

# don't write *that* book!

## Episode 49:

### “How to Document Ideas for Books You Will Write in the Future”

**Mike Michalowicz:** 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 A. J. Harper. What a great way to start an episode.

You sent me an awesome picture of the progress on your home.

**AJ Harper:** I'm sorry, I'm like a little kid.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. And you said it's beadboard, so there's this roof on your porch of exposed wood and you said it's fir. Is that, is that natural wood? How do they?

**AJ Harper:** Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay.

**AJ Harper:** The whole ceiling. It's just a little thicker than a typical beadboard. They put it in one slat at a time.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, I love it. Just ironically, so I'm looking at your picture and another text came in from Kieran. Kieran's a friend of mine. He says cool building, I dig it. Um, to give you context, we're looking at an office building. I've never bought an office building before.

**AJ Harper:** Oh, where?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Here in town, there's a historic barn built in the 1800s. In town, no parking lot, no nothing, it's just on a corner lot.

**AJ Harper:** Of course not. Why would you have a parking lot?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Have a parking lot? Um, Kieran Flanagan restores historic buildings. So he went into Newark, for example, and there was this thing called the Flat Iron Building, and they restored it into an office building.

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And this was a building built in the 1700s or 1800s, I don't know when. But the building walls were kind of collapsing in on themselves. So they made it structurally sound and made it a beautiful building. I know him through Masterminds, the Mastermind I was in. And he's like, yeah, anytime you have a question, I'm your resource, I'll check it out.

So he's checking for structural integrity. I was, there was another building we were looking at right outside the town. It was a colonial, built during the Civil War. They actually made ammunition there for the Civil War. It's really cool. And he goes, run away. He's like this thing you put one ounce of weight on this building.

It's going to collapse on itself. It's so structurally unsound. Um, so it's, it's great to have a resource like that.

**AJ Harper:** So, would you move, so you, would you move both offices over there?

**Mike Michalowicz:** No. So Profit First Professional, where we're recording stays here. We're looking at that for the author brand. Now it has three levels. Level one would be a gathering space for small conferences and events. Level two would be our office space and level three studio. So it would be a podcast studio like we have here and also filming. Um, so we'll see. Kelsey's over there looking at it. The price is right. Um, so we'll see whatever the boss says.

**AJ Harper:** Barn.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Um, yeah, a barn, a barn. I'm kind of disassociated with the necessity for it. Um, so let me introduce you. You're AJ Harper. My co-host, I guess is the right term for this and the author of *Write a Must-Read*. Um, And a manifesto of dreams, dude, a manifesto of dreams. Yeah. I remember you talking about, actually there's quite a few things I remember you talking about, but I do remember you talking about going, um, to the lakes and how much you enjoyed that and how important it was to you.

And it's interesting, when I heard you talking about the home originally, I thought it was I perceived it as just a nice, it would be nice if, but it was a dream as opposed to an intention. And then there was a moment of like, Oh, this has become an intention. Um, if five or six years ago, I can't remember what you were saying.

It's like, Oh, you start hearing, it's kind of like a drum in the distance where you're like, is that a drum or a helicopter? And then all of a sudden, yo, it's a drummer coming my way. There was that moment. And now it's just like, that thing is just pulsing hard.

**AJ Harper:** I think it's for us, for my wife and I, it's always been an intention.

We've been saving for it for a really long time, but we, we increase the time we shorten the timeline. Because she, you know, almost died from COVID.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** It makes things so visceral.

**AJ Harper:** Oh yeah, I was like, forget this. This is, why are we waiting? Life is so short. That was 2020.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yep.

**AJ Harper:** Bought the land in 2020. Without going there.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, I didn't appreciate that. Meaning, you hadn't been to this specific island. You just saw pictures and

**AJ Harper:** Oh no, we've been to the island. We go every year.

**Mike Michalowicz:** But the one, the land I mean, when I say island, the land you bought.

**AJ Harper:** Mm hmm. You hadn't been there. The lot. We hadn't been to the lot.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay, that's what I'm saying.

**AJ Harper:** Nobody was going anywhere. It was December 2020.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And... What did you base them on, just pictures?

**AJ Harper:** Well, do you really want, I mean, this is a pretty good story.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, give me the juice.

**AJ Harper:** Okay, so when we were first together, so we've been together for 28 years and married for 26 years. And of course when we got married it wasn't legal, but I wore a white dress.

You know.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** Looked like a regular old wedding. And we were all broke, all our friends were up there. Nobody had any money. And I walked down the road from where we were having the ceremony from these ramshackle cabins and I walked down the road and there was a little box peeking out of the ground like a wooden stake on a wooden stake with a plexiglass door

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and it had a tri fold white sort of like promo like a xeroxed thing: land for sale. And there were four lots I think it was around 800k and this would have been like 99 ish, 98, 99.

And I was like, um, huh. I walked back to the cabins and ramshackles, showed it to my wife, showed it to my friends. I was like, This. I'm gonna buy this piece of land.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Mm hmm.

**AJ Harper:** And they were like, oh, you know, like, we literally had no, barely any money, you know? It was like Kraft mac and cheese. And they were like, okay, sure, because they're used to me.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** You do that. And I was like, no, that's it. Meanwhile, my wife said. I don't want to build because I don't want to knock down any trees. So I want a preexisting structure. I'm not cutting down any birch trees or pine trees. No. So this was our issue every time we were talking about it for the next 21 years.

I want to build a house. I don't want to build a house. I want to build a house. I don't want to build a house. And then she would say, okay, the only way I'll do it is if there's already a cleared lot, meaning. I didn't have anything to do with turning down those trees. There has to be a driveway, electric, and a cleared lot.

And I said, okay. So I wanted this one piece, one of those four lots, because it's the same exact view from our wedding.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh my gosh.

**AJ Harper:** So of course, I don't have 1999, \$200,000? No. So meanwhile, the lots are all sold.

**Speaker 4:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** Right? Fast forward, maybe like eight years ago, there's one lot on the corner in the same spot where the little plexiglass box was that's for sale.

And I keep going out there and I'm like, honey, look, it's got a driveway. And it's, uh, cleared.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

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**AJ Harper:** And she said, no, because it's too busy. No, I don't want this. So she's very sweet y'all. She's not being bossy. She's just very clear. She was right. That one lot on the corner was just, they kind of treat it like a public beach.

