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Episode 46:

“Addressing Your Readers’ Doubts and Objections”

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. Do you do any voice impersonations?

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

No.

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

Like, nothing like the, I just did a WWE or WWF. Let's get ready to get on that horse. I said like, you know, let's get ready to rumble. You don't do anything like that,

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

Huh? I'm trying to think.

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

Do you, you and your wife have like a cutesy voice? I mean,

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

<laugh>. Oh my God. No. Cutesy voice?

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

Every couple has something.

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

There's no cutesy voice,.

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

Cutesy words?

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

I mean, in terms of endearment?

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

Uh, you know, Young Frankenstein's, like my favorite movie of all time. My wife and I. At the very end, <laugh>, the very end, um, I can't remember the actress's name. Oh, she's so great. And she's, she's, sadly she's passed away.

AJ Harper ([01:07](#)):

Oh. Um, Madeline Cohn.

Mike Michalowicz ([01:09](#)):

Madeline Cohn, she goes to, uh, young Franken. She goes to Frank Frankenstein, the monster, and at the very end they, they get married. <laugh>. It's such a great way to end the movie.

AJ Harper ([01:20](#)):

You're already laughing.

Mike Michalowicz ([01:21](#)):

And <laugh>. She goes, do I have to go clean your poopy undies <laugh>. So Krista will do that when she's going laundry. She's like, oh, I'm gonna have to clean poopy undies.

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

Okay. So that's different than it a voice. It's not, it's not a voice. We definitely have things, you know, inside things.

Mike Michalowicz ([01:35](#)):

But we do voices too.

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

Yeah. You know, um, we're not cutesy. My, my wife, though, has a lot of things that she likes to quote, but they're not things I would quote. Like, for example, <laugh>. She will quote Caddyshack.

Mike Michalowicz ([01:53](#)):

Oh, good.

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

Endlessly. This is not, I don't even ever wanna see that. A minute of that movie.

Mike Michalowicz ([01:59](#)):

Yeah. It's totally not you.

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

You. No. We're opposites. Or she quotes Airplane, which if you watch it again, you'll say, how,

Mike Michalowicz ([02:08](#)):

How did that make that? Welcome to the seventies.

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

It's literally the most problematic.

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

Yes. Misogynistic.

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

Horrible. Abusive. It's wretched.

Mike Michalowicz ([02:18](#)):

It's wretched.

AJ Harper ([02:19](#)):

And yet she has lines that she can't help. But quote, also, Caddyshack is, um, the thing that she quotes with her sibling. So they just, that's the only way they communicate sometimes.

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

Does she do the voice? She's like, oh, she like, let's check out power floor here. She she'll try Oh, hold in one. Like, does she do that?

AJ Harper ([02:39](#)):

Not quite. Not quite. Uh, so yeah. I mean, we, you know, you can be married for 26 years and not have like little bits.

Mike Michalowicz ([02:47](#)):

Yeah Okay.

AJ Harper ([02:48](#)):

You do. But no, nothing super cutesy.

Mike Michalowicz ([02:50](#)):

Okay. I was just curious.

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AJ Harper ([02:51](#)):

And also, I do zero impersonations, so.

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

Yeah. I I've never seen you do one, so I cannot contest

AJ Harper ([02:58](#)):

That. I bet though, if I had any acting ability, I'd be good because I have a good ghostwriting ear.

Mike Michalowicz ([03:02](#)):

Yeah. You everyone has acting ability. You just haven't explored it.

AJ Harper ([03:05](#)):

I don't, no.

Mike Michalowicz ([03:07](#)):

Today we're gonna talk about addressing your reader's doubts and objections. I already have an objection that you don't have acting ability. And I doubt. Well, you have, you haven't explored it!

AJ Harper ([03:16](#)):

I don't have it.

Mike Michalowicz ([03:17](#)):

I'm joined in studio with AJ <laugh> Harper, the naysayer. This is Mike Michalowicz here. What I love about AJ is you call it the way you see it, <laugh>, you don't pull punches. You're, you'll speak, you know, Emily Dickinson said that famous line, speak the truth with slant. You have the innate talent of doing that. You, you speak the hard truth. You don't dance around it. We've had hard conversations. But you speak it with kindness and understanding. I appreciate that.

AJ Harper ([03:43](#)):

Thanks.

Mike Michalowicz ([03:44](#)):

You're welcome.

AJ Harper ([03:45](#)):

I try, I think I, if you would ask a New Yorker, they would say, which has been my home for almost 20 years, they would say, I'm too nice <laugh>. And if you would ask a Minnesotan, which was my home, my entire childhood, they would say, I'm too blunt. <laugh>

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

My gosh. So what, what's in between?

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

I don't know, just me.

Mike Michalowicz ([04:03](#)):

Like Western Pennsylvania? You're <laugh>.

AJ Harper ([04:06](#)):

I don't have any idea.

Mike Michalowicz ([04:07](#)):

You're a Pittsburghian.

AJ Harper ([04:08](#)):

I think I'm just me. I think I'm just a, just a mix of my experiences. Yeah. Um, I don't, I don't think that you're blunt at all. Like in the way that I am. I think that you're honest.

Mike Michalowicz ([04:22](#)):

Yeah.

