in my Amazon account specifically. When everyone has it, I'm like, oh, let me put this book up because the title was a little confusing for me. Is, is that part of the conclusion is that the, you don't know necessarily where the

# don't write *that* book!

reader has landed reading your book because you, you have an intention for them. You know, they came with a want. They have a want that hopefully you've satisfied. You don't know if they actually did it, but you have this grand dream that could be the cure all for them. And are you in the conclusion saying, this could have already happened for you, and if it didn't, it's a, it's a possibility because that's the ultimate want, to cure that Carpal tunnel syndrome. But you don't know where they are actually. So is there a no?

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

No, no. No. It's, it's, what it is, is because they are now transformed in some way, what new dream can they dream?

Mike Michalowicz ([25:46](#)):

I see.

AJ Harper ([25:47](#)):

So, I I, a good example, a good way to think about this is you know, we mutually know Jeffrey Shaw. He's a dear friend of mine. He wrote Lingo and the self-employed life. And I adore him. And he was working on a Ted Talk some years ago, which you can all look up. It's called the Validation Paradox. And he and I were chatting about creating that Ted. And he talks about how we are limited in our, and what we can dream based on our own perspective, and how we need other people to help us dream bigger. Because they don't have the same limitations we have with our, the way, you know, our experience and our beliefs and so forth lets us, there's a ceiling. But when we have other people in our lives, we can get pa they can show, take us past the ceiling. We can't even see it. We don't even know the ceiling exists in this way. The author is serving that purpose for the reader saying, you didn't even know that you had this ceiling, but you, you did, but now it doesn't exist anymore. Now what can you do? You can't tell them that on page one,

Mike Michalowicz ([27:07](#)):

Right. <Laugh>. Right. They don't believe it.

AJ Harper ([27:09](#)):

They won't believe you. And they can't wrap their head around it because they can't see the ceiling. So it's like, I use this mountaintop analogy for the called greatness. When they start the book, they're at the bottom of the mountain that they're climbing. The, your book is the mountain. They can look up and they can see trees and maybe clouds and some sky. They look in front of them and they can see the path forward. When they get to the top, they can see from miles and miles. They could not perceive of any of that at the bottom. But at the top, once they finish the book, they can see the horizon. So I want you to show the readers the horizon. I want you to remind them that they climbed the mountain to build them up in that way. In that way, you're getting that big, you know, that big swell in the music, right?

# don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper ([28:05](#)):

You did this, you are different. You, you tried it, you read this book, you did the exercises. You're, you thought about this. You have a new perspective, you have new tools, you have new resources. Whatever it is, whatever your topic is, right? Whatever applies. And you build them and you build them up to say, look what you did. You climbed this whole mountain. Now look around. What do you see that you couldn't see before? There are possibilities that they couldn't conceive of on page one. And if you don't show that to them, they might not realize it. And this is your chance to call them to greatness. Call them to those possibilities. And that's the beauty of this, this system of writing, not system, this structure I created for the call, call to greatness. Call on your readers reader to imagine a future beyond what they thought possible. On page one,

Mike Michalowicz ([29:06](#)):

I had a call, I have a weekly call with our leadership team at Profit First Professionals. So Billy Ann's on that. And we have guides. These are people that work with our members. And she recounted a story, and it just speaks to what you're sharing. We have a pro first professional member who's working with Angie, our guide, and they said, I'm just so frustrated my business isn't moving forward. I'm, I'm not achieving the goals I've set for myself. And just went through these frustration points and said, Angie said, let's stop a second ago. Let's talk about a year prior. And what we do as an organization is we track where people started. This person increased their revenue by like 400%. Their profitability was nothing. Now they had extraordinary amounts of money, something they dreamed of having. They eradicated all their debt. They forgot this person. Literally forgot all they achieved. They simply were looking forward, but not reflecting back. What I'm hearing in this conclusion is for them to look forward, they also have to acknowledge where they've come from and achieved it. It gives 'em that perspective. It sounds like. Do we--

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

It's part, it's part, it's part of the construct of the call to greatness is to remind them how they've changed.

