

# don't write *that* book!

## Ep 52:

### “Amazon Ads v. TikTok”

**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. This episode that we're just about to do, which is Amazon ads versus TikTok, or maybe in conjunction, we'll discuss that.

Um, it's one I'm really looking forward to. Now this is something we talked about literally last night. We said we gotta put this together. Um, so it's kind of a real live, as-we-go experience that's happening right now. And so that's why I'm particularly excited about it. Because I want to reel some stats that you don't even know about, um, that's happening right now that we can, we can speak to and live adjustments that's happening on Amazon as we have this experience going on.

So that's the big tease. Um, but what I hope our listeners discover is additional ways to promote your book that perhaps you're not using yet, and maybe you want to consider Amazon ads. Um, maybe you want to consider Tik TOK and I'm going to say why one's better than the other, at least for us, before we kick it off, I want to welcome my co-host, AJ Harper, and AJ is not just a friend. She's an extraordinary writer's not the right word. Author's not the right word. It, you are the authority in the space, but also a matriarchal figure. So many people have, or at least contest that they have expertise, but they're doing it as a greater than now. And what I love about you, AJ, is you embrace other authors and, and you are willing to walk the journey with them over and over and over again.

And while you yourself have written. Dozens, hundreds of books, the, the, the thousands of authors that you've put your arm over and walk with them is, is just remarkable. So thank you for doing this with me.

**AJ Harper:** Thank you, Mike. That's so nice. Um, it's funny. You say arm over their shoulder and walk with them. Did you say that?

**Mike Michalowicz:** I did?

**AJ Harper:** Arm over them? That's so funny Because that's, that's my Mike editing pass arm over the shoulder. That's right. Totally. But that's who you are. Sometimes people ask me if you're really like that. Is that really Mike? And you are, um, that is not a, we're not scheming or contriving the arm over the shoulder. Tonal editing pass is there because it's legitimately who you are and how you care about entrepreneurs.

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I think we have a lot of things that are different about us, but that those core values about how we care that for the people we serve is probably why we're good friends.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Great friends. Great friends.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** You know, I define great friends as we have the real conversations, the celebrations, the struggles, the disagreements, the agreements, uh, and every time come out of that stronger and more connected.

**AJ Harper:** Yes.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Um, and I, you know, also you think of a great, what defines a great friend? I can't think of a day. I don't think of you that I consider you that there's a thought in my head of something You shared that we've experienced together. Um, I just noticed that recently. I think I think of AJ every day.

**AJ Harper:** Well, I mean part of it is the work we do. We are in writing season after all

**Mike Michalowicz:** We work together. And particularly in writing season.

I'm so excited about this episode So I want to dig right into it, but I want to start off with a tip You because this is something we deployed, uh, maybe two months ago, and we have seen a measurable, not significant, but a measurable result. Something I learned from Allen Dibb, so I do that retreat, you know, we do it down at Don Miller's place, and we just went around the room and said, you know, tell us something you, you don't think we know.

And Alan's like, "Oh, you can have an Amazon series." I said, "I don't know what you mean." Amazon designed this originally for fiction books, but it works in nonfiction too, where you can have a series they call it a part of. So if you go to any of my author books, *Profit First* or *Get Different* or *All In*, we registered it with Amazon as a series.

So today, if you go to *Profit First*. Listed in, I call it the buying triangle. The buying triangle is where people are considering shy bias book or not. And so buying triangle is my own word. But the triangle is I look at the book cover and say, is this relevant? The book title, I look at the stars, what kind of rating does it have?

If this is like a four star or less, probably not a good book. If it's a four and a half stars or higher, probably a good book. I look at the quantity of reviews. If it has like a hundred or less, not reviewed by many people. If it has. A thousand or 2000. Wow. If it has 10, 000 or more, my God, the world's reading it.

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I look at that. Well, in that little triangle area, um, you can also get some other things that bolster your book potential. One is a bestseller flag. So in your category, if you have a consistent bestseller flag, um, it's another form of nomenclature, but it's also another kind of call out of significance. And I think it influences buyers, but there's another thing you can get in there, which is the part of series.

So when you discover if *Profit First* is the first book you discover, there's a link right in that triangle area that you click on it. It shows you all of the other books. This works for fiction or nonfiction, but you do have to have a series name. So because my big promise to our community that we serve is to simplify entrepreneurship, we call it Entrepreneurship Simplified. That's the name of our series. And so what's cool is you go there and it says *Profit First* is part of a six book series called Entrepreneurship Simplified. So I invite you to do it.