AJ Harper ([04:24](#)):

And I think you're kind, but I feel like you're just, I think you're, you know, what you do is you, you'll do this default positive thing. So. Almost immediately you will flip and say, but you know what, <laugh>, right? But here's the thing. Because now you're moving into positive almost right away. But the way I look at it is, you know, and I love that it's, you, you still tell, you'll always tell the truth, but you aren't always gonna be saying blunt things.

Mike Michalowicz ([04:59](#)):

It's, thank you.

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

You're gonna go straight to moving on. "Moving on from that."

Mike Michalowicz ([05:04](#)):

Thank you. It's interesting. There was an internal discussion about cost cutting. And, uh, one person's like, we, we are cut kind of cutting costs and so forth. And I said, if I can just insert, we're doing cost corrections, <laugh>. And I'm like, I realize this is a nuance in words. But it was so interesting how the

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whole mood of the room shifted from we're in a risk position and taking drastic measures to, we're simply adjusting to the circumstances around us. It was just received so much more effectively. .

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

Yeah You reframe it.

Mike Michalowicz ([05:36](#)):

Reframe it. Yeah. I, I think I really try to insert myself into the recipient's mind. Like, if I was receiving this information without the context that I have as the producer, how would I receive this most effectively? Um, because words do matter. Sticks and stones may break my bones. Words will crush those bones. And I think we, we devalue--

AJ Harper ([05:58](#)):

But I also don't think you wanna stay, I don't think you wanna stay there that long. Like, you're, you're, you wanna, you use words to help everybody out of whatever.

Mike Michalowicz ([06:10](#)):

Yeah. Or through.

AJ Harper ([06:11](#)):

Maybe because you don't, you don't really wanna stay there yourself.

Mike Michalowicz ([06:14](#)):

No, no. And I don't wanna be, um, what is, what's the word when you're overly optimistic, there's a, um, ah,

AJ Harper ([06:22](#)):

I don't think you have to worry about it because you're gonna back it up with action.

Mike Michalowicz ([06:27](#)):

Right.

AJ Harper ([06:28](#)):

You know, overly optimistic is--

Mike Michalowicz ([06:30](#)):

Then there's another term for it. Like, where it's like almost, um, not caustic, whether is the word. Ah, whatever. Let, let's move on to this subject. That's what's important.

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AJ Harper ([06:38](#)):

Right. Email us and tell us since we clearly don't have the vocabulary.

Mike Michalowicz ([06:43](#)):

Perpetually Optimistic. All right. So we're gonna talk about addressing your reader's doubts and objections. Um, I, I think you're gonna be leading the conversation because you, when we're working together, you're structuring books this way. When you're coaching others, you're structuring books this way. Um, readers can give up on books. And we were talking about it last week in last week's episode. What's the main reason in your opinion, people give up on books?

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

Well, it's not the main reason. I mean, I think people give up and for a lot of reasons. I, I mean, the number one reason would be bad writing. <Laugh>

Mike Michalowicz ([07:15](#)):

<laugh>. Totally. Right?

AJ Harper ([07:16](#)):

Yeah. It's, you know, we can only do what we can do. There's sometimes, I, I was reading something last night and I turned immediately, I said out loud, No. And then I <laugh>. I just, I was reading it online. I won't say what it was because I don't like to disparage people, but I, I knew within two sentences, I can't count on this person to give me good content. So I said out loud, no, to myself in a room by myself.

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

That's brilliant.

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

Nope. Then turned it off.

AJ Harper ([07:47](#)):

Turned it off because, so yeah. Bad writing number one. ve>. But we're, today I wanna talk about doubts and objections because I think, at least with prescriptive nonfiction, so for clarity, it does come into play a little bit with other types of books. But it's primarily an issue if you're writing a book that's designed to help someone make some sort of change. And then the doubts really are a problem. And the objections really are a problem. And I, I have this system editing system that I talk about in my book. The, the Must-Read Editing Method, and it has 17 editing passes.

Mike Michalowicz ([08:31](#)):

Unbelievable.

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AJ Harper ([08:32](#)):

Don't be,

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

Does that mean you literally go through the entire book 17 times?

AJ Harper ([08:36](#)):

No. No. Okay. It, it's, it's to prevent that. So I'll, I'll just do a quick little backstory on it. It came from when I did my very first big self-help book. And I didn't have any idea how to tell if it was working. And I wasn't really, you know, it's not like when you're starting out, you can say, oh, hello client. How do I tell if this book is working? They would just say, and thank you for playing. We're gonna get a new author. And they're like, Nope. New writer, new writer. So I have OCD and the way it manifests for me is I check things like, I worry, did I do that? Did I lock the door? Did I turn off the oven? You know, that's how my brain works. So here I have this book that's supposed to provide change. I don't know how to tell.

AJ Harper ([09:32](#)):

And so I started to panic and I thought, okay, okay. And so I did what I do, which is I made a checklist.

Mike Michalowicz ([09:39](#)):

Great.

AJ Harper ([09:40](#)):

And I, that's how I deal with OCD. So did I do this? Did I make, did this happen? Did this happen? Did I do this? Did I do this? And that list evolved over time as I was a ghost writer, to be the must-read editing method. So anybody out there who's dealing with any sort of like mental health issue, it can become an asset. Because for me, it, I took the checklist and used it to make sure that books actually work.

Mike Michalowicz ([10:07](#)):

Gotcha.

