

# don't write *that* book!

## Episode 50:

### “You Need an Author Community”

**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. All right, so, I, oh my god, I hit record.

So, we're talking off air about last names, and I did not know this.

**AJ Harper:** Yes.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Your birth given name is not Harper.

**AJ Harper:** No.

**Mike Michalowicz:** What is it?

**AJ Harper:** Muggli

**Mike Michalowicz:** Muggli How do you spell that?

**AJ Harper:** M U G G L I. On my birth certificate, it's my father's last name.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And then you decided. At age 19. I'm not going by that name.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah,

**Mike Michalowicz:** And it was because people just rhymed it with ugly or ...?

**AJ Harper:** There were a lot of reasons at the time I just felt like I knew I was in a writing career and I thought and my name is Anjanette. And I thought Anjanette Muggli? No.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Doesn't work.

**AJ Harper:** I'm not doing it.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** I think good move.

**AJ Harper:** I mean, I feel bad to this day for my dad, you know, and by the way, Harper's my mom's maiden name. I didn't pull it out of thin air.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay.

**AJ Harper:** I've always been a Harper and a Muggli I just formally changed it to Harper.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So It's interesting, did children call you ugly, Muggli?

**AJ Harper:** Well, considering I was always the chubby kid, this was not a good name for me.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, double.

**AJ Harper:** And it was the 80s.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I was McCowshits. That was mine.

**AJ Harper:** Listen.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Like, every name gets bastardized.

**AJ Harper:** It does.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Cow shits. My son and his fraternity was cow shits.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, I mean, it's generational. Yeah, I was 19 years old, and I marched right into the Hennepin County Government Center in Minneapolis and changed it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Did I tell you my father invited me to change my last name?

**AJ Harper:** No.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh. So, when I was becoming a man, 18 years old, at the Michalowicz house, my father came to me and said, uh, you may want to change your last name. And I said, is it associated with something bad? He goes, no, no one can pronounce it. He goes, it's been, it's been a burden in his career.

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Now, This is pre internet, pre everything. But he goes, people can't pronounce it. They don't know how to spell it. They think you are not of, they don't think you're, um, an American. They, they think you're Eastern European, um, and therefore you're going to, you're not going to understand American culture and so forth.

**AJ Harper:** Oh, that's interesting because in, you, you're a Jersey kid. In Minnesota that would not be the case. Oh, that's so interesting because it's primarily Scandinavian and German ancestry there, although that's changed now, but... When I grew up, nobody would have batted an eye at that.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Here, more Western European.

So, Italian, German. Um, but German would be like, uh, Han, or something like that. A W I C Z, Wicz. Very difficult to pronounce. It's Wicks. Um, yeah. The Ukrainian or Polish depends on the time of the century of what territory where we came from Lviv. So it was Mihalovich or Mihalovich Is the proper pronunciation?

But here we pronounce McCallowitz. My cousins pronounce it Mike Hallowitz And then there's another guy I met in New Jersey who pronounces it Mike Lowitz.

**AJ Harper:** I mean every look I mean the Mugglis first of all, there's a lot of them. Catholic.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It does sound like a Harry Potter...

**AJ Harper:** It does now.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** It was not cool when I was, you know, kudos to my dad.

Like he's only ever been nice about it. I always feel bad. Um, but they were the moo-cles in Swiss

**Mike Michalowicz:** A little better,

**AJ Harper:** But no one's gonna say that here.

**Mike Michalowicz:** No, no one's gonna say that. I remember, remember that show? Um, can camera. Of course you do. Yeah. I, I don't know if it was that one or something, but they went through the phone book seeing if.

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The most peculiar names and then they call these people and I don't know why I remember this distinctly this is like from the 70s. Maybe because I thought it was so funny. Belcher was the last name.

**AJ Harper:** Of course, I mean, you're just, uh, you're just a doofus prankster. That's why you loved it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** No, yeah, because I am, I am.

Belcher, and their first name, the guy was not, he married Ima. I. M. A. I swear to God, and they called and confirmed there's an I. M. A. Belcher.

**AJ Harper:** Of course, you remember this from what, 1974?

**Mike Michalowicz:** I am a man child, A. J., a man child.

**AJ Harper:** But you know, I don't go by Anjanette. What do you mean? I go by AJ.

**Mike Michalowicz:** You're commonly, but your proper name's Anjanette.

**AJ Harper:** Yes.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I call you Anjanette occasionally, but A. J.

**AJ Harper:** I, I always call myself Anjanette when I say, Ugh, Anjanette.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And Annie, and Annie sometimes.

**AJ Harper:** Well Annie is what was my nickname growing up because I could not spell my name.

**Mike Michalowicz:** You couldn't spell your own name?

**AJ Harper:** Well, when I was first learning to talk and write things, it's nine letters, man.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Anjanette, yeah, three syllables.

**AJ Harper:** It's nine letters long.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

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**AJ Harper:** And, um, but the reason I became AJ in business is because when I was starting as a freelance writer, I, uh, could get the jobs because nobody knew I was a woman.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, that's so interesting. I have A. J. Jacobs, famous author, uh, he just finished, I finished reading his book, *The Year I Lived Constitutionally*, great book, male.

**AJ Harper:** If you heard AJ, did you think I was a man or a woman when you, when you, because you actually first hired me off eLance for a little test job when you were trying to find a ghost.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Correct. I don't recall and I wonder if it influenced me. I don't...

**AJ Harper:** For you, I don't think so. I, I don't see you that way at all, but I did have a lot of experiences with people who didn't think someone with the name, I, my name sounds like a romance author.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It does. You know, it does. And you know, the Harper, I wonder if that subconsciously was favorable because I think Harper Collins and I still do occasionally, I see your last name. Um, and I think Harper Collins by default.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. No relation.