Mike Michalowicz ([30:25](#)):

Because they will forget. They will forget. It's, there's this kind of homeostasis when, when something becomes our new normal, it's our normal. It's maybe new, but it is our now normal. So we, it's hard to see beyond that normal.

AJ Harper ([30:38](#)):

Yes.

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

Okay. Any other elements when it comes to the call to greatness that I missed? That we missed on?

# don't write *that* book!

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

Well, we haven't actually gone over. We went, we described what it is.

Mike Michalowicz ([30:50](#)):

Yeah, yeah. Exactly.

AJ Harper ([30:50](#)):

Yeah. So here's how you put it together. So, okay. The, the call to greatness starts with a story. And the story could be from your own life, it could be from a client. You and I have used a popular figures, like the guy who does the underhand free throws, to Lin Manuel Miranda, to one of your your friend from Nextiva.

Mike Michalowicz ([31:18](#)):

Yeah, Thomas Gorney.

AJ Harper ([31:19](#)):

So, I mean, it, it can be, it, what you need is a good story. And it's can be challenging to get the story right. People try to force it sometimes, but you're using it. We use, we use the stories differently. So for example, in in Clockwork, when we did the revised and expanded version, it was an opportunity to really make a better call to greatness. 'cause I wasn't totally happy with the other one. So I tell this story a lot. We didn't, we were looking for the story and looking for the story, and then I finally stumbled on it, and it was the Lin-Manuel Miranda on vacation story. So in Clockwork, their page one desire is the reader is coming in and what they want is freedom from this. The, you know their business is choking them. They have no, they're totally locked in. Right. They're like a prisoner to their business.

Mike Michalowicz ([32:18](#)):

Correct.

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

So they just want to be, have a little freedom from that. They don't wanna feel that locked into their business. They probably don't even have a one day a week that they have off. Right?

Mike Michalowicz ([32:34](#)):

That's right.

AJ Harper ([32:36](#)):

So they can't really conceive of what you really want for them. So we, page one desires, we wanna help them run their business like clockwork, so they can be free from it. But what you really want for them, Mike, is for them to have the freedom from their business so that they can have those big innovative ideas and do the stuff they love.

# don't write *that* book!

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

Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. That's right.

AJ Harper ([33:02](#)):

But you can't say that. You can kind of hint at that at the beginning, but they're be like, yeah, yeah. I just wanna be able to make it to my kids' soccer game. Or I wanna, I don't wanna feel this way anymore. Right. I don't wanna feel chained to this, but by the end of the book, they're ready to hear this. So the Call to Greatness, the story for that is Lin Manuel Miranda, who took a vacation after his musical In The Heights completed its off Broadway run, and before it went to its Broadway run. And because he took this vacation, he was able to downshift his brain enough so that he could read. And the what he decided to read was the biography of Alexander Hamilton. That's

Mike Michalowicz ([33:46](#)):

Right.

AJ Harper ([33:48](#)):

And if he had not taken the time away from the grind of his business, and his business was definitely a business of getting in the heights up and all of that, if he had not taken that break, would we have had Hamilton?

Mike Michalowicz ([34:03](#)):

Of course not.

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

No. You know what I mean? Yeah. Like, you, you need, yeah. So that was the call to Greatness story that introduced, Hey readers, you're different now. You've done all this work to streamline your business. You've done all this work to help make it run like clockwork. Now let's see, what could you really do now? Because you freed up your bandwidth to create in the same way you did when you started your business. And that's a call to greatness. You see, that's, that's the type of story I'm talking about. So you, you need a, you need a story like that. That's a key element. I'm sorry, go ahead.

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

Well, I'm thinking as you're sharing this the call to greatness is kind of the big declaration of what I think sometimes people say they want, but the page one desire is the exasperated statement. So with Clockwork I do hear people say, I, I want my company to run itself. I, I don't wanna work in the business at all. But then I hear under the breath, like, I just want a day off man. And so it's when that man comment comes out, I'm like, oh, there's the page one desire and that dream that I have for them, which is honestly, it's a dream for them too. It stays buried. It gets revealed in the conclusion.