And so it would always be annoying. So meanwhile, fast forward, 2020, my poor wife had a really hard time with the first round, got COVID in March of 2020. And when everybody here in New York was really suffering.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** And that changed my perspective. So I'm, what did everybody do during COVID? Look at houses, look at property on Zillow.

So I was looking every day and we had previously had a realtor that we would go every summer and just, she would take us around the properties. Cause we were always looking. It wasn't like we had this dream and we didn't do anything about it. We were actively looking at places.

Her name is Sally North.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Of course, real estate agent.

**AJ Harper:** Of course, super, super blonde, super sweet, Sally North. And I saw this lot and I thought it was the one on the corner. I was like, Sally, just go out there and will you check it out? Maybe I can, maybe I can convince Polly. That we're going to get this corner lot. She goes out, she drives out there, she takes video of the driveway and pictures and stuff.

And she's like, it's not the one you think. It's down the road. And I said, wait a minute. Was it part of one of these four lots back in '99 that were sold? She said, yes. One of the people who was sold, the guy who bought it, put a driveway in, cleared the lot, brought in electricity

**Mike Michalowicz:** and didn't build.

**AJ Harper:** And then they decided not to build and it was for sale and I said, look!

It's one of the original lots from 20 years ago that I wanted, and it has all your requirements.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Unbelievable.

**AJ Harper:** And with, so, sight unseen, yes.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And Polly's like, I'm in.

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**AJ Harper:** She's like, yes. And then, I, uh, we went, did this whole thing to get it, it was done by September, and,

**Mike Michalowicz:** This speaks so well to what our topic today,

**AJ Harper:** I manifested that thing.

**Mike Michalowicz:** You manifested it

**AJ Harper:** 20 years, man,

**Mike Michalowicz:** but it's almost like this reserve story. Like we're going to talk about today how to document ideas for your books and kind of store them up. That specificity that Polly put out there, ensured that would present itself at the right time in the right way.

**AJ Harper:** And I did too.

Cause I wanted to build, I wanted to build. Incidentally, if anybody wants to buy a property on Madeline Island, message Sally North.

**Mike Michalowicz:** You're the one to talk to. Or no, Sally North. Does she go by Alexandra, quote, quote, Sally? You know how the real estate agents do that?

**AJ Harper:** It's truly Sally North.

**Mike Michalowicz:** My nickname is Sally.

**AJ Harper:** Nope. Um, sight unseen. We bought it, but it was always in our hearts. It was, I feel like it was meant for us. Because I wanted the view and I wanted to build, I wanted to be right where we were when we got married. She had these other stipulations and there it was. And it made, okay, we're a drive thru society.

We want that thing right now. But that's not how that works. But it, I think the specificity is you're on to something because I never let it die. I just like, okay, we're just gonna keep on keeping on. And I still looked at other houses. I still, you know, I stayed open. That's the other thing is I didn't, I didn't say I'm not looking at houses just because I didn't--

**Mike Michalowicz:** Correct.

**AJ Harper:** You know, I still looked at houses.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** That's so interesting. That speaks to our story today. Well, so our topic for today is how to document ideas for a book you will write in the future. And to your point, it's the desire, for me at least, to collect any idea, but also with the specificity of I need certain ideas.

Um, I want to show you something. I was keynoting and a gentleman and his wife, uh, Uh, or a wife and her husband showed up at the event from India and they said, we brought this from you cause your books have changed our lives. And it's a, it's a Ganesha, I think it's Ganesha, the, uh,

**AJ Harper:** Elephant.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Which is the, the Hindu God of good fortune, I believe.

**AJ Harper:** I love it. Isn't that cool?

**Mike Michalowicz:** And I'm like, Oh, this may be a story.

**AJ Harper:** It might be a story.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So let's dig into that right away.

**AJ Harper:** So the topic.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. The topic is, um, is collecting ideas for a future book. And you were telling me a lot of readers and stuff and people go through your workshop, Top Three Workshop, ask for this.

And it seems like it's so obvious, right?

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. People say, well, how do you keep track of all the books you're going to write in the future? And what do you do with all the, uh, all your ideas? I always look at people quizzically like, what do you mean? But then, you know, you realize if you're used to doing something, you don't realize that it's a mystery to other people.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So yeah, I guess so. One thing I do, so I, I have at any given time about 25, it's probably more than that now, book titles and stuff I'm working on. Have you ever sat there and you tell someone, oh, that's a good title?

**AJ Harper:** All the time.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** Like, you know, you're, you're in conversation and someone's like, yeah, oh, that was the, the West Fire. Oh, that's a great book title. Westfire or Firewest or whatever. When someone says that to me, or I hear in someone else, I have the habit now. I immediately go into, I used to use Evernote. It's now OneNote by Microsoft. I don't know if they acquired them, but I moved over to OneNote. That's my go-to tool. There's a second one.

It's Journal, it's on the iPhone. They have a little journaling app. It's a great story collector because it integrates pictures so easily and it reminds you. So I recap a story from every single day because I'm in my little journal writing stuff down. It's become a source of stories. Um, but when someone's like,

**AJ Harper:** So you put, wait, hang on, you put the picture in there.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I'll put pictures in there. Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** So then that jogs your memory?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yes, but I put, I write text.

**AJ Harper:** Nice.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So I go to journal and it's like, what's your journal today? I'm like, Oh, what was a good story from yesterday or today? And I put pictures in, if I have them and then I write the story of why it was impactful. Um, so this, this uh, Ganesha is in there as a journal.

It's just like, Oh, it's such a nice gift. I wrote some notes about it. Um, but the trigger I wanted to get to was in dialogue. Now I'm constantly, I'm not constantly, I'm naturally in search of good titles. So when I hear a good title, like, oh, that's a good idea. And for me, They may not be actual book titles, but they're concepts to explore further or fill in a concept I have already but I'm the discipline if I hear a phrase a catchphrase or something that sounds like a title like I've got to store that now.

**AJ Harper:** Mm hmm

**Mike Michalowicz:** That's--

**AJ Harper:** So people are wondering. How do you do that? You know?

**Mike Michalowicz:** It's actively listening for it.



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**AJ Harper:** You're actively listening. But, so this would be I think the question that people would ask. Okay, but what do you write down?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Okay. So what I'll do is say someone says something I think the title. So let's, let's talk.