**Mike Michalowicz:** No relation. Well, maybe, but maybe back in the chain, you know

**AJ Harper:** Maybe they were 2,000 years ago.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Originally it was Muggly and Collins. I don't know.

**AJ Harper:** But now you know. Now you know. I was, uh, yes, Muggly was my last name.

**Mike Michalowicz:** We're going to talk today about you need an author community. And to me, this is likely the most important thing, um, that an author can do, not just for exposure a book, but for the support network, um, for the shoulders to cry on.

I'm joined by my co-host AJ. Muggli, AJ Harper.

**AJ Harper:** AJ Harper.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Anjanette Harper, Annie Harper. You go by, you're mystical, like, you're a combination of names. Um, and, um, What I love is your candidness about your story your personal stories So I know about Widjiwagon or whatever would

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**AJ Harper:** Widjiwagan.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Widjiwagan. I know this, I know that. It's know a lot of your history Didn't you do phone support a customer service at one point? Or phone support?

**AJ Harper:** No, I was a receptionist. (Receptionist.) That also happened to answer a crisis line.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay, that's it, the crisis line.

**AJ Harper:** Yes, where you never knew if someone was just calling to inquire about an appointment or in a mental health crisis.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, okay. You said, yeah, that's the story that I was getting to. And you just have this diverse background, but you're also very candid about it in support of any work we're doing together. Just a fun banter.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Um, I think that's remarkable. I think some people really, yeah. Yeah. Cause I think some people just hold back their stories cause I'm embarrassed by that or it doesn't, it's not a service or I don't want to go into like, I don't know.

I think that's pretty remarkable. I don't think everyone shares their Muggli. I changed my name and is candid about it. I think some people build up, Artificial.

**AJ Harper:** Like a mystique?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, a mystique or just, or they'll spin the story just because they don't want to share the real reason. Oh, you know, uh, I had to change my name. It was, it was a legal requirement or due to a wedding.

**AJ Harper:** I mean, you'd have to go deep to even know that story. I'm 50, you know?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** My high school friends, my childhood friends know. My family knows. It's not a big deal. It's not like I was, you know.

**Mike Michalowicz:** But you openly share stories. You've talked about, um, I'm not even going to go into it now, but just, you can't really share stories in service of our relationship or of the book. You're just very open about stuff like that.

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**AJ Harper:** Yeah, I am. I tell, sometimes I'll tell it even when I'm working with my students just to help them through something.

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

**AJ Harper:** I think that's the power of story. I think that's part of what it's for. I mean, if you look at how it's been handed down from, in different cultures and used as medicine and, and used as inspiration and used as a form of guidance and, and, and used to, um, start, um, movements and revolutions, and... I mean, story is the thing. It's how we connect.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Underline the word connect. John Jantz, I want to give proper attribution, I believe is the inventor or the creator of the “no like and trust” concept that we buy. And I was, he was presenting recently, and I was talking to him and I don't know if it was him or who added this aha, but what facilitates “no like and trust” is connection, meaning relatability.

If I hear in your story a fraction of my story, a component of it, there's a connection and that is the foundation between no like, for no like and trust.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. And you do the same thing. You're, you are happy to share a story, and you don't care if it puts you in a, makes you look like a doofus.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. Um, you. You will not spin it. You don't spin.

**Mike Michalowicz:** No. You know what, if anything, I go more, I lean into the doofus, like. Because I find humor in that every time.

**AJ Harper:** Yes. But that's the ultimate form of connection, by the way, is when you share something that doesn't show you in a good light. Um, that's kind of low stakes.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Yeah. That's the way to do it.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. Like you're like, I still hear from people who say that episode where you talk about being in the airport and sleeping in the back of the truck and worried people would think you were a terrorist.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Yeah. Or that I was actually human trafficking myself. That was,

**AJ Harper:** It's, um, people still say that they, you know, f k them, sorry, peed themselves, well,

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**Mike Michalowicz:** Bleep.

Now it's too late. Bleep. Yeah, we want to be careful about saying certain words because we don't want to, uh,

**AJ Harper:** Bleep me out.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Catch, well, we, I found out once that young children listen to our show. Um. Really? Yeah, yeah. Like, you know, mom or dad are driving the kids to work saying, hey, let's listen to this.

**AJ Harper:** We're pretty good.

**Mike Michalowicz:** We're no, we're very good. We're very good. Um, so we don't want to say inappropriate things, but, uh, let's get into this author community. Yeah, I'll start off the story. I was at Don Miller's place. This is an event I facilitated. I facilitate and have been doing now since pre COVID. What I decided is I want to be in a room.

It wasn't a scratch on marks. Like I want to, I want to be in a club that wouldn't invite someone like me. Something to that effect. He said, I want to be in a room where I wouldn't necessarily be invited because I want to be.

**AJ Harper:** He said the opposite. He wouldn't, he wouldn't go to a place that would invite him.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay. So he re the reverse. I want to be in a community that I can't get into and How do you get into that group? And I decided, Oh, if you put together the group, you can get into that room. And so I've identified a group of authors who are achieving different facets of impact or success that is aspirational for me.

And I built this list and there's probably a hundred people on this list. And so I'm gonna start building this group. What I did, this is again, pre COVID. I called Don Miller because we had a relationship at that time. Nothing formal, not like we're best buddies, but I called him up and said, Hey, I'm thinking about doing this if I can get, and I named three other people on the list in the room, would you want to be in the room with them? So what the angle was, I wasn't saying, Hey Don, you want to hang out with me? Cause I don't know how compelling that would be, but do you want to hang out with, and the pick I picked was James Clear.

He's like, yeah, yeah. You know what? I never met him. He had written this book *Atomic Habits*. It was taking off now. It's, you know, it's untouchable, but it was taking off. I love that. And it was all guys at the time. Okay. We've expanded beyond that, gratefully. But then it was like, oh, uh, Ryan Holiday was another one that came up in the list.