AJ Harper ([10:07](#)):

And also, it's now a way that people can actually edit their books one thing at a time. Because a new author has a hard time looking at the whole finished first draft and figuring out where to start to make it better.

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

I find that authors will get in the weeds with sentence structure when there's these big structural problems or, um, flow, um, continuity issues or inclusivity issues, or just big stuff. And they're in the weeds trying to change a sentence. And that's what we do after we make sure the book works and people don't realize it. So the, the 17 passes are looking at one component. Like for example, uh,

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doability is one I talk about all the time. And we use it in your book. I mean, it's so important in your books because a hallmark of, that's actually one of our immutable laws for your book. All your books is doability. But that doesn't come. You have to have the intention, but then you have to go check. So the doability becomes a check. Are all of these exercises doable? Are all these action steps doable?

AJ Harper ([11:17](#)):

So you wouldn't have to say, go look. Start from page one word one. You just think, okay, where do I have where am I asking the reader to do something? Right.

Mike Michalowicz ([11:29](#)):

It's typically at the end of a chapter for us.

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

Yeah. But sometimes it's yes, wherever, wherever it is. Go there, see if it's doable, fix it if you need to. And so the 17 passes are like that. So.

Mike Michalowicz ([11:43](#)):

Gotcha.

AJ Harper ([11:43](#)):

Yeah. It's just, it's like a surgical targeted approach. And then once you're that way, you've handled all your stuff. And it's also an approach that's geared toward the reader. So it's a reader-driven approach where you're considering how they feel throughout the entire 17 passes. So it's not just a checklist of making things better. It's very specifically built around reader experience.

Mike Michalowicz ([12:09](#)):

So doability or the lack thereof could bring about doubts or objections. How quickly do doubts and objections present themselves when someone--

AJ Harper ([12:17](#)):

I think it can happen immediately when--

Mike Michalowicz ([12:19](#)):

Page one.

AJ Harper ([12:19](#)):

Yeah. When you present core message. Okay. Because they might disagree, but doubts and doubts and objections isn't its own editing paths. Because you need to go through and look for where in the book might a reader object to something I've written or doubt something I've written. And then if you have too much of that, then it becomes a problem. It's okay if it happens once in a while, but if we're not

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aware of where it could be and we don't get in front of it, we could have a book that has tons of that and then that leads to a book person tossing the book across the room.

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

Yeah. That could be one of the consequences. You know, of all the books we've written, the one that gets the most skepticism is Profit First. They're like, that can't work. When people are first introduced to the topic. So there's a risk of them, even at the title, I think thrown out. How do you--

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

Potentially,

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

So how do you, uh, start addressing it? Because it can happen so early?

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

Well, I'll get into how to address it. Okay. But I think I wanna point out that what happens, I think people need to understand what happens to a reader is they, they say, Hmm, I'm reading. I'm reading. Oh, I don't think so. Reading and reading and reading. Hmm. I don't think I could do that. Reading and reading and reading. Hmm. This guy, it's pretty easy for him to say that, but I don't live like that. More reading. Finally, it's like, okay, this book is not for me. So we put it down, we throw it away, we put it in the garage sale free bin, whatever we decide to do. A lot of people will say nothing. They just quit the book.

Mike Michalowicz ([13:59](#)):

Right. They're not gonna call you.

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

No. What's worse though, is when you have so many doubts and objections from a reader that they then move into criticism. So now they're not just putting it away. They've decided that they're going to tell people how much your book sucks. And we're usually afraid of that when it comes to one stars. I don't know about you, but I, I have one, one star and I on my book, and I just laugh. And I sometimes we'll go look at one stars on, on our books. And also, I just laugh. And I think people are really afraid of them and they get uptight about them, and they think that it ha it's, it's a big deal. But it, they're usually trolls.

Mike Michalowicz ([14:42](#)):

Usually. Sometimes they're, they're good criticism.

AJ Harper ([14:44](#)):

Sometimes I--

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Mike Michalowicz ([14:46](#)):

A one star I think is absolutely necessary. You know, I would question any product or anything that doesn't have a negative rating. The, if you only have one stars that's gonna influence.

AJ Harper ([14:57](#)):

Yeah. That's a problem.

Mike Michalowicz ([14:58](#)):

I'm not buying it. Yeah. But if you only have five stars, I'm not buying it either, because then I'm like, something's going on. I, I looked at some product, I can't remember what I was looking to buy, but it was a, it wasn't a book, it was a physical product. I had 5,000 reviews. It was five star ratings. So I do the skim. What I believe is most people will skim five star and they'll read the one or two star. So it's this negative of real negative. Or is it someone trolling? All the five stars were foreign entries. They weren't even in, it was broken English. But it, it said this, I can't remember how Amazon does it because it was on Amazon, but it said like, the source a lot was in Spanish. And I'm like, this is product selling into the US. This is gamed. I'm out. So my sense is, when it comes to people speaking negatively about your book, um, we do like train wrecks. We are gonna go there. Um, but if there is none, we're gonna be suspicious.

AJ Harper ([15:52](#)):

It's true. But what's the real problem isn't the one star, the real problem is a person who didn't like your book and now is telling everybody that they didn't like your book privately.

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

Yeah. Avoid this book. Yeah.

AJ Harper ([16:06](#)):

Yeah. And then that, you know, depending on how their influence can be a whisper campaign.