# don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper ([35:21](#)):

Yes. Because at the, when they're at the bottom of the mountain in Clockwork, there's no way they could imagine having a four-week vacation, which is what you advocate. Where they can get all the juicy, cool ideas. They can't even conceive of that.

Mike Michalowicz ([35:37](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. People, so it's funny when I say, if you want to have a business that runs itself, you need to schedule a for vacation. You hear the <laugh>, are you crazy, dude? And that, that is the top of the mountain. And then you, the blaze the path for them to, to get there. Yeah. Now go ahead. Keep going.

AJ Harper ([35:59](#)):

Well, I, I wanted to use the example of two other stories. So in All in your dad was really sick while we were writing it and passed away while we were writing it. So he was on your mind, and we shared a lot of, you shared a lot of stories with me and you jotted some stuff down for me. And I actually have the original of it where you talked about how you had asked your dad about the most impactful person in his life. And that person was this woman Helen Fuller. Who had been a mentor to me, to him, and an advocate for him when he was a child in the tenements in New York City.

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

New York City. Yeah.

AJ Harper ([36:46](#)):

And if it hadn't been for Helen Fuller, he would not have, may not have good chance, he may not have had the good life he ended up having. And then, and so you shared that with me. And then we could, I could see right away, oh, this is potentially called the greatness story, right?

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

Yeah.

AJ Harper ([37:10](#)):

How that then worked was you then carried it forward to how your dad then became the kind of father that he did not have. And how that influenced you, and then how you became that kind of person and how that also changed the way you raised your kids, and also the way you work with your employees. Right. And so you're calling on readers of all in who have a page one desire to finally have a team who gives a crap. Right? That's their page. One, two, this end call to greatness, where you're saying you have a chance to influence generations. That's a big old call to greatness.

Mike Michalowicz ([37:56](#)):

Yeah. And starting that way--

# don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper ([37:59](#)):

You could never say that on page one. Never.

Mike Michalowicz ([38:01](#)):

Right. Because you'll lose people say like, are you, you kidding me? What's so interesting is that Helen Fuller story is one of the most recalled stories that all in, we nailed it with the museum stories and in the beginning and so forth. What's interesting is when, I'll use it in speeches now and I think it's a great way of measuring a conclusion for your book, is by speaking on before you write that conclusion. When, when people come up after the event and say, my God, that story opened my eyes. Or you get standing ovation after standing ovation, which that story gets, you know, it's the conclusion, the most important part. And you said that the reader sees themselves in that. So when I share Helen Fuller transformed my father's life, but she transformed my life. I look at the audience and say, your leadership will serve generations.

Mike Michalowicz ([39:06](#)):

The greatest thing you can do is to be of service of someone that you'll never meet, is they stand up and they start applauding. And they, they see themselves as the hero, which, which they are. But also we started knowing that I said, we, and you are the one who, and this is in this case with this book, you said, "Mike, you gotta put this in." And I was hesitant to do it because that's my father. He was actively dying at the time, is like, oh, I don't know. It's the greatest conclusion we've written. It's the first time that we've written a conclusion where I wasn't trying it in a speech before, at least to some degree, we put in the book, like even the the, the Hamilton story. I, when you shared this. Oh, that's so good. I started testing in speeches and like, yeah. It was landing. So this is a little tip on where to use it. You, you use a call to greatness in your book with Write a Must-Read. Share.

AJ Harper ([40:06](#)):

Yeah. And it's probably, I get the most, I get the most comments on this. And for me, it was the son, the, the story about my kid. So specifically, it was a story about my kid who was a, who loved basketball. And this was in middle school, and he he wasn't that great at it. He was good at a lot of sports, but he wasn't that great at basketball. And how one summer he decided to be great, and how he took this <laugh>, he decided to be great, and he developed this discipline. It's on his own. We had nothing to do with it. We were mystified.

Mike Michalowicz ([40:45](#)):

I remember when this was happening because we would talk, you know, doing the work we're doing, you're like, you wouldn't believe what my boy's doing.