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And Don's like, yeah, I'd love to hang out with those two guys. I don't know them well enough. So I called James Clear and said, Hey, James, uh, Don Miller would love to hang out with you. And, uh, would you want to hang out with him and Ryan Holiday, you know, for a day at Don's place, at Don's facility. And James was like, yeah, I'm in.

Now, now the cascade is set, right? So I call Ryan, and it continues. This guy John Gordon, again, introduced to Chris Gallibeau. Oh, I love. Um, John Rulon, who, I just want to put a little important and sad asterisk here, he passed away.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, we talked about it on the podcast.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, okay. Did we did it already?

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. Right after he passed.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Right after he passed. And John Rulon, and John became a great facilitator of this. So me, John, Uh, got this organized and this initial group of eight authors show up and the defining moment of the impact of this community happened in an elevator. I was going to Don's house. We're staying in a local hotel.

I get an elevator and another guy, you know, rushedly rushing hops in and he's going down. He looks at me, he goes, Mike. I go, yeah. He goes, John Gordon. I'm like, dude. Pleasure to meet you. John Gordon has sold, sold I think six million books. Um, he, one of his books is called, uh, Energy Bus. Another one's called The Coffee Bean.

He writes these parables of stories of inspiration, inspirational books, um, self-help, motivational. Huge impact. He's like, dude, so glad to meet you. I didn't know you're friends with Don. I said, I didn't know his friends with Don either. It's nice to meet you. And this rapport built out. And then John went on later that day to share ways that he's built his business.

Um, of how he got in with different groups and communities I'd never thought of before. And then Ryan Holiday looks at John, he goes, what are you getting for an advance? And John shared and he goes, are you kidding me? He's like, "You got to ask for this." Um, and that set this learning for me forget different to ask for your advance.

And John next year or whatever in a text chain comes back. He's like, dude, I got what you're suggesting. And now that's my new standard. It was like a five times to 10 times multiple of what he was getting his advances

**AJ Harper:** From that author community. That first little meet up.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** Yep. Guess who shows up? Dave Ramsey. We, we go hang out with him for the evening. It was just unbelievable. And it became this group. Our most recent gathering was, uh, three months ago in this, maybe August, maybe two months ago. I became of August at Don's place. 50 authors show up, um, it happened again. What we're going around the room. I said, everyone just quick introductions and I point this guy, Adam Wallace.

And Adam's like, yeah, I've sold 10 million books and people are like, Oh, that's pretty impressive. He goes, you know, my most popular book is how to catch a unicorn or how to catch a leprechaun. And one of the authors screams, he goes, Holy beep, you're him. My kids idolize you. And he then went up and taught a course on how to become an artist of a children's book.

It was just such so insightful that anyone can. He just gave a perspective. What we've done is build this now, this extraordinary community of support and engagement and insights and education. And it all started out with this vision of I want to be in a group that I wouldn't necessarily get invited to.

So I'm going to facilitate it.

**AJ Harper:** Create it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. So why don't we talk about how to build it, how to leverage it, how it works, all the house.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. Start with yours.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay. So I started mine. Um, the inspiration for this is I've shared this on many episodes, but it's worth repeating. I emphatically believe, but not all authors do that if you and I are in a complementary space in books, we both write books on systemization, that if I promote your book, that, and readers fall in love with it, they fall in love with not just a book, but the idea of, in this case, systemization, and therefore are inspired to read more books, which can only come back over time to support me in selling more books.

I remember being acutely aware of this, once we did a promotion to our list of Michael Gerber's book, which is kind of a systemization. The E Myth. Yep, E Myth Revisited. I turned around and I said, this is such a good book, you must read this. And, the next morning, woke up and noticed that pumpkin plan, whatever it was, had sold dramatically more and that people were buying the books in parallel because you saw the frequently bought together box of Michael Gerber's book.

And I became aware that when you are encouraging people to get other people's books, inspires them to investigate more on that subject. It just came back to me immediately. So I

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said, if I surround myself with authors that I know and believe in and I will actively promote selfishly, I'm going to get wins out of that.

The second thing is education. Like they know things I don't know and I can share things with them that they don't know we can collaborate on elevating each other So this this knowledge Gets amplified very rapidly There's You were experimenting with ideas marketing books. They're experimenting with ideas of marketing books.

They're playing with ideas of writing books We're experimenting, and we can just exchange this stuff So another quick story This guy, it gets introduced to me, his name is Joseph Wynn. Joseph Wynn is—

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, you mentioned him on the podcast before.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay. Yeah, he looked at, uh, Pen With Purpose. We interviewed him before. And we decided, collectively, it was not a fit. He's working with, uh, James Clear, his new company. What's it called? It's a publishing arm.

**AJ Harper:** Same print? Imprint?

**Mike Michalowicz:** No, no. It's his own publishing company. Oh. Authors First, or something.

**AJ Harper:** Smart of him to do that.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Genius. Joseph Wynn

**AJ Harper:** Traditional or hybrid? Hybrid.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Traditional? None of the above. Oh. It's tri bred. Like, which is traditional and hybrid blend together, tri bred, I'm making this term up. What the heck is that? I don't know. I'm making it up because Joseph Wynn went in and he only details so much, he's like, a lot of this is confidential.

**AJ Harper:** Oh.

**Mike Michalowicz:** But effectively, my understanding is they want self-pubbed authors that are starting to hit their mark, uh, starting to hit their stride, I mean, and they, they put fuel behind it.

And they bring it into their publishing model. So they're looking for people that are on this trajectory. On the cusp. And they put the boiler on it.

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**AJ Harper:** Rocket fuel.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Rocket fuel.