Mike Michalowicz ([16:13](#)):

Yeah. It's the, that book sucks. Yeah. It comes up in a conversation like, oh, that book sucked.

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

Oh, I didn't like that book. Yeah. Uh, this wasn't, that wasn't for me. It didn't do, it didn't. That book doesn't work.

Mike Michalowicz ([16:22](#)):

It goes off the list instantly. Yeah.

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AJ Harper ([16:24](#)):

That book doesn't work. Is not what you want.

Mike Michalowicz ([16:26](#)):

And conversely, it's, how many books have you read in your life, AJ? Thousands. A lot. Tens of thousands. Right? Yeah. How many do you support vocally or, or recommend Regularly? It's probably a couple dozen. Like, oh, this is a great book. Like, like the, the, um, art of, uh, the War of Art. You, you talk about regularly. You're such a proponent for that book. We were talking about Bird by Bird yesterday.

AJ Harper ([16:49](#)):

Anne Lamont.

Mike Michalowicz ([16:50](#)):

But there's, there's thousands of others that you'll never mention. So I think there's kind of this bell curve on one side. There's the 10 or 20 we recommend, but there's also the 10 or 20 where I never read that book. And I'm not gonna say them all because I don't wanna hurt those people, but there's certain books that have come up. I'm like, dude, such a waste of time. Yeah. Such

AJ Harper ([17:09](#)):

A waste of time. Sometimes you're actively making fun of it.

Mike Michalowicz ([17:12](#)):

Yeah. I don't know if I've ever done that.

AJ Harper ([17:14](#)):

I, I don't mind going out on a limb on this one because I didn't read the book. And I wanna apologize to any readers who love this series. Um,

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

Is it Surge?

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

It's a series. Can you imagine if Surge was a series?

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

Surge, by Mike.

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

Surge, the series.

Mike Michalowicz ([17:30](#)):

Oh my God.

AJ Harper ([17:31](#)):

<laugh>. I don't think so. That's a good book, Mike. It is a good book. It's a terrible cover and a terrible title. And it was the wrong book.

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

We do like a Harlequin romance cover. We've probably done Better Surge.

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

Fabio.

Mike Michalowicz ([17:43](#)):

They meet on a beach. But more than just meet! <Laugh>.

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

Oh God. Um, no. 50 Shades.

Mike Michalowicz ([17:51](#)):

Oh yeah. Yeah.

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

It-- Among my friends. It was a game we would play where anytime we were in a bookstore and we saw it. Because it was always right out front, we would open it, choose one line from it randomly and text it to each other and laugh. <laugh>. You know, they don't, that person E.L. James does not care. <laugh> that. I just said that online. Yeah. Because that book has sold bajillion million copies, whatever number. Um, my point being is had that been a less successful book and people were making fun of it by playing a game like that, this is not good for you, <laugh>.

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

Yeah. But I think, you know what? I wonder if apathy's even worse though. There in the recent Olympics, there was that break dancing competition. The Australian breakdancer.

AJ Harper ([18:45](#)):

Oh man. Listen. We were so excited to watch Breakin' and then we were just like, what is happening?

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Mike Michalowicz ([18:49](#)):

What is, yeah. But that person is getting tons of notoriety. Yeah. Perhaps negatively. Yes.

AJ Harper ([18:56](#)):

But it shouldn't.

Mike Michalowicz ([18:57](#)):

But tons of notoriety. And I wonder if apathy would've even been more damaging. I

AJ Harper ([19:04](#)):

Don't know. Yes, for sure. Correct. Because otherwise we wouldn't have,

Mike Michalowicz ([19:08](#)):

Wouldn't even know.

AJ Harper ([19:08](#)):

We wouldn't even know.

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

So 50 Shades of Grey in some way you are promoting because you keep--it keeps coming up. It's a point of joking. But we're even discussing on this show.

AJ Harper ([19:17](#)):

Well, it's just within my friend group.

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

No, I understand. But I think some books--

AJ Harper ([19:21](#)):

I'm just pointing out. Yeah. Sorry.

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

There's some books that are successful and some mock it, there's some books that will never get the light of day because the, particularly the early readers, the early adopters of that book said not worth it. And they don't spread it.

AJ Harper ([19:36](#)):

You can see it too. You see, uh, book, um, somebody, you know, tried to do a great launch. I saw it with a book recently. The book came out a couple months ago. There's a bunch of reviews from those two

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months. Now it's not selling well at all. And there's no movement. What is that signal that signals that the people who bought it early were usually probably part of the network of that, that person's network. But the people who are reading it are not necessarily recommending it. And so therefore there aren't new people coming in and buying it, which you can reflective in the BSR rankings on Amazon. And further, they're not people reviewing it. And also just to your credit, all of them are five stars. Yeah. Right. So very early reviews, all five stars. And then nothing since tells you that the book is not kicking off because some people are not. They're, they're not loving it enough to say, you should read it.

Mike Michalowicz ([20:41](#)):

A technique when it comes to reviews, uh, that a technique, a process I'll use is when I ask for reviews, I simply say, please give them an honest review.

AJ Harper ([20:49](#)):

I say the same thing. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz ([20:51](#)):

And so I actually, one person said, I did not like your book. I can't remember which one it was. And they said, you're, do you want me to still review it? I said, yeah,

AJ Harper ([20:58](#)):

Yeah, sure. Yeah.