Let me actually, let me open my Evernote or my, my One Note here. And I'll tell you some of the titles and then we can kind of reverse engineer how I got there. So I'm opening up one note. Um, which nice is it's an app on a phone, but also it's synchronizes with your, um, with your, uh, PC. So one of the topics, the first one pops up as a book is "sell your business this year."

That is, I have a section called sell your business this year. Um, I'm sure if I--

**AJ Harper:** We outlined that whole book this year.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And so, at a certain point I wrote that down because someone was saying, "I wish I could sell my business this year."

**AJ Harper:** Oh, yeah, that came from that. Yeah,

**Mike Michalowicz:** So that started it. Then I started collecting and you can see I can just kind of scroll through it just when I have a concept I'll write down.

So here's one, Steve Denny. I don't know who Steve Denny is. I'm gonna click on Steve Denny. Steve Denny. Steve Denny was introduced to me by Sandy Wagon. I know who Sandy is. Um, I met with him in St. Louis. I was speaking there. We met for one hour and here's our conversation. And so then I have all the bullet points I wrote down after I met with him from our conversation.

Um, he explained that the SBA, so here's a topic.

**AJ Harper:** And this is on the, this is for the sell your business this year.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So your business here, he said, Steve explained, I wrote down that the SBA funds acquisitions up to 5 million dollars. They basically back the bank. So the bank has no or low risk. Here's the process. We talked about chop shop mentality, and this was something we were talking about putting in the book.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. The chop shop.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** He calls it the garage sale. He goes, you can take a business and put on self. In pieces and bits and stuff. So Steve Denny is a guy that will want to interview. I don't have all the notes in here. I just heard something of interest. I went into my little file here. I already had a topic on selling your business this year.

I said, Oh, that's where Steve Denny goes. This morning I met with a guy named Matt Alderton. He's visiting from, um, uh, Australia. He's a company called Be Exponential and it was, the conversation was on networking. So. Actually, I don't have a book topic on networking. I have one on acquiring businesses.

Uh, I have one on the business mind. I have one. I'm starting a new business. He could fit in any of those categories. I'm not looking to perfectly categorize people. I'm just looking to get me into a related section I have. Then, we get into the process of now formulating a book, I will look through all these sections and say, Oh, this story is better suited here.

This information is better suited there and start moving this stuff around.

**AJ Harper:** I think I want to pause you for a moment because I think when you're, people still don't know what to jot down, you know? Try and put it in a category. If you don't know, if you don't have a set book idea yet, at least have themes or categories, then dump that content there.

It doesn't mean that it has to stay there.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yep.

**AJ Harper:** But use keywords so you can easily find it. Yeah, that's key. That's important. I think that's really important. And you won't remember why you wanted it. Let me repeat that. You will not remember why you wanted it. So don't leave little blips for yourself. Be very specific about, this might go with X, Y, Z.

I got the idea because... This is why you want this. Tell your future self why you saved it, because you absolutely won't remember it. And this is not an over-50 thing. This is just a human being thing.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I have, uh, one book title, Grit or Quit. And, um, I don't know where that term came from. It's like, oh, this is an interesting book title.

There's one note in there so far. And that's pretty normal too, is I've had probably concepts around commitment, making a determination, if it's still a fit for you, it may have inserted elsewhere. It just didn't fall in that category. So if we wrote a book on that, quit or quit sounds a little bit to me, like, uh, the dip by Godin, Seth Godin, I may shift things around,

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um, to fit that category, but I don't, I'm okay with making a category and then not always putting stuff in there perfectly.

For me, this isn't a perfect categorization system.

**AJ Harper:** But you do, but you need to label properly. As long as you label properly, it doesn't matter if it's in the wrong category.

**Mike Michalowicz:** That's right.

**AJ Harper:** So you can easily find it with a keyword search.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Another thing that I do, I take handwritten notes. So when we're doing those interviews, I take handwritten notes.

I used to say, I'm going to type these in and then use these notes and I never gets to type in part. So what I started doing was just scanning my notes. My handwriting is so freaking sloppy. The only person I can read them as myself. So it's almost like, it's like, encoded. So I find... Not that that's the intention.

**AJ Harper:** Mine's the same.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I can't read.

**AJ Harper:** I can't read mine either.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I mean, I'm sorry. I can read it. No one else can read.

**AJ Harper:** I actually can't read mine. I could read it that day, but if I have to read it five days from now, I might not be quite sure.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, that's so funny. So I scanned in my notes and I put them in there and that's been a great tool.

**AJ Harper:** But we also debrief. So you'll read from your notes while we're debriefing after an interview. Okay. And so even if your notes don't come through all the way, you have actually hit all the points with me verbally and it comes through in the transcription.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. A question comes up as, as you collect information.

Once we're in season, we talked about that last week when we're in season, it almost becomes like a beacon. I know more what we're looking for, probably from our conversations. You're

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giving me some guidance on what to look for. I was out in Australia. I was in London, and I met with Alexis Kingsbury. He's someone we interviewed two years ago for this book, and I was like, oh, okay.

I know what we're working on. We're working on our personal finance book. This just all comes back very quickly. And I'm like, we'd like to interview again. I think we already lined it up. Uh, and I asked him some questions out there. He's like, I have so many updates for you over the last two years. So he's a long arcing story of his employment of Profit First ESC.

**AJ Harper:** Nice. I love those.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. But what's so nice is Because we're in season, it's, there's this kind of beacon out there, and I'm paying much more close attention. It becomes self-evident if it could work for the new book or not. Well, your

**AJ Harper:** mind is, is, when you're out of season, you're just collecting anything and everything. But right now, it's gonna skew toward the book you're working on right now.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. That's right. And sometimes it's these kind of stretch stories, uh, I can't think of one for this book specifically, But like, *Clockwork* when we're working on it, the beehive thing, it was just interesting. I was kind of talking with Adrian, but some other folks and beehives became very apparent.

Like, oh my gosh, there is something that bees are doing that translate directly to the official, uh, efficient organizations. So sometimes those connections, which I maybe collected a bee story prior, I don't remember, but they become apparent during the writing season.