**AJ Harper:** Ok.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Joseph has sold 700,000 books. Crazy. So good. And it's a 75-page book. Um, He said, Joe, this guy was so nice and so funny, he goes, at the end, this is true, he summarizes his book and he goes, why did I summarize a 75-page book? The book is a summary itself. Totally. He's adorable, he's genius, and now I have a rapport with him. I feel a level of comfort where, I can reach out to him and say, Joseph, I have questions. Could you support me? Can you, can you answer this? I feel comfortable. We can say, Joseph would love to have you as a guest on a podcast or something like that, which actually he may be, if we ever have a guest, he may be our guy. He's that brilliant. Um, so it's built this network of, of expertise and knowledge and rapport.

**AJ Harper:** I need to interrupt you. Yeah. You know how you're always saying you want to do a live podcast. Don't write that book podcast. That's how you do the live podcast. So instead of doing a guest here, just the two, you know, when we're in studio Yeah.

We'll only do it. We'll do a live podcast with guests.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Would that be so badass?

**AJ Harper:** We should do that.

**Mike Michalowicz:** How should we try something we guys, because I wanna do it in a theater. In old theater.

**AJ Harper:** Let's do it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I want a hundred to 200 people there. Um, and I want. The guests just coming up like three guests in a row

**AJ Harper:** So leverage your author community.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I would totally do that

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, I mean that that's how to do a live event is to bring those people in versus not doing that on the regular show

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yes.

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**AJ Harper:** Yeah,

**Mike Michalowicz:** I love that and Joseph Wynn would be a dream guest and I'll ask him Here's my ask for our listener emails right now at DWTB, you know, hello at DWTB podcast.

com. We need like 500 people saying I'm interested because that means 200 people will actually show up. So tell us, say, I want to go to that. And if we get hundreds of people, we got something yet. If it's only a handful. Okay.

**AJ Harper:** But not at that theater. That's across the street over there.

**Mike Michalowicz:** No, I know.

**AJ Harper:** We'll find a spot.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, we'll find a spot. Um, yeah. Okay, so that's one form of community. There's another one that's really good. It's called right, uh, Write and Rant, uh, Joe, my gosh, Mitch Joel Mitchell. Mitch Joel is the facilitator of it. It's on Facebook. It is a powerful platform because people are sharing some extraordinary insights.

Mitch Joel as a curator, he'll find an article and say, you got to rediscover his article when, um, Penguin acquired some companies. The first way I found out was through this community. When people say my speaking gigs have dropped off the cliff. Is anyone else experiencing that? And you see other people say, yes, me too.

Me too. I was like, Oh, something's going on here. Well, welcome COVID. It was just really interesting to get insights and people were candid on that. So that's Write and Rant.

**AJ Harper:** Can I back you up though? What's your agenda when you do your event, when you do your gathering?

**Mike Michalowicz:** The most recent one was our best one. The actual agenda like my desire or the actual script for the..?

**AJ Harper:** you know, just how do you guys structure the time?

**Mike Michalowicz:** So how I'll give you the blow by blow. So we kicked it off with social activities Don has a frisbee golf course. So we ran, played frisbee, and it's hysterical when Michael Bungay Stanier is throwing it and then I'm just trying to think of some people there.

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Ryan Dice was there. Uh, uh, Pat Flynn, Dorie Clark. It's just, it's fine. It's gathering people. Um, and then, uh, yeah, whatever. So that was amazing. So we kicked off with that activity. Optional. Um, Tiffany Aliche, um, Amy Porterfield, uh, there's, there's so many other folks decide not to do it and they're hanging back. It's social time.

People are lapping it up because they don't know each other that well. Jeff Walker was there and he's hanging out. Then in comes Jay, seven-foot tall papasan who wrote *The One Thing*, Um, who is This wildly intellectual, super friendly guy, um, with a touch of introversion. He's like the perfect author, and just, you, to know him is to love him, and he's so wickedly smart.

And he's like, I'll tell you why James Clear has sold so many books. And James Clear is listening and going, how did I sell so many books? It's just fascinating.

**AJ Harper:** What did he say?

**Mike Michalowicz:** He goes, COVID was his best ally. He goes, there was a revelation in self-improvement because we went into this deprived state of over drinking and over consuming as a society during COVID.

Uh, and it, not his term, debauchery, but we went into this kind of state and he goes, then there was this inspiration to turn it around. And that's when James' book was, it was already in the market and just it rode the COVID rebound was his core argument. And he showed his correlations like that's a really interesting insight.

On top of it, he wrote an excellent book. ing

**AJ Harper:** I mean, I was going to say, there's some other factors.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It's an excellent, excellent, well planned book.

**AJ Harper:** But that does speak to the lighting in a bottle factor. The luck factor, yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Um, so social activity, then we kind of did like these TED-like presentations.

What's the profound concept that you have or idea that can market more books, that can prepare a better book, that can interview? So we picked all the subjects. But they gave me the liberty to dynamically adjust speakers. So I did Seth, Seth. Um, Oh my God, I can't remember his name. Yeah, I'll come back to me.

His last name is Miles and I cannot remember his first name. I cannot believe it. I'll, I'll, he's in my contacts. I'll pull him up in a minute. He wrote a book called *Blowback* so you can pull

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up his name real quick. He wrote a book called *Blowback* and it's about, um, the Donald Trump administration and he was in the cabinet or in the administrative department and some stuff he saw.

And so he took a risk out there originally writing a book under anonymous and decided if I'm going to stand about behind what I saw, Miles,

**AJ Harper:** Miles Taylor,

**Mike Michalowicz:** Taylor. That's it. Yep. It was coming back to me. It was, yeah, his first name was Miles. Miles Taylor.