AJ Harper ([40:51](#)):

I was getting, I had to get up. I mean, I was probably up, but I had to get up my clothes on. Okay. <laugh>



# don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz ([40:57](#)):

With Jack.

AJ Harper ([40:58](#)):

To get in the car to take him to the Y at five o'clock in the morning before school. Yeah. So he could do his workout before school. The kid was out in, in the rain, in the cold, he doing shots in the dr shooting hoops in the driveway. He was asking for compression garments for Christmas. <Laugh> Like, and he was a kid! But he was determined. He watched every listen. I mean, he watched every video he could. He studied everything he could and transformed himself from a bad player slash mediocre player to a total beast. And I, in this, I tell that story, and it crescendos with the, the championship game that his team was absolutely not supposed to win, because this is middle school basketball, you know? Yeah. It's, it's a ragtag group of kids who, some of them hit their growth spurt and some of them are still pretty short, you know, and anyone can be on the team. So there's different levels. And I used that story as an example of what I wanted to show, to call, to show readers who came to my book with a page one desire to write a really good book. Right. But I wanna show them that actually they can be authors. I wanted to call them to greatness of authorship. And to do that, I wanted to show them that they didn't need to have, that. They had everything. They needed it from the book because it was more, it's more about that discipline than it is about talent.

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

Because he didn't, he wasn't, he didn't show up on the first basketball game with this natural talent. He had to work at it. And I firmly believe if you work at it as a, as a writer, that, that you can absolutely realize your vision as a writer. It's craft, man. It's craft and practice. It's not magic. I mean, I'm not saying you can win the Pulitzer. I'm not saying you're gonna be you know, win the National Book Award and, and write some great American novel, but we're talking nonfiction here and there's a craft to it, and you can learn it. And I wanted, I wanted, I couldn't call people to authorship on page one. That's too big. So I used that story about Jack's basketball game and his transformation to show how the reader was already transformed and they could use those skills to dream a bigger dream for themselves as an author. Rather than just getting a book done.,

Mike Michalowicz ([43:41](#)):

We should clip some of these episodes like parts so we can put 'em on like TikTok or something. When you said it's craft and practice, man, it's craft and practice <laugh>. Like, oh, that's a good one. But it's, oh no, I know. That's the essence of this. It's so true. It's so freaking true. We gotta wrap things up unless you have anything else you wanted to share. Well,

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

I just wanna, I just wanna give these key elements. So we've talked extensively about story, but a call to greatness has story. So it always starts with story. You remind them how they've changed, which incidentally is a sneaky way of doing a summary that you're not saying, here's what you learn, but you're saying, here's how you're different. So instead of saying, I taught you these things, you're saying these

# don't write *that* book!

are the things that, these are in this way, you have changed. So you can sneak in the teaching points that they already learned to remind them. Right? and then it, you should be lifting them in this called greatness. It should be lift up, you know, thinking about that note, that musical note, and then show them the new horizon. Show it, show them what's possible, call them to a new dream. That's the greatness part. Those are the elements. What's not in there is a summary. And certainly no new teaching points, no new teaching points. We're at the end.

Mike Michalowicz ([45:04](#)):

Hmm. In regards to all, in conclusion, if somehow my dad can hear this right now, I miss you, dad. Oh, and yeah. And thank you, Helen Fuller. Thank you. All right. Next week, next episode, we're gonna talk about creating content based on your book. You know, you can monetize or you can be of service in another capacity. You don't have to necessarily monetize it, but you can create, create great content for YouTube millions of different platforms. And we're gonna explore all that stuff. It has broadened the exposure of the work that AJ and I've done tremendously. As always, I wanna thank you for listening to this episode and all the past episodes. Please binge meaning hit that subscribe button. It really selfishly serves AJ and me in a great way. It gives more exposure to this show. So I'd be honored if you spend the 30 seconds or minutes to do that. And, and give us a rating and review and honest one, our website is [dw tb podcast.com](#). That's, don't write that book [podcast.com](#). You can email us both at [hello@dwbpodcast.com](#). We really do appreciate the feedback that's coming in, the insights and stuff you want to hear. It's inspiring shows. As always. Don't write that book. Write the greatest book you can.