When it comes to how much jotting down, I'll tell you the key stuff is the contact information. I've gotten good at that by the person's name or write their cell and write their email. Um, and two years later, one of those may not long no longer exists. So you better find a way to track them down, right? Their location to so Alexis Kingsbury. If I wrote Alexis Kingsbury, I would think, oh, that's probably a woman.

Um, yeah. And how do I find her? Alexis is a man. It's in England. It's much more common to use that name for male or female and supposed to the U. S. Um, I have his contact information. He did start a new business. His email changed. Um, I wrote down where he's located and—

**AJ Harper:** Oh, I remember that dude.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

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**AJ Harper:** Now you're, now you just hit me with some little factoids and like, Oh, I remember him. Oh yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And he's connected with, uh, through a network IM. So when I lost the ability to contact him I had other ways of contacting him. I really encourage you to write down because some of these stories, they may sit, I don't know, they could sit quote unquote forever. And you need to be able to access these when you want them.

Yeah. That's the stuff I do. Uh, OneNote is the big outlet for me. And then the other one's called Journal.

**AJ Harper:** I think Notion does a good job too, if you want to learn Notion.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, I'm not familiar with that.

**AJ Harper:** You know, I think I like the way you can categorize it and search for things, uh, and make to do lists within it, but I'm also, I think we get over focused on the tools we're using and we really just need to do something simple.

I think it should be on your phone and you shouldn't have to take a 10 hours of a class to learn how to use it, you know, otherwise it's not, it's counterproductive.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, and voice memos. So I use voice memos on the apple phone. I'm sure it's on android too. You just hit voice memo, and then you can import it into, in this case, OneNote.

I do have a central repository, which is consistently OneNote.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, and sometimes when we are looking through all your notes, you'll transfer stuff over to our Google Doc Outline, and there will be an audio for me. Versus, yeah, so sometimes it's a link to something you wrote, sometimes it's a link to an audio, sometimes it's a link to an article.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** And I just work with whatever you saved.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. So I'm on a flight wherever and I'm flipping through the magazine. I'll tell you one magazine that is probably now my favorite is Psychology Today. So I subscribed to that and like four other magazines, business magazines and so forth. So I'll just flip the pages.

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I'll read an article. If it's good, I'll take a snapshot of just the article section, my finger pointing to a section of that article if it is, and I'll save it in one note. Subsequently I may email it to you and say it's an interesting article. Another thing I do is, um, it's happened with my mother. I was visiting her and she was sharing stories about World War II, when they were hiding under trains in Germany, when the bombers, you know, the British would come and start bombing.

And, uh, it was just really interesting insight. I don't know how we could use it, but I made a note of it. I said, that must've been terrifying. She's, no, it wasn't. You know, so these are people, she lives in a, she lives in a city called Stade and it was north of Hamburg. There was military operations in Hamburg and manufacturing, but this one bomber came over and started bombing where they lived, it was a residential area.

And she assumes it was a misguided plane, but once you got the bombs, you start bombing. I said, why wasn't it scary? She's like, no one I knew died. She goes, but my friends who lost their loved ones, they were terrified. It was just interesting. Because then I'm like, Oh, there's a saying.

**AJ Harper:** Oh. I can see why you saved it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. There's a. There's a saying that 10,000 deaths is a statistic, but one person dying that you know is a tragedy. And I'm like, it's so interesting of how we perceive certain things. And I'm like, there's something, I don't know if that's for the new book. I don't know if it's for a future book. I don't know.

But like that story is good. Um, so even if you'd see no correlation to anything, there, there's a, there was a lesson embedded in there.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. That's why I'm saying about having all the crayons in the box.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** I think I said that last week, actually.

**Mike Michalowicz:** You did. So tell me how you document your stuff.

**AJ Harper:** So surprise: it's different than you.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay. Okay. Surprise, not surprised.

**AJ Harper:** Well, to be fair, I do use my notes app, but that's only if I'm sort of on the go. Okay. Um, so I'll use it to capture. So let me, I actually, Let's see. For, so that people know, if

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I'm working on one of your books, I will put it in a one note, but mostly it's going in that outline because I can get it from, I keep Google Docs app on my phone.

So instead of going into notes, if I want to add something, I actually put it directly into the outline so that I don't forget. So I actually have the app for Google docs on my phone.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Smart. Okay.

**AJ Harper:** So that's number one is I put it where it's supposed to go. And even if I don't know where it goes in the chapter outline, I dump it in that document because otherwise I get this feeling of like, wait, what was that thing?

And so that's really important to me. But if you remit, if you're an, if you're a regular listener, then you might know that earlier this year I was trying to decide what to write next for myself.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yes.

**AJ Harper:** And I, ultimately decided to put a pin in it and test some content and just let it breathe a little bit without trying to be on a specific deadline.

But I do have stuff I like for the lake house. That's one of my notes.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Which is also so important to track is these things that may not be for a book, but if you don't write them down, it occupies your mind space.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. So I have a whole thing. It's called who am I to write this book? And that's the question that I'm asked most often in some form or another.

And that's where I'm storing every little thing I think of while I'm on the go for the book I'm working on, which is more about the mindset of authorship. So, but here's how I'm different than you. I am an analog. So. I love nothing more when I'm going to sit down and figure out a book, clear off the dining room table, I have usually a box of stuff, hence my Crayola reference, and it's like books that I've marked up and have Post Its in it that are related to it, put big, I love to take index cards, so it's just like the old school, it's analog version of notes.

So I keep index cards on my desk. (That's great.) A little recipe box, or I even just use rubber bands. I mean, I'm low tech here. (That's great.) So then I will write my idea on a note card and I have them color coded. So potential story would be one color, research, and the research could be research I either have or want to get.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, interesting.



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**AJ Harper:** Because sometimes I think, Oh, you know what I need? And then I'll jot that down, and although I don't know what it is yet, I need to remember to look for it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Well, let me ask you a question about this, because one of the most extraordinary stories is in *All In*.

**AJ Harper:** I know, but you love that.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I do, because that was such a powerful open, and the book is received that way.

How did you find that story of the Russian museum?

**AJ Harper:** You found it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, I'm sorry. How did you find the counter story? Well, okay, let me tell you I found the story.