**AJ Harper:** He was a whistleblower.

**Mike Michalowicz:** He's a whistleblower. He had over 5000 death threats. He was assaulted one time. Um, there was active attempt to bring harm to him on other occasions. And after hearing a story separately, uh, and always authors talking about strategies to get more and more exposure, I said, I want you to hear the counterpoint. So I pulled Miles aside and said, Miles, would you do a presentation on the risk of being known. And he went up there and said his story. And I told people I was, I was taking, took a big risk. I said, you're about to hear the most important speech you've heard. Not just now, but in your life, because this may save your life. And so they're expecting like how to market books.

And he comes up and says, here's how people may come to harm you and what happened to him. And he gave us in straight blow by blow strategies, do this, change that, modify this.

**AJ Harper:** Oh, wow.

**Mike Michalowicz:** He shared one story. He was, um, after writing this book, he'd go to the safe house. I mean, that's how absurd humanity is. He didn't threaten anyone. He's shared. what he experienced.

**AJ Harper:** Right.

**Mike Michalowicz:** His truth. And I said, believe whatever your political position is or not. And I think our his and mine are not the same. I said, this is the most patriotic person I know because he spoke his truth and he made us aware of it. That takes the ultimate courage knowing. the blowback he would receive from writing this book.

**AJ Harper:** So wait, did he give actual strategies for how to manage that?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

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**AJ Harper:** Is that something that you'd be willing to share at some point? Because I have to tell you, I have students, so a lot of my students in my author community are dealing with, um, sensitive political topics, other types of things.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, we should dedicate an episode to this.

**AJ Harper:** We need to do it because they're nervous to put their book out. Rightfully so. For the trolls that are going to be attacking them. Yeah. And they're change agents, and they need to get the book out.

**Mike Michalowicz:** You have to.

**AJ Harper:** I really wanna, I would love to, if you can document what he said, and we can talk through it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I got it all. And I've been using it.

**AJ Harper:** Okay. And then check to see if he's cool with it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** Because I would love to do a whole episode on that because I see people, um, holding themselves back because they're really afraid.

**Mike Michalowicz:** They're rightfully afraid.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, of course. But I know there are ways to manage it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** There's ways to manage it. And so I've been enact-acting upon some of this stuff. Um, it was transformative. Uh, yeah. Standing ovation type of stuff and people just showering him with appreciation. And then he's like, I got to go. My wife is giving birth in about three weeks. So next morning he's like, I'm out of here. And people are so grateful.

**AJ Harper:** So then you, how many days is the event

**Mike Michalowicz:** today? We did a two-day event. Uh, Don Miller's remarkable. Um, he said, I'll, I'll provide the facility because I don't want to travel and he goes, and I'll cover the food cause I don't want to travel.

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

**Mike Michalowicz:** Um, yeah. So that was that the...



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**AJ Harper:** what's, what's a big thing that you learned?

**Mike Michalowicz:** The there's, these authors are wildly smart and capable. And I don't know if anyone is necessarily better in what they've produced. Some people are just luckier, you know? Profit First, I don't know if it's a better book than any of our other work, including *All In*, but it's been luckier.

**AJ Harper:** Well, there are factors that, you know, there's a whole business that supports it.

There's a lot of stuff. There's a lot of reasons.

**Mike Michalowicz:** There's tons of stuff. But some of the stuff in that room was like, that is so remarkable. So Michael Bungay Stanier is, is my favorite example. He's written quite a few books,

**AJ Harper:** Most famous for *The Coaching Habit*.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And. I maybe shared on this podcast, some other episode.

I asked him, this is not this year. It was a prior year. I said, dude, what's the formula for, for writing a book like that and producing a book? He's like, if I knew I would have done it again. He goes, people are discounting luck, but luck won't happen unless you keep on putting your best book out there. I just keep on bringing the best book out there.

But he did say one thing. And this is something you've said, too. *The Coaching Habit*, because I've lived that for 15, 20 years. He goes, I produce content. I codify content I already knew. He goes, my other books I'm also curating. And he goes, there's something that's a little bit different because I didn't live this stuff.

I can't speak to it the same way. (Yeah.) That was an interesting differentiator. (Yeah.) So it's a two day event. Authors come up and speak lots of networking. We ended up with a pool party. Um, people just enjoying each other.

**AJ Harper:** Are you telling me that a bunch of these authors who've sold millions of books were in the pool?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, my God. I'm sitting there with Todd Herman, floating, and then I get dunked by Joey Coleman.

**AJ Harper:** Okay.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And someone cannonballs me.

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**AJ Harper:** Is this one of those parties where you can't have your cell phone?

**Mike Michalowicz:** No, you totally can't.

**AJ Harper:** Just joking.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Because no one drinks there. I don't even think, maybe there was alcohol, I don't know. I selectively drink when I'm with my wife. That's it. Um, But then Don, and then all of a sudden this food truck shows up like, I'm like, what's this? He's like dinner and it is a food truck. Uh, and one last thing. We did a cold plunge together. If it was optional day two. So Don has this thing that is like a Wim Hof. Have you heard of this guy? This cold punch. Okay, basically you sit in ice, ice bathtub, but Don's got this like sophisticated one. So it's, it's, it's, there's no ice in there, but it's, there basically could be. So it's like, have you ever done one? I said, no, not this. 12 people showed up. Don, uh, no one has bathing suits, by the way, but Don, he's got a changing room with like 50 bathing suits.

They're all the same one of all different sizes, all washed. Facts

**AJ Harper:** you didn't know about Don Miller.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Yeah. .

**AJ Harper:** He's a bathing suit collector.

**Mike Michalowicz:** He's got a little, got a penchant for bathing suits, for men's bathing suits.

**AJ Harper:** He's just ready.

**Mike Michalowicz:** He's ready. So I say, yeah, go back there, throw on, pick your suit of your size, throw it on. And then you're sitting in this, this, um, bathtub for three, three minutes and it is freezing. The first 30 seconds is willpower and the next two minutes, and a half is you just keep it.