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

I--

AJ Harper ([21:01](#)):

First of all, review, review. We need the numbers. Yeah.

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

And I think they gave me a two star. And I'm like, thank you. Right. It's quantity of reviews is a big deal. Huge. Huge. They're probably more important than, well quantity and the average. Average. That's the two things that really matter.

AJ Harper ([21:15](#)):

You want a four or above.

Mike Michalowicz ([21:17](#)):

Yeah. Four and a half and thousands of reviews is a big deal. What'd you break a hundred? You're breaking out of your friend domain, typically. Yeah. Yeah. Um, but there's no question if, if someone sees a book that has 50 reviews, one that has 500 reviews, one that has 5,000, one that has 50,000,

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50,000 by default social proof, there's more people reading it. That's probably the better book. There's more engagement with that.

AJ Harper ([21:42](#)):

Exactly. Yeah. Because people are telling other people to read it. It's just basic. It's, well, we started the podcast.

Mike Michalowicz ([21:48](#)):

Yes. Don't write that book. Can you get in front of the, the doubters, the skepticism?

AJ Harper ([21:54](#)):

Yeah. So the, the way you deal with it is, you know, instead of pretending, trying to make your content perfect is first identifying where might my reader have doubts and objections. And then once you've done that, finding creative ways to get in front of those so that by the time when it comes up, you're immediately addressing it or you're eradicating it completely. So it's a different, you're gonna approach it in different ways depending on what the doubt or objection is. Okay. So for example, if we mentioned doability earlier, if a person were to say, that's not possible, I can't do that. Like if you were <laugh>, if you were to say, for this action step, go, you know, build a car, you know? Uh, no, that's not happening. But so if you were to fix it so that it then became doable, you would've eradicated that doubt or objection. But sometimes it can't be, uh, edited out or modified. And so you would have to get, get in front of it in another way. But the first step though, is to identify where they are. That's, that's the next step in.

Mike Michalowicz ([22:59](#)):

Where they're coming in. Okay. I do wanna share a quick story about getting in front of it. We test doability prior to publishing the book. Yeah. With Fix This Next, famously I came up with--or infamously. I came up with all these questions right in, went to a group of about 30 people and said, Hey, would you be willing to do this little process to find out where your fix is in your business? All business owners. And I think about three questions in people are like, all right, lunchtime, like throwing, like just disregarding it. And some people start mocking me <laugh>. And I'm like, thank you. You know, comedians do the same thing.

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

Well, you didn't say thank you immediately,

Mike Michalowicz ([23:35](#)):

<laugh>. Well, first I got at them. Like, you guys are idiots!

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AJ Harper ([23:36](#)):

Yeah. I remember a phone call where it was like, oh man. And you told me that you basically barely made it out of there.

Mike Michalowicz ([23:42](#)):

Yeah, exactly. And then they're idiots. And there was a, but uh, the comedians will do this too. Uh, when you see these Netflix shows, it's not the first time you're delivering, right?

AJ Harper ([23:51](#)):

No, no, no. They're testing it constantly.

Mike Michalowicz ([23:53](#)):

They test it and a lot of the stuff fails, but it just doesn't land. And so we have to do the same thing. We gotta test to see if it lands. So continue on to your next step there. I'm sorry to cut you off.

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

No, that's fine. So the first thing you wanna do is identify the doubts and objections. So there's some pretty common ones. A big one is, uh, kind of easy for you to say, or you don't know my life, or. And the truth is, you don't, I think we, we have a it to no fault of our own. We will default to our own experience. So one of the things that you and I will always talk about is, okay, well, you know, Mike, you have time to do that. Or Mike, you're not afraid of doing that, but what about this person who's a single parent and doesn't have time resources? Or what about a person who doesn't have financial resources or is marginalized in some way, or, um, feels nervous. You know, it's just thinking again, it's reader-focused. So consider is this, um, is this concept or method a thing that a person could easily adopt? Or do you need to address the fact that maybe it's not gonna come as easily for some people. Get Different is one example.

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

I was about to jump on that. Yeah.

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

We, we tried valiantly. I, we really did. I was extra focused on doability for that book and the doubts and the internal doubts that readers would have and their objections to you. Making it seem like it was easy. So we went kind of overboard in addressing that. It was not gonna be easy, but we still have people.

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

Yeah. And I think it's a, it is a title fail because I saw with Sally Hogshead, um, last week, and she goes, Mike, no one wants to be different. We wanna get noticed without being noticeable.

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

So it should have been Get Noticed.

Mike Michalowicz ([25:36](#)):

It should've been Get Noticed! Yeah, I don't know. Can you do a title change?

AJ Harper ([25:39](#)):

I don't know. You should call, you should mention it. Ask Noah.

Mike Michalowicz ([25:43](#)):

Same book, everything. Just different title.

AJ Harper ([25:44](#)):

I mean, it would probably increase sales, huh.

Mike Michalowicz ([25:47](#)):

Okay. On my to-do list.

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

Go, go find. So, um, you know, and then that, that goes into, this won't work for me because, so fill in the blank. Right? So where in the book would, and it's not even just an action step or exercise, but even just an idea, this is, this isn't gonna work for me because people are gonna have their own internal objections. So the objections that people have to your book are very often the objections they have in their own lives, the pushback, the resistance that they have. I can't do that, becomes your problem as the author. So that's why you have to think about what would be the potential objections to this idea, framework, methodology, exercise concept. Really think about it. You go through chapter by chapter to look for these doubts and objections. Another one, a big one is, um, uh, I've tried that before and it didn't work. <laugh>.