**AJ Harper:** All you had though, can we be, I should go find it. I'm gonna go find where you sent it. It was just one little line in the outline of like, Russian guard mix up or Russian guard, yeah, it was barely a blip.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I'll give you a hack. I just remembered this I do. You can probably do in chat GPT. Now I would type in weird news stories. No, because yeah, but I'm telling you they're fascinating because they're the, the unexplored stories and they're very colorful typically. So just Google weird.

**AJ Harper:** But I do that in Google. I do unexpected is the word I use. Yeah. Um, you know, because you don't want the same old same old, but I'm sure Chat GPT can find stuff faster.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I think that's how I found the Russian story. But then how did you find the counter story? That, that was unbelievable to me.

**AJ Harper:** I, I wasn't looking. This is an example of being in writing season.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So there wasn't an index card saying find the counter story, but you knew inherently we needed it.

**AJ Harper:** Hell no, all I knew, all I knew was that we would use, I would probably use the Russian story as an example. And then I was watching the Today Show, and they were talking about the Baltimore Museum, and I said, oh dang!



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And it just came to me, which is like, Hey, this will be a good counterpoint to the Russian museum. So we can show the Russian museum is an example of an employee that is not *All In*. Yeah. That doesn't give a crap to the point where he's defacing priceless art. And then the Baltimore museum is the absolute, you couldn't even ask for a better story of the also security guards in an art museum who are now... Not only do they love the museum, but they have created their own exhibit.

**Mike Michalowicz:** They're empowered.

**AJ Harper:** But then that also spoke to the power of how you lead those individuals, which may, it was literally the find of a, of a, the dream find.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** But I was keyed in. Like, I wouldn't have noticed it if I wasn't in writing season.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So, okay, so that story, if you weren't in writing season, do you think it still gets captured?

It's like,

**AJ Harper:** No, what I'll tell you what I did. I texted you immediately.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I know. Oh, I know you said because--

**AJ Harper:** We were in writing season.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I think it's a gold mother effer, gold.

**AJ Harper:** But if I, I think it's, that might happen if you're just collecting little nuggets all around for a bunch of different books.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** But if you're not in writing season, it's, you might not keep, you might not notice.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** You know, I was doing other things. I was drinking coffee. I was probably talking to my wife, you know, but it per my ears perked up because I was working on the book. That's different than what we're talking about today.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** Do you, you like to take photos, and I was looking at the notes here. You like photos as inspiration.

What do you mean? And are you—

**AJ Harper:** So I literally will take books. Um, I take, um, photos that inspire me. I mean, just. They don't even have to have anything to do. This sounds very esoteric, but I respond to visuals. (Sure.) So, I'll take, I collect a lot of old photographs. I'll take that, books, my index cards, scribbles of stuff.

Um, I do a lot of writing prompts. And then I'll, I'll usually have a lot of open questions like, um, why do we do this or what, why haven't we solved this yet? And so those will also be kind of written on everything. And I clear off my dining room table. So it's not the same thing as collecting it all digitally.

I like to have my hands on it and I like to look at it all. And here's my stuff.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I'll, I'll call your bet and raise you a one bit. We have in the author office, a wall, it's a wallpaper with all these different writing prompts or just prompts, just questions.

**AJ Harper:** Mm hmm.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Um, and that's really interesting to go in there and it says like, why that color, as an example.

And so I could be thinking about anything and I'll look in there like, why that color? And it just, it just changes perspective.

**AJ Harper:** So you want it to be, you know, for me it would be prompts related to the topic.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, ours is just all these different prompts. general questions but expands thought.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. So, but there's something we didn't, I didn't put in the notes for this, this call is just, you have to actively put yourself in situations where you can find these tidbits.

So Julia Cameron is famous for writing *The Artist's Way*. And I think she's most famous for morning pages, which everybody talks about the 20-minute stream of consciousness, um, writing you do in the morning for no, not in any prompts at all. Just get like download stuff from your brain. But she's also got another technique that I've used forever called artist dates.

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And it's where you are taking yourself out on an artist date. To what she calls fill the well because you can't really write from a place where you don't have new stuff.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It's true.

**AJ Harper:** So the cool thing about you is that you're always traveling. You're always putting yourself into novel circumstances. You have to be in something new where you are a student. You've never seen it before It's something that's interesting. I would argue you probably need to do more of it because you are kind of set in a travel thing

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** And maybe you need to go to a museum you've never been to, or um, watch a documentary you would never normally watch.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So let's play this. I have a story that maybe could be appropriate for this book. I was in Munich two weeks ago. I was invited in front of all the Germans to be the Burgermeister for the opening event at a brewery. Now, what I said to them, I said, oh, Meisterburger, Burgermeister? Everyone's like, what the hell are you talking about?

I'm like, Rudolf, the red-nosed reindeer! Yeah. A Burgermeister is the mayor of a town, and it's tradition at Oktoberfest and other important festivals that the mayor taps the first keg of beer. And only once the keg is properly tapped can people be served any beer. So it's a ceremony. So I tap the beer. And what's so interesting is, is when you know the process is simple, but when you don't, like I didn't.

**AJ Harper:** Tapping beer.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. It can be a disaster. And you actually use a hammer and you tap the keg.

**AJ Harper:** How'd it go?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, explosion of beer everywhere. All the Germans. Oh, you know, they laughed in their German. Oh, it's a much more haughty laugh. Everyone got a kick out of it And then I haven't thank God an apron on that they put on me because they were prepared for this. So everyone got a laugh out of it. And then finally I got the keg in the tap in and then everyone applause And goes—

**AJ Harper:** And you think this will be good for the personal finance book.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, because We're going to, we're going to have a, we're going to have problems and there's going to be splashing and a disaster when you don't know what

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you're doing. (Nice.) And what was so interesting was everyone got a kick out of it because they anticipated it and then everyone started cheering me on and they're like, Burger Meister, Burger Meister.

**AJ Harper:** That's a classic Mike anecdote.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And so then you see me on the video, because there's a video of this. Eins, zwei, drei, vier, fünf. And on the fünf. I got it in, and then everyone starts applauding. I was ready to give up on the first one. Actually, I thought I did it right the first time, when beer was splashing everywhere.