**AJ Harper:** You do realize who you're talking to, right?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Well, you take ice baths.

**AJ Harper:** I have jumped in a whole frozen lake.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, this is Wiggy, Wiggy Wagon.

**AJ Harper:** Widgiwagan. But also Lake Superior is always freezing.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** And you jump in there?

**AJ Harper:** Yes. Swimming in. Swimming in.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Madeline Island. Does it, do you, would you jump in the water there? (Yeah.) I am in with you.

**AJ Harper:** My wife has swam in that lake when there's ice chunks in it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I'm going in with you guys. If you guys are up for it, I'll go myself. I don't care if you get a sauna at your house, AJ...

**AJ Harper:** Okay.

**Mike Michalowicz:** My God.

**AJ Harper:** You're just going to be there.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** You're just going to show up. I'm just going to show up every day. Hey, I was in the neighborhood, 2,000 miles away from my house.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And this also happened at Don Miller's place. I went back a few days later and I'm talking with Don. This dude comes out of the steps and he's like, I cannot remember his name. He's a doctor, famous author, sold 3 million bucks, whatever. He's like, Oh, that's, I can't believe I can't remember his name. That's so and so. I'm like, Oh, nice to meet you. It's like, yeah, I just work in here. I was passing through town, so I'm working here for a few days. Like you just show up at Don's house if you know Don, uh, and your buddies. And he's like,

**AJ Harper:** he's just like a hot, like a hostel for authors?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Hostel for authors.

**AJ Harper:** Bestselling author. Yeah. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. So it was kind of funny.

**AJ Harper:** So that's the event. Okay. So that's the event. And then throughout the year, are there any other connections or is it primarily around that?

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**Mike Michalowicz:** We have a shared WhatsApp. Okay. Uh, that's the connection. We may do. I may facilitate another call. Here's the take home lesson. People is a generalization like to participate and don't like to facilitate.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** There is a huge opportunity for someone listening in. To connect any community by just facilitating.

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

**Mike Michalowicz:** And you'll be blown away by the people you can attract if you're willing to put in the facilitation effort.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, because what you're talking about are people who do that in their own lives. They do not want to be in charge. They want to attend an event.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** They don't want to necessarily have to lead it. They don't want to have to figure out anything for it. They want to play. They want to come and be with everybody else and not have to be the leader in charge.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And then you become the central character. Like everyone there, I'm the one who opens the event. I'm the one who closed the event. I'm the one who's moderating in between.

Everyone knows me. And everyone at the end said, we want to thank two people, Don for hosting, Mike for facilitating. Yeah. Well, it's contribution. I feel I'm in a much stronger position. I can go to some of those folks when the time is right and say, Hey, I have a opportunity with my new book. Would you be willing to support it?

Does it compliment you? And it just feels a much more natural conversation. And they can decline by betcha. I get a lot more support because of how I've contributed to their lives.

**AJ Harper:** And we talked about that in a previous episode about author collaboration, but I think this is more about community. And I think where people get confused, is they think, Oh yeah, I should connect with other authors so we can help each other with joint venture this, which is what we used to say, JV opportunities, or they're going to do the lit, publish to their email list and I'll do it for them when their book comes out. But that's not what I'm, that's not why we started this episode.

**Mike Michalowicz:** This is about building a community.

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**AJ Harper:** It's not about what can we do for each other per se, but more about we're all in this space together. And it doesn't have to look like Frisbee and 50 swimsuits and a food truck with people who've sold 10 million books.

You're having a different kind of experience, but you can start it from the ground up with whomever. And I, I would argue. You know, you have your metrics for who can join this, but I would also say, like, you don't need to have metrics that are based on sales. You can have metrics that are based on mission.

Um, you know, I, I think there's, um, you can attract a lot of people with mission. I think it's important to have a unifying factor with the group, you know,

**Mike Michalowicz:** 100 percent agree. And what's also happening maybe right now is two of those authors from that event. are connecting, talking as we speak about whatever they may reference the event.

There's a, they may be talking about something independent of me, but I'm also including that conversation because the event is there. It's, it's a congregation point. Um, and I think that's powerful. That's wildly powerful. And I think it's. Far underutilized. We go, as Lone Island, too much.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, and it's just that mystique of the author that writes in their cave or their little cabin and um, toils away and then a publisher makes all their dreams come true.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** And you really need a community.

**Mike Michalowicz:** But let's talk a little bit about your community. You have a great one.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, I do. I'm really super proud of it. I just had a, um, an author who's got their dream publisher, traditionally published.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Who's that? May I ask who that the publisher is or author or either or both?

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, I'm actually, I don't want to read her note to me because I don't, I didn't ask permission, but hang on. Let me just quickly, we do this, we do this on this show. This is how live it is. We just look it up because we get an idea. Um, Okay, so I'm super proud. Ida Rose Flores is published by, uh, New Harbinger.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Nice.

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**AJ Harper:** Uh, that was her dream publisher. Her book is coming out in January, *The End of Education as We Know It*.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Ha ha ha.

**AJ Harper:** It's, it's a game changer and sent me an, uh, the most lovely email about how if it weren't for, I won't read it because it's, I should ask permission first, but that the, the book wouldn't exist without the community I created.

I hear that all the time. Now I'm really, I think it would, I would argue that it would. But I created the community, which is part of my Top Three community, right? So you don't have to be in the workshop to be in it. You can also just join sprints and you can also join for any amount of money you want. I have a pay what you can offer.

That's just my value system. Um, but in the Top Three universe, my goal there was creating a home. It's so hard to navigate the publishing industry, figure out how to write your book, learn how to write it while you're doing it, try and deal with your inner critic trolls, try and figure out how to market it, learn a new language, which is publishing.