Mike Michalowicz ([26:45](#)):

Right. But that's probably the most common.

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

Yeah. I, yeah, go ahead.

Mike Michalowicz ([26:49](#)):

Which, which isn't is often not valid. They didn't necessarily try it before, or they think they tried it, but it wasn't what you're suggesting. Do you call it out in advance and saying, you, you may resist this because of this.

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

Sometimes it just depends. It depends on what you think your reader needs in that moment. Maybe they need to be called out in a way that's not too threatening, but maybe they just need a little love. Say, oh man, I know I tried it too. I tried it four times before I got it.

Mike Michalowicz ([27:16](#)):

Yeah, that is good. Right?

AJ Harper ([27:18](#)):

So then you bring yourself into it and you say, I know you might be thinking I did this already. I thought that, too. Right? So you bring, you acknowledge this is an okay thought for you to have. And I also, I also, uh, am proud of you or I commend you for doing those things. And we gotta do it a couple more times or whatever, whatever the, whatever the, the thing is that you need to get them to do.

Mike Michalowicz ([27:45](#)):

I would, I just got a little tip here. I think of my own children, when we give our kids direction on what we know is in their best interest, they're unlikely to do it because we've given them that direction. And that's human nature. If you said, Hey, Mike, you really shouldn't dress that way. There's a better way to dress. I may receive that as an intellectual thought, but subconsciously I'm like, resistance. Like, are you, who are you? Who are you? And ironically in prescriptive nonfiction, we're saying, here's what you should do. And so there's that inherent resistance. So when it comes to my child, it's about empathy. It's about understanding. It's about listening. And you can do that through writing.

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

You can primarily through storytelling, but you can also do it through direct address. So the the two biggies though, I think are, um, "this goes against everything I learned, blank". So everything my mom taught me, everything my church told me everything My boss mentored me about everything my friends think, right? Everything I learned in school that costs \$50,000 a year. Whatever. That's big. If you're asking a person to reconsider a valuable lesson that they heard from someone else or earned. And so you have to be really respectful in this, especially if you're talking about someone's family or church. You know?

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

Don't say your church are morons and your family are idiots. Right?

AJ Harper ([29:08](#)):

Don't do that. But just acknowledge that maybe this is a tough pill to swallow. Or maybe, maybe this is gonna take some time for you to think about. Perhaps just consider it. You know, the point is to just acknowledge is-- remember, we'll get to that in a moment--but you have to go through the manuscript

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first and see where people potentially going to push back. And then we can address it. But the biggest one of all, the biggest one of all is I can't do this because I'm not something enough.

Mike Michalowicz ([29:38](#)):

I'm not strong enough. I don't, I'm not smart enough.

AJ Harper ([29:39](#)):

Not, I'm not thin enough. Smart enough, wealthy enough, connected enough, uh, talented enough. That was for me, that was in my book. I have people who think they can't write it. Um, clever enough, whatever the, the list is long and it might have multiple, multiple, uh, issues there. And that's big. And if you can really get at what that is, and you can be gentle about it, you know, in the manuscript, and think about where that's gonna come up for people, and then insert targeted, edited comments or anecdotes or whatever you need to do. What happens is instead of that person going, Hmm, uh, easy for you to say, or this and every few pages having some sort of data or objection. Instead, every few pages, they think, oh, how does this person know so much about me? It's like they're reading my mind.

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

That is when you have someone hook, line and stinker,

AJ Harper ([30:41](#)):

You can't get that though. If they're gonna have a bunch of doubts and objections, you just can't. It destroys trust.

Mike Michalowicz ([30:49](#)):

I, I think there's a, there's a misconception that authors have between the, the reader's wants and the reader's perceived ability. So I want to be rich, does not translate to I can be rich. The, the reader will have the, I'm not blank enoughs, uh, as resistance. And just because someone wants something doesn't mean that they're on board.

AJ Harper ([31:12](#)):

No. Because they come into a book with hope and skepticism.

Mike Michalowicz ([31:16](#)):

Oh, I love that. Yeah. That's what it is. It's both. Okay. So what, what do we do

AJ Harper ([31:21](#)):

About this? So now one, so make just literally do what I do. Make the dang checklist. Okay? So go through every chapter. Where might there be doubts and objections? What kind of doubts and objections are you dealing with here? Then once you have that, you figure out how to deal with it. So it could be that you're just gonna take the air out of it. Um, that's the big one. It's the easiest one of all is

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by saying, I know you may be thinking, or maybe right now you're feeling, or if you're like me when you heard this for the first time, you thought X, Y, Z. It's just acknowledging the elephant in the room instead of continuing to write as if nobody should have a doubt or objection.

Mike Michalowicz ([32:03](#)):

With Profit First. Uh, this is more in the speech, but we do in the book. But I'll do the speech and I'll say, I didn't believe in Profit First. I didn't think it would work. I did it not because I believed in it. I was desperate. And that kind of blazes that path. It takes the air out of the balloon.