I'm like, oh, I tapped it open. No, I broke it. Uh, I had to continue the process. So there's something there.

**AJ Harper:** That is such a classic Mike anecdote. Of course, of course, it'll go in the book.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It's got to go in the book now, I'm thinking about it. But what's so interesting is, to your point

**AJ Harper:** But now, wait, you have to document it. So now you need to either text me that thing.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay, I'll send you the video.

**AJ Harper:** That's fine, too.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah,

**AJ Harper:** And then I will move it to said Google Doc.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay. I already have my Google. But this is you know, I love about our show is this is this is legit how it works. Um, so right now on my phone, the last text is a picture of your beautiful space. And now I'm responding with the Burger Meister chant and you're going to see me in the

**AJ Harper:** evening. That's our, just anybody look at our text chain. Like, what is this? What is this crazy town?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Um, but there was a, okay. Text sent. And it's interesting, too, is this is kind of indicative of our dialogue is we'll have a little conversation: Is there something there? Maybe send me a note and then you'll ruminate on it and say, yeah, there's a fit or you'll come

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back and say that's stupid or it's not a fit and rejected. But we've got a point where I just keep on dumping story. (Yes.) For story idea after idea.

**AJ Harper** Yes.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And you without, you're unabated in saying it fits or doesn't fit and, and I don't know if it used to be that way. I think you wanted to accommodate all my stories. Now we're at this level. It's like in out, in, out, I mean, very quickly.

**AJ Harper:** I think I did try to accommodate all your stories. Sometimes I will be honest. Yeah. Sometimes I just didn't and then I didn't mention it to you. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And I would forget anyway.

**AJ Harper:** You do forget.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Now you're...

**AJ Harper:** But most of the time now I can say these aren't working. Um, it is, uh, but I like having all the, all the crayons. I like all the colors. I want the 64. I want the 128-box. I want all the shades because I don't know, you know, I, I like to, I like to figure it out. I, yes, we have a very specific outline, but I need a little mystery element.

I need to be, Ooh, what's that? You know, I need to kind of play around with the pieces. It's just not fun for me. And I think this is where, when you're talking about say, Chat GPT, writing books or that sort of thing. I mean, this is what writing a book is. And this is this human component. So whether I'm looking at a Google Doc with all your stuff in it or a literal, I'm telling you, plastic box with my stuff in it, you know, it doesn't matter.

It's about, um, seeing what's there and the key to that is to not judge when you put it in the box. Don't judge when you put it in the Notes app or the box. It could be something. It might not be something.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. And it may not be something now. Like I wouldn't discard it. It's just like, "Oh, the story wasn't a fit for this now."

**AJ Harper:** Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And it comes back. Um, one more quick story. Cause I don't want to lose this one. One thing that's interesting. I intentionally, as I was traveling to all these different countries last week and this week asking myself, what is the perception of money in each country and was notably different as I was talking to people.

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So here's a quick download in England. There's a stiff upper lip that you don't talk about money problems because that's not the British way you maintain a stiff upper lip But when I was in Germany There's a shame with not having money and there's a shame with having money. Like you're wrong No matter what so you have to fit in the confines in Amsterdam, in the Netherlands it was If you are successful, you need to be brought back down to the right size.

It's the tall poppy syndrome in the US this was actually the most interesting in the U S the response with money is if I'm having problems with money, it's not my fault. It's yours. There's a deflection of responsibility. The gurus got wrong. I wasn't educated. Well, my parents? Shame on them. It's just interesting.

These money perceptions, how they're different. So whatever. Um, let's talk about our vetting process a little bit. We were in Nyack. I remember the one meeting, I can't remember what book it was for anymore.

**AJ Harper:** *All In*.

**Mike Michalowicz:** You sure it was *All In*? When I went through like 150 different things and I said, Okay. That was really, for me, very effective.

I said, let me just read off every single note I have.

**AJ Harper:** That's right.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And you're like, in, out, use not. I thought that was good.

**AJ Harper:** If I said in, it would have been, what I mean is maybe. It did, but no means no. I can pretty, I can tell. when something is really not going to work with it. And we don't do that until we have an outline, everybody.

We don't, we don't do that until we're very clear on our book's fundamentals, until we're very clear on a working outline. And then I can see, okay, yeah, okay, possibly yes. And then I dump that into where I think it's going to go, but I know it might not end up going there. But if it's a definite no, I really know.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So, Burgermeister, definite no, or it's like, eh maybe?

**AJ Harper:** Maybe. It's a maybe.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It's a maybe.

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**AJ Harper:** Okay. Yeah, but it's a very Mike story. Let me tell you why.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Why?

**AJ Harper:** Beer.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay. Which I don't even drink it much anymore at all.

**AJ Harper:** But I'm going to tell you the reasons why this makes a classic Mike. Beer. German. Right? Your heritage. Right? Humiliation.

**Mike Michalowicz:** In front of a thousand, a hundred. Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** Cause we, we like to routinely put you in humbling situations that are legit. We don't make any of it up.

**Mike Michalowicz:** No. Wait until you see this video. Okay.

**AJ Harper:** And then finally. You finding the lesson in the story, which relates to something that helps the reader with what? Arm over the shoulder. Encouragement which is part of our immutable laws for our book and see I processed all of that while you were like telling me The story and I was like, oh, yeah.

Mm hmm classic Mike Yeah, because I know because of 16 years that it's gonna hit all those elements. So it's a strong maybe.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah I love that. Oh, that's so good. That was juicy. Because it shows more for me And you then it is our listener. I think at times,

**AJ Harper:** I mean, I listen, if you get anything out of listening to our process, please let us know.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, people do. I'm telling you, AJ, people are loving the show. Um, because I think we're diving into the real and rawness. The realness and rawness of authorship. And I think we're empowering folks too.

**AJ Harper:** I hear good things.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Um, what do you think percentage wise do we use of all this stuff?

**AJ Harper:** Of your stuff?

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**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. And your stuff too.

**AJ Harper:** Well, what do you mean my stuff for your stuff?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, my stuff for your stuff. Yeah, my stuff for my stuff and your stuff for my stuff. What do you think we use percentage wise?

**AJ Harper:** I think we use maybe 60 percent of your stuff.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay. Wow, if I, if I was putting what I say 10%, so isn't that funny?