It's just too much. It's just too much. And this is why most people cut and run. And I don't just want authors to stay in it to finish the book. I want authors to stay in it to sell the book for years and years and make the change happen. So I created a community. And one of the ways that, uh, I, I make it available to people is through the sprints.

So on the surface it's, hey, come and write, but really it's, hey, this is your community. So you're showing up, um, Coming to sprints, but you can ask questions. You can share concerns. Everybody rallies, uh, and supports each other. In a deeper level within my workshop community, that is serious community. Those are people who've been through class and, uh, the sort of gauntlet that I run, but they're committed to excellence and writing a truly remarkable book that changes lives.

And the way I've structured it with the having regular touchstones. So there's the sprint community that meets several times a day. Okay.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And you, do you facilitate those still yourself?

**AJ Harper:** Laura Stone facilitates Monday through Thursday, and I facilitate on Fridays.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So quick question about community. If you're not facilitating it and someone else is, does that still sustain the community in the way you want?

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**AJ Harper:** Yes, because Laura Stone is completely in alignment and she knows what my value system is and it's, she's completely Team AJ on that. So she knows and she's done her own magic with it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yes.

**AJ Harper:** I mean, I'm, I'm, you know, she's taken it to another level with her own genius, but it's all rooted in this one core philosophy I have, which is for the community, which is we leave the porch light on for your book.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I love it

**AJ Harper:** Because books take a long time. So like we'll leave the light on, you know, coming home late. It's all right. Um, or even if it's been years. So what's happened is more books get done. More people do remarkable things. They also work with each other outside of us. We don't really facilitate it. We encourage them.

But so many authors have a home. It's just you need to have a sense of community to pull you through when you're confused or you're disappointed or something takes too long, or you don't have answers. Publishing is so confusing. So you can create this on your own. I think key elements for me is there's a right... For us it's about having a daily and weekly touchstone. You're talking about an annual event. I'm trying to keep people in it. That's part of why I created the community. I want them to finish your folks. These are like they're finishers, right? My folks are, are finishers, but they just need some support. They just need people.

Hmm. You know, so, um, so for us, it's, we have the daily sprints, Monday through Friday, and then for my, uh, workshop folks, we also have a live edit, which is probably my favorite thing ever, because it's people from all my different cohorts sharing work and I keep a very structured format for it and how people give structured feedback in a positive way. So all of that has created this sort of T3 community, Top Three Community of people who are like minded value driven, but also just there to give unfaltering positive support to everyone.

And you can make this yourself. You don't need to do it as elaborate as I have it. You know, no, you don't have to have multiple sprints a day. It's just what I've created to try and make sure people get what they need, but you can create your own sprint community, can just set up a Zoom and regularly invite people and facilitate it.

Um, you can. You can set up a Facebook page and just start grooving in that way. Um, but I think you, people need to have, people need to have a home. They need to have a creative home.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. People need a home. They need a home. Do sub communities come out of it? Do spinoffs come out? Do you care? Do you try to control that?

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**AJ Harper:** I don't control any of it. I don't, I don't know. I don't control any of it. I think what happens is people find ways to help each other. It's not really sub communities, but there's groups of friends that do all sorts of things like Khristina Paider and who wrote *The Hollywood Approach*, Julie Ellis wrote *Big Gorgeous Goals*. Amanda Crowell wrote *Great Work*.

They're all besties You know I didn't facilitate it. I'm not trying to control it. They do, um, some different webinars and things together. I love that. Then within my own workshop, I've got people who do panel discussions together, help each other in a lot of different ways, their launches, different things like that.

**Mike Michalowicz:** You know, I, at our event, Alan Dibb, who I've known for years, first time I spent time with him and just hung out with him. There's interesting to me, uh, uh, does a different relationship comes about when there's face to face time?

**AJ Harper:** Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Um, yours are face-to-face?

**AJ Harper:** Face-to-face, but they're on zoom.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh wait, but on zoom, do you ever do live in person?

**AJ Harper:** Um, well, I mean, no, not as, not as a community. Maybe we will now, you know, coming out of COVID it's, it's harder to navigate.

**Mike Michalowicz:** For sure.

**AJ Harper:** Maybe we will. I'm more and more interested in cultivating community because it's, um, for me, I see so much misinformation and disinformation. When your group is highly educated about publishing, my group is not.

I need them to come to a place where it's a trusted source, that's not trying to upsell them something, that's not trying to feed them a line, that's going to be realistic and kind. And that's my group. So that means my community are people who can, okay, let me go see, let me go there and see if this is really something I should be doing or not.

So there's less, um, They're less likely to be scammed. They're less likely to give up. I just it's just a really important to me that there's a place for them to come,

**Mike Michalowicz:** You know, it's so funny in the community. I have, um, the jibes they make at those types of folks, the upsellers and stuff. So someone's like, yeah, it took me three years. I got the book done. Someone's like, didn't write in 30 days, you know, and then, um,



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it's just busting the chops of that. So there's that awareness. Um, you know, Which also becomes like an inside joke, like when someone says you didn't write your book in 30 days, like everyone gets a laugh out of that because we know the scams that come about.

It becomes a common language maybe, uh, that instant understanding of each other's circumstances, what we hear.

**AJ Harper:** You know, when I had my publishing house and that was fiction, um, I saw what fiction authors did to build community and change their author trajectory. They really bond with people specifically that are mission-driven in the same way or they're on, have their same author goals, or maybe they're, it's genre specific and they become very dear friends and help each other at events, pitch each other, get on panel discussions together, host each other's live events, get them into places they need to be, push their work out.

Uh, it's, and, and also help them navigate all the stuff you're talking about. And those are informal communities that are formed, drastically change your experience as an author because you can say, Hey, do you guys know this agent? What do you think of this deal? I got this contract. I don't know. Does this make sense?