AJ Harper ([32:19](#)):

So that's one way is to take the air outta the balloon through directly saying, just acknowledging the thing. That can be enough. That can be just it. The second, because it's not always fixable. You can't always make the, you can't necessarily make this stuff go away. But by saying it out loud, then you're saying what they're thinking or not out loud by writing it, you're writing what they're thinking, which is how they start to, oh, how does this person know me so well? Right? That could be all you need. It's not complicated. But you could also try sharing an anecdote or story about you or someone else having a similar doubt or feeling or objection, which then speaks to it. So that just makes a person feel like, oh, I'm okay. I'm not alone. And that can be enough to just keep going. I'm not alone. This book is for me because this person sees me. Or if the anecdote or story shows how to deal with that doubt or objection, then that can help them also move forward. You could give other actual research evidence as to why the thing they're objecting to. They don't have to because, see, this, this study says this. That's not always gonna work. But if you got it, use it.

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

I just wanna go back to the antidote. You might be able to share their own story. So with, uh, look, we'll keep going with Profit First. Profit First. I say take your profit first in your business guaranteeing profitability. And then we, we can say, you're already doing this. If you've participated in a 401k or some kinda retirement mechanism, you already do this. So is there ways to--

AJ Harper ([33:54](#)):

Oh yeah, you, yeah. That's a great, that's a great point. You can say, think about a time that,

Mike Michalowicz ([33:59](#)):

Oh, I love that. That's the word.

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

Yeah. Think about a time that you overcame blah, blah, blah. So you can use their own story and their own memory bank to move them forward. Then there's also sometimes you do have to modify, as we mentioned earlier, say with Doability, sometimes you'll have to change it. Sometimes what you've written maybe isn't gonna work because maybe it's gonna be offensive. Right? It's just not worth it to say it because it's just gonna make people upset. So maybe it needs to go

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

Right. Because they would then abandon the book. Yeah. And, and they could benefit from other components, uh, in the book. Okay.

AJ Harper ([34:36](#)):

Then also a huge one is managing expectations. So I had to do that in my book, because my book is called <laugh> Write a Must-Read. And you have to write a book that's, you know... I have, but I don't, you're not gonna be done with it by the time you finish reading mine. Yeah. And I can't guarantee that it's gonna be great or a bestseller or any of those things. And I also know how long it takes to really write something wonderful. So I had to manage their expectations. Plus I know that we have inner critic trolls that come up all the time, and I know what all the mine fields are. So instead of saying, there's a lot of these books about writing a bestseller or whatever, it's just full of positive comments. And the thing is, it is... There, there's a lot to be positive about.

AJ Harper ([35:28](#)):

But the road, as you know, is precarious sometimes. And if we can just manage the expect, if you can say, okay, this next stretch, you're gonna need extra water. You're gonna have to pack this. You're gonna feel like giving up, but you're gonna make it. It's just this much. If you just do that, then you're prepared. You're mentally prepared. So it's sometimes it's managing expectations. This one's gonna be hard, or you're gonna need to take time off for this. Or it might take you four or five tries to make, to get this right. By just giving them that then that if it doesn't work for them and to try one, two, or three, they aren't mad at you. Oh, Mike said it was gonna be four or five tries. Okay, no problem. I got this. You see what I'm saying?

Mike Michalowicz ([36:17](#)):

Totally.

AJ Harper ([36:18](#)):

You've solved it now. Whereas before, they were gonna give up because they thought it was supposed to happen on try one. And listen, we are, we as humans are wired to constantly look for evidence that we're right. So if we think we're not good enough, or talented enough, or strong enough or smart enough, and we try the thing and it doesn't work on the first try, and the author didn't warn me, then I now have evidence that I was right. That I am not this or that enough. And bye-bye book and bye-bye change and that, what are we doing here? So just get in front of that thing by managing expectations.

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

Confirmation bias is the term for that behavior. Dan Heath and Chip Heath wrote a, one of their books, I attribute to Decisive, but I think it was another one, whatever they call it, inoculation. And it's, what it was, was they said, uh, as an example, if you run an ad for a job, what most advertisements will say is looking for an employee. Uh, benefits are extraordinary. Work environment's, extraordinary best culture ever. Uh, work however you wanna work. And the second that employee comes on board and they have

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to work extreme hours or it isn't an extraordinary work environment, you've over promised so much, they're out. So they said the most effective ads have an inoculation. It says occasional extraordinary work. Sometimes the environment, uh, is kind of, you know, we get into arguments here in the best interest of the company. And when we, we put that in, when those moments do happen, you actually win over trust and you have better retention. And they also found it doesn't dissuade people. Because you think if you run an ad like that, that less people would come for the position. They said, no, it's, it's, it's, it's six of one half dozen of the other on its effectiveness of attraction, but a hundred percent better on retention. And I'm hearing the same thing in these books. Have that inoculation saying, be prepared for this moment. And when that person experiences that moment, they'll say, that's what the author told me is gonna happen. They win your trust.

AJ Harper ([38:21](#)):

Exactly. Yeah, absolutely. And then finally there's that encouragement and rally piece. So you can just rally them right outta that doubt. Just, you, you are gonna be able to do this thing. I believe in you. The, the thing is that I, I think offers tend to default to that encouragement and rally. And so every doubt an objection is met with a, I believe in you, but that's not always the thing that works. You can use it, but try one of the other techniques as well so that they really feel seen. But sometimes it does work to say, take it, take it on faith. You know, one thing I'll I'll say to people is, I know you can write this book that you intended to write. And I don't just say that because I'm an optimist. I say this because, and I also say, I'm not blowing smoke up your ass. But I say it because I can't get rid of that term because I really think that's, by the way, sorry for cursing. But yeah, I think it's very painful and harmful to tell people that they can do something when you don't. You're just saying it.