**AJ Harper:** No!

**Mike Michalowicz:** Well, I wonder what we're judging.

**AJ Harper:** Okay, maybe 50.

**Mike Michalowicz:** What are we, what are you judging?

**AJ Harper:** The whole, the list of stuff that ends up in the outline, so the maybes.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay, the list of the maybes. Yeah, I think we use, almost all of the structural actionable elements, the strategy, with some modifications. When we're writing *Fix This Next*, I was testing things out and we change.

And that actually becomes a challenge in the books. If I'm changing the concept as we're going, it makes it a million times harder to fix. To write the book. This book, we know from day one.

**AJ Harper:** I'm just deliriously happy.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, there hasn't been any changes.

**AJ Harper:** A few of the terms. Oh, maybe this shouldn't. Yeah, but that's fine. We don't, there's no question of. So, there's never a question of if it's going to work. Because we don't start working on a book until you know it works. But whether it will work for a reader is a separate thing. Because working in person, and, and working for you are different things. You're not, you know, you're a bit of a unicorn.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.



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**AJ Harper:** So we always have to bring it down, bring it down, bring it down to a place where it's really easy for implementation because that's one of our immutable laws, which is do ability, not just actionable, but doable. So, uh, so yeah, with *Fix This Next*, that, that was a factor.

**Mike Michalowicz:** You know, one thing that landed in the new book was the change from phases or stages to seasons. I just had a implementer of the new. Personal finance system.

**AJ Harper:** Hey, I came up with that idea.

**Mike Michalowicz:** That was your idea. So you said, because we don't want to give this stuff away yet, but. That a phase or a stage is something you pass through and don't return to. Not exactly, but a season is something that can end, does present itself again.

So change the seasons, deploy it this way. And it was on this last call I had when I returned from my European travels, I was doing the concluding call and I said, Hey, anyone want to give the feedback from their experience? And one person said, I understand I'm in this phase. Season, they use the way we use... And they said, uh, the season's coming to an end.

I'm ready. I'm starting.

**AJ Harper:** You know why it also works. Why I wanted to do it is because seasons do come to an end, whereas you need someone to tell you when you're out of a phase or a stage and, but a season you don't because it's, you understand because we all grow up with seasons.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So interesting.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. It's this, it's this very subtle difference for people who are in personal finance who are not as familiar with different things. Yeah. But see, you just asked me how much of my stuff do we use? A lot of it, probably like 80 to 90 percent only because I'm really just putting stuff in that like, hey, there's a gap, there's a hole. Yes. I need something else. Let me go. I'm going to go look for unexpected stories about this. You know what?

We don't have enough research on this. And so that's, I'm, I do like the fill-in. So we know we need it, which is why we're more apt to use it. Versus the stuff you've just been collecting for years and you aren't necessarily sure if it fits.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Correct. Correct. I, yeah, I'm kind of a show up and throw up. I just, my sense is give you everything and you have the discipline of very quickly cutting me off and say, I don't need it. Like I don't have to go through the full story or the full explanation. You're like, nah, yeah, maybe. And then that's become a very efficient process.

**AJ Harper:** But I also text you and I was like, Hey, can you, yeah.

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So in we're in writing season, you, you know, we're not quite at that stage yet, but really soon it's going to be like, do you have a, this or that? Do you know anybody with this?

**Mike Michalowicz:** And. And what about someone listening in and going in alone? How can they call through as effectively? Is there a way to do it or should they have a partner in some capacity?

**AJ Harper:** I mean, a lot of that is what a developmental editor will do for you.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** But not all the time. I mean, I think this is where their fundamentals really come into play. So it's a reminder. This is what I talk about in *Write a Must-Read*. It's reader statement. Who's your reader? And very specifically, not a marketing avatar, but describe who they are based on what they want and what they perceive as standing in the way.

The rest doesn't really matter too much. And then the second fundamental is core message, which is transformational on its own. And the third is really critical, which is the promise of the book, not what's promised if all the fates align five years from now, but what will be different or better or changed or understood by the time they turn the last page.

So then you use those fundamentals as a filtering system for all this content you collected. Is it gonna help me prove core message? Is it gonna help me deliver on the promise? Is it gonna help me connect with that reader where they are? And if the answer is yes one time, then maybe it goes in the book.

And then the rest, once you have the maybes, is just trying it in the writing. That's all. You just try it. And I think the, what I wish most authors would do, is be willing to try it out. And so many of my students say, should I start with this story or that story? And I'll say, I don't know, you know, why don't you give it a shot?

And it's just intellectualizing it beforehand that is stunting all this creativity. Deciding before you try is stunting all the creativity. Just give it a shot. What's the very worst thing that could happen is you might not use it.

**AJ Harper:** You know what I mean? And I think that's one of the reasons you and I work well together is because you're willing to try stuff and I, I am definitely willing to try stuff.

So, but that stunts, you know, people are afraid to jot things down because they have, it's like they have to know where it goes right when they jot it down.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

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**AJ Harper:** You don't have to know where it goes.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Be open to receive it all.

**AJ Harper:** Just be open. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Maybe that's a great spot to end on. Is there anything else you wanted to share on this subject?

**AJ Harper:** No, but I will say since we talked about the, um, the property on the island, and I said in the last episode I would talk about retreats. Can I take a moment to do that?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Of course, Madeline Island!

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, so that dream of ours is now almost done. And the studio is done, so one thing I did for myself was create a studio where I have an office, but then there's a conference room for... It's more like a workshop room where I'm hosting editing retreats.

The first one starts a week from today. I leave on Friday for Madeline Island.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Holy shinole.

**AJ Harper:** And I have authors coming from all over the country and from Australia.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Wow.

**AJ Harper:** Mm hmm. Shout out to Richard, who's flying from Brisbane. And it's a week-long retreat, but with five active days, the first and last day are travel days.

And it's specifically an editing retreat, so it's for people who have made some progress on their book. You have to have about four chapters ready to go. They can be in terrible shape, but they have to exist. And you have to have read my book, so you have a basic understanding of how this rolls. And then we do intense editing work during that week, and I'm reviewing those four chapters, plus I'm reviewing new work every single day. Amazing. New pages you turn in every night. It's serious and amazing. Breakthroughs. I've done, I used to do these up at Mohunk, um, in the Catskills, but now I don't have to. Now they're going to be on Madeline Island, right on my property.