What do you guys think about this thing that the shakeup that happened over here? Um, is anybody going to this event? Y'all want to meet up? I saw, I see it in fiction all the time in the authors that I used to work with and how they built their careers. Again, not about collaboration so much, but about like intimate connection, you know?

Having people they can get on speed dial to help them through that rollercoaster ride that is publishing. So it doesn't have to be something formal. You can start it really small with you and just maybe one or two other authors. And it can be authors that are working toward it or already published or whatever you want.

It doesn't, you know, it doesn't have to be on the scale of Mike's deal or my deal. It just. Just get started. Just, just do it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Even just one other person to get started with.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah,

**Mike Michalowicz:** That's... true story. You know, this was Simon Sinek. My first attempt at community was me and Simon meeting at his loft in New York City.

We did it two or three times and he famously said, hey, you know, whoever hits it first support the other guy. (Mm hmm.) And he gave me the ultimate compliment, uh, through his, his endorsement, which has been so powerful because of that relationship we were building.

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Um, he was a guy who did it first, just so everyone's, um, one other thing that's interesting, and I'm, I may mix up these terms.

There is uni-directional communication. That's where one person speaks to everybody, the kind of expert. There's bidirectional where it's, I speak to the community and that person can speak back to me and I can answer it. But true community comes from, um, omnidirectional where everyone can talk with everyone.

We're just a facilitator of connection. Even if it excludes us participating in that communication, we've built a community where there's this omnidirectional communication. Um, any other stuff we got?

**AJ Harper:** I mean, I think let it live, you know, create it for your own reasons, but then also let it live. Don't be too territorial about it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Do you ever fear that someone may try to insert themselves and take it over? Is there a way to protect from that? Does it even matter? Sure.

**AJ Harper:** This stuff happens. Yeah,

**Mike Michalowicz:** Humans are humans, right?

**AJ Harper:** Humans are humans. Be who you are in all things. I mean, that's my value that I pass down to my son. I hope it actually sticks one day.

But, you know, what I try to tell him is what I try to live. I'm myself. no matter what other people do. So if somebody decides to be a jerk, that's terrible. It's disappointing. And I'm going to be who I am and not a thing to change things. You know, it's okay. It morphs. You can create another thing.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Let's, uh, let's wrap things up here. Uh, next week we're gonna talk about mapping the reader journey. Do you want to share? Tease me a little bit about what's coming.

**AJ Harper:** So, mapping the reader journey is the very first editing pass in my, um, must-read editing method. And I want to do a deeper dive into how you do that. Because what I see when I work with students is...is it's sometimes hard to wrap your head around putting the reader first in the book. Not because you don't want to, but because we're not Conditioned to think that way. And so mapping the reader journey is a simple way of once you've got a book, how do you determine if it's what the reader experience is?

And then how do you change the book? Not in significant ways, but what kind of edits do you need to do to be respectful of what it's like for your reader to read your book? Most

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people don't think about it beyond basic stuff like design or is it funny? Is it clear? But there's a lot of emotions that come up when you're writing prescriptive nonfiction or teaching memoir.

Because don't forget, that reader wants something. They really, really want something. Or they're having a really hard time or both. And so if you're bringing in content that challenges that, or helps them fix that, or wake, awakens them to new ideas that they never thought about. A lot of that is, um, emotional. A lot of that is, can be frustrating, uh, can cause conflict in them. And so, it's really thinking about what's it like to read this book if you're reading it for the first time.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So it's the framing you as the author have of the reader's journey is, well I don't want to get ahead of myself.

**AJ Harper:** No, I'll walk you through how to do it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Good, because I want to learn all about that. Um, I want to also invite people to go to Madeline Island. It's such a rare opportunity, um, to work hand in hand with you.

**AJ Harper:** Yes, it is rare.

**Mike Michalowicz:** But it's also it's removing yourself from your daily routine. Um, so to do that, they go to [ajHarper.com](http://ajHarper.com).

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, there's, you can do editing retreats with AJ and come, come hang out and work on your book and make it better on Madeline Island, which is one of the Apostle Islands in Lake Superior.

**Mike Michalowicz:** You know, and there's, there's rules that you're going to live by that are going to help you with your book. It just reminds me, I'm leaving for Canyon Ranch on Wednesday. I talked about last week, but we record these. We're recording three episodes today, so we haven't left yet. But one of the rules they emailed is phones are not permitted on premise and only in your room.

Um, but when, and when you're out actively, you're not even allowed to have your phone, which part of me goes, well, who are you to tell me what to do? But secondly, thank God you're telling me what to do because I can live by these rules. And I, I think As authors and aspiring authors, we get stuck in our routine and the protocol they're going to go through in intense is going to be a such a great service and it may be inconsistent with where you're doing now.

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It definitely is. So go to [AJHarper.com](http://AJHarper.com) and sign up. I'm telling you, it's going to be life changing. Also get AJ's book, *Write a Must-Read*. Um, I hope you enjoyed today's episode. We have a little writer's lab coming up. This is an online experience with me and Ajay about proposal writing, about marketing a book.

Ajay can give some insights into writing a book. You can go to or email us, I should say at hello at [DWTBpodcast.com](http://DWTBpodcast.com). Include writer's lab in the subject line. So we know you're interested in that and then a day love from our team. We'll give you more details also at our website. Same domain [DWTBpodcast.com](http://DWTBpodcast.com).

[DWTBpodcast.com](http://DWTBpodcast.com). You can join our email list. You don't miss a single episode, get some free materials, share with us what you want to hear. I think we got everything covered, right? AJ.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, we're good.

**Mike Michalowicz:** All right. We're good. Thanks for joining us for today. Today's episode. And in every episode, we hope you're getting tons of value.

I hope you're a binger of the show. We'd be honored to, if you could just write and review the show, it really does serve us. So if you have a second, please do that. Subscribing is the big one. And as always. Do not, do not write that book, write the greatest book you possibly can.