Mike Michalowicz ([39:23](#)):

Yes, I a hundred percent agree that's

AJ Harper ([39:25](#)):

Awful. But what I say is, I know you can write that book that you are worried you can't pull off. And I don't, I know that. Not just because I believe in you, but because I have 20 years of experience seeing people do it. So if you can back up the rally with, I'm not just saying this, I have life and work experience that allows me to say this. You know what I'm saying?

Mike Michalowicz ([39:54](#)):

Yeah, I do.

AJ Harper ([39:55](#)):

Yeah. So we have to be really careful. This is an important careful editing pass. And it, for any book that is designed to help someone, it's mandatory. Otherwise you're absolutely gonna lose folks.

Mike Michalowicz ([40:10](#)):

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The words came back to me in the beginning of this episode where I'm like, what's the word around optimism and stuff? I bet you by now we probably have 50 emails in from listeners saying it was toxic positivity. That's what I was like, Toxic. And this is what that encouraged rally is. It can become toxic. Yes. When it's artificial,

AJ Harper ([40:27](#)):

It toxic When it's artificial and when it actually doesn't acknowledge the reader's experience. Right? Like, you have to realize that not everybody has your abilities, money, time, perspective, experience. And so, um, if you're just saying you can, that's actually counterproductive. You have to first acknowledge that the doubt is real and you understand. And then you can say, and I still have confidence, you can do it and we're gonna find a way to do it together.

Mike Michalowicz ([41:03](#)):

Can I say, I love our show, <laugh>? Is that fair? Because this is how you write a must-read. Yeah. And these are the elements. It seems so nuanced, but gosh, it, it's foundational and necessary. So I love our show. <Laugh> I hope other people love our show.

AJ Harper ([41:18](#)):

I, I hope so too. It's become one of my favorite things I do. Yeah,

Mike Michalowicz ([41:22](#)):

Me too.

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

Really?

Mike Michalowicz ([41:23](#)):

Yeah. I generally in the morning, I don't want to come into work this early. We came at seven this morning.

AJ Harper ([41:28](#)):

Oh, today... Listen, it better not get any earlier than this.

Mike Michalowicz ([41:32](#)):

No, I, because

AJ Harper ([41:32](#)):

I have to, I have to leave the house at six o'clock

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

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To come in morning. I know. I appreciate driving all the way down here. Um, I, I have a big 10 minute drive too. <laugh>.

AJ Harper ([41:40](#)):

Oh, Okay.

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

<laugh>. Um, but I just enjoy it because I learned so much in this process. I wonder if those 50 emails are really me, like the middle of the night. I just wake up and I, uh, I send an email to ourselves. I don't in my sleep. Um, okay. I think we're covered.

AJ Harper ([41:56](#)):

We covered it. We covered it. And I hope you all do it.

Mike Michalowicz ([41:58](#)):

Yeah. You have to do it. Next episode we're gonna talk about live launches. And I wonder probably a debate episode.

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

It's Not really a debate because I don't know the, I don't think I have a strong opinion on it. Okay. It's more like we get this question a lot. Should I do a live launch when my book comes out? And I think we should weigh the, weigh the pros and cons.

Mike Michalowicz ([42:20](#)):

Yeah. We will. We will. I I have a, a slt I have an opinion. You

AJ Harper ([42:23](#)):

Do? Okay. I'm waiting. I'm not gonna ask you what it is.

Mike Michalowicz ([42:26](#)):

No, no. That's our big tease. We gotta save it for the next episode.

AJ Harper ([42:29](#)):

I, I used to have one too, but I think I changed. Okay. Okay. So maybe we are this. Now you're have, maybe it's a little mini,

Mike Michalowicz ([42:35](#)):

A little mini debate.

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AJ Harper ([42:36](#)):

I think it's a discussion.

Mike Michalowicz ([42:37](#)):

Oh, it is. Totally a discussion.

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

But maybe, maybe we'll debate a bunch of a few things.

Mike Michalowicz ([42:41](#)):

Because I think our, our debate record is to you zero,

AJ Harper ([42:43](#)):

Man. I am the, I am the reigning champ.

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

Reigning champ. Two to zero on debate so far to AJ.

AJ Harper ([42:48](#)):

Okay. We'll see if that changes.

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

Maybe. Uh, all right. We'll see you next week. Thanks for listening into this week's episode. Please download the free materials and join our email list. This way we can stay in touch with you, including our new releases. And I'm trying to see if we could do a live podcast. I wanna rent out a theater. I want hundreds of our listeners to be in attendance and me and AJ doing a live podcast on stage. Other shows do it. So if that's something that appeals to you, you gotta be on our email list so you can show up to, there's a theater here in boot in New Jersey. It's musty and gross, but it's perfect for us. Also email any questions? Comments. A couple shows have been now, uh, inspired by you, our listener. So email me and AJ at hello@dwbpodcast.com. Hey, you know how we conclude every episode. It's with this simple reminder as always, don't write that book. Write the greatest book you can.