And then the guests stay at a lodge. Um, and the first one that's on my property is happening in a week. Next year, I'm offering it four times. People can go to [ajharper.com](http://ajharper.com). and just click on writing retreats or editing retreats with AJ. Again, it's not a, it's not a start your book thing.

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This is specifically editing, based on my methodology and it's one of the only ways you can just get me to work on your stuff.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Amazing.

**AJ Harper:** So there's only eight slots.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Per retreat?

**AJ Harper:** Per retreat. You can sign up by the time this airs, you can go and, um, contact Laura Stone to get on the, um, to, to book a slot. So there's, uh, something like 35 or 34 slots for the whole summer. I think. We already have a quarter of them gone just from the internal community, but I will love for the first time I'm opening it up to people who are not my already my students.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay. So I'm talking to the listener now, not you, AJ. You can close your eyes. I am telling you, my friend, go to [ajharper.com](http://ajharper.com) right now and make an irrevocable commitment to your book, to writing the greatest book you can. And I promise you, AJ's been the greatest partnership I've had in my life. You've transformed my life, AJ, and you will do it for these folks here.

So don't say, yeah, I'll get around to it. Just bet on yourself and do it. I'll tell you a story. My wife, 10 years ago, and she knows now so I can make it public, 10 years ago said I want to go to Canyon Ranch one day. I never heard of this thing. It's like a wellness resort. It's just my dreams to go to Canyon Ranch.

So I made a note, uh, within a week, I made an irrevocable commitment. I opened a bank account. That's a Canyon Ranch. I start saving and saving and saving. And last Saturday I said, here's the reveal. So I told her, book a vacation. Really? Yeah. Yes. We're leaving Wednesday.

**AJ Harper:** That's where you're going.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Canyon Ranch, which is in...

**AJ Harper:** Arizona?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Arizona.

Yeah. And so. I also made note over the years of the stuff she likes. She enjoys yoga, she enjoys massage, cooking. Physical activity, hiking. So I made a note of all the things she likes to do and you can sign up for these different experiences. So I just checked off the whole list. So we're, we're doing yoga together. I'm gonna get my ass kicked.

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**AJ Harper:** Oh my God. Here. I can't, I'm gonna get my ass kicked if there's not a video, I just please let there be a video. Oh my god.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh my god. Oh my god. Downward dog. I sent my downward dog. Um. And we're doing all these activities together. But it starts off with an irrevocable commitment.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Something, I used to say, Oh, I guess I want to do it. And never happened.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So take that first step.

**AJ Harper:** I love, I love that you're doing that. What did she say?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh my God. She started tearing up.

**AJ Harper:** I bet. Oh my gosh.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So she was making, because I did tell her a year ago, once I started, I picked the date. I said, reserve these dates for a trip.

We are celebrating her birthday. We're going to experience her birthday while we're out there. And, um, I said, I'm not going to tell you what it is until a week prior, because you may want to get the proper attire packed. So I'm not going to tell you as we're getting on the plane. Um, and I told her in front of some friends, and she just started crying.

**AJ Harper:** Oh my gosh. My... 10 years.

**Mike Michalowicz:** 10 years. It ain't, it ain't cheap, but also I want it to be doable. I didn't want to, it's part of the system that we'll be teaching. I just wanted it to be something that naturally flowed and there was no urgency or rush for this, but I committed that we're going to celebrate this.

And I wanted to make it a significant date, which was her birthday.

**AJ Harper:** I love it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And also I'm going there without any worries. There's no credit cards.

# don't write *that* book!

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, you saved it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It's just, it's already been paid. Um, And we're doing it in the right way, so to speak. So, all right. Um, well, also I do want to make mention we have a writer's lab.

Yes. So a little taste experience, um, around proposal, writing, marketing, but AJ is also going to be there. So if you want to experience AJ, um, come to our writer's lab. This is a two-day event we're hosting virtually. Um, so you can email us at hello at DWTB podcast.com in the subject line, write Writer's lab.

And we'll share some strategies with you to get started on that proposal. Get that book moving along, but my God, go to [ajharper.com](http://ajharper.com) right now, do that sign up. Uh, and I'm getting out to Madeline Island myself. Is it going to be during one of these retreats that Erin lined me up? (No.) Okay. I can't wait to come out there.

But I'm gonna be writing out there. Well,

**AJ Harper:** we're gonna have our own retreat out there.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, it's just a one-on-one retreat. It's a mega awesome retreat. Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** And I'm not making you stay at a lodge. You can stay in the house.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, because you have a guest. I actually

**AJ Harper:** also have a, um, you could stay over the garage or you can stay in the house.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Whatever you prefer. It'll be your choice. Okay. I'll probably want to stay in each room because like I can just

**AJ Harper:** flip around. Oh yeah,

**Mike Michalowicz:** exactly. One night I'll camp out on the property. You know

**AJ Harper:** what you might like is there's going to be a day bed on that beautiful porch.

**Mike Michalowicz:** If the weather's appropriate. That's why I love that. I love that. Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** Sleep, porch sleeping.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** I love porch sleeping. New Jersey is difficult with the mosquitoes. How's it out there?

**AJ Harper:** It's also difficult, but that's why it's screened in.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Good, I'm in. All right, my friends, if you want to get more materials, uh, and join our email list, go to [dwtvpodcast.com](http://dwtvpodcast.com). Oh, hey, do me a favor, too.

Would you please subscribe to our podcast and give us a rating and review, whatever you feel is appropriate. The reason, on a star rating, the reason I ask is it's the greatest way to spread the word for our show, and I know it's an inconvenience for you. But it's of great service to me and AJ. So if this show is serving you, we'd just be honored.

If you took the time to do that, because it does serve us, go to [ajharper.com](http://ajharper.com) sign up for a retreat, let's see how Madeline Island let's do this for real face to face and any comments, questions, emails at [hello@dwtb.com](mailto:hello@dwtb.com). And you can. Put Writer's Lab in the subject line and we'll make sure that you get registered and signed up for that.

Alright, thanks for joining us today. As a constant reminder, don't write that book. Write the greatest book you possibly can.