You may be asking, what are the particular steps? I don't know because I asked Andrea to take care of this and she found out how to do it. She called our publisher, but you can do it. I believe through KDP, there is a way to communicate with, with Amazon. Inevitably, there is a contact us at the bottom of the Amazon advantage or KDP page, where you can talk with someone literally on the phone, at least until recent.

Months I've been able to talk to someone or submit an email request. So, um, do that. Here is the, maybe it's anecdotal, but there is one measurable stat is I did have a reader say, Oh my God, I didn't realize you had a series. I just bought the books. So that was one reader email that came in saying that, uh, AJ, you have something to share.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, when I had my publishing company, we routinely had series, you know, we had, um, authors who had multiple books, you know, uh, in the same, um, universe, so typically sci fi and, uh, uh, fantasy, so it's just, it's just a choice, it's a field that you can choose on KDP, so you can easily go back in and correct that if you already have it, it's not that hard, you just go into your KDP account, and you add the series component,

**Mike Michalowicz:** So what we're going to do and something exciting is going on today and why I was excited to talk about this topic is we have a big hit going on in Tik Tok.

Uh, we also have done a lot with Amazon ads. So we're going to explore both, but let me tell you a little bit about what happened on Tik Tok. And I'm curious if this series serves us. Profit first, as of this, let me just refresh the page here. This is the Amazon page. The ranking and the ranking, you go to the page of the book and you scroll down, I would say half to three quarters of the way it's ranked right now, five 91.

That's the overall ranking. So what that means of the Amazon domain, all the books, they sell millions of books. This is the 591th best-selling book in the current hour. And they update this maybe every five or six hours. So it's for a period of time. That's where it's ranked in comparison to all books.

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So one way of saying is the 591th best-selling book in the world, if Amazon represented the world in this moment, that is a pretty substantial ranking. And there is a calculator, a tool you can use to see what that translates into to book sales. But we won't spend time talking about that. I want to tell you why I went to 591 as comparatively *Profit First* was, and continues to be an extraordinary seller for, for me in, in compared to many books.

In the recent months, the last six months, it's been averaging around 1500 as a ranking, which is actually off of our typical best was around 900, which is where it was consistently ranking at 1500. We've been selling maybe, uh, 1200 books. Uh, a week where when you're ranked around 900, we're selling about 2000 to 2,200 a week.

So you can kind of see, uh, there's not, there is a correlation, but it's not a linear translation. Because if you, if you're ranking drops by half, you don't double your book sales. You may quadruple it. So the, the jump from where we've historically recently been 1500 or so to 500 doesn't mean that we have three times the book volume sales.

We have maybe 10 times. It's a significant jump. Well, the nice thing about looking at rankings, anybody, everyone look at your rankings every single day for your book, because then you can try to do some correlation to what's doing it. Book ranking had a big jump starting yesterday morning. Um, knowing there's a six-hour lag time, uh, you look back what happened six hours prior or the day prior or the day prior to that.

So you can simply look what happened the last two days prior to this big jump and determine if anything changed, if you can identify it. Well, sure enough, we had a TikTok video that hit it. What I mean by hitting it is as of yesterday morning, it had 15,000 views. So that's not massive on TikTok, but for us, it is because it was my own video.

It was a video of me doing a presentation on *Profit First*, but it was a little clip. I think it's a 60-second clip and it's an old school one, maybe the pre-Mike, you know, Beard. Uh, so this goes back probably eight years now or something. There's an old video, maybe talking about *Profit First*, a little clip from it.

And that video, uh, had 15,000 views in the morning, had 17,000 views a couple of hours when we checked later by the end of the day, I think it was like 19,000 views. And we see the book sales continue to thrive. So like, Oh, there's a correlation between TikTok. We had another instance. I'm someone talking about *Profit First*.

This is about a year and a half ago. It was not me. It was someone else on TikTok. It was a store owner. They do like t-shirt printing and so forth. And she mentions how she uses *Profit First* that got 300,000 views over a period of time. And we saw a massive leap in the book. *Profit First* ranking dropped all the way down to... One, one time we checked, 29th in the world, 29th bestselling book in the world.

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It was a top hundred book big time. And we moved, we can directly correlate 2,000 print book sales during a one-week period specifically to this TikTok platform. So TikTok friggging matters.

**AJ Harper:** I love you that, you know, this, this is. Because you hear, you hear, you should be on TikTok, but you don't actually understand how it correlates to book sales.

And that breakdown was awesome. That was so good. Especially something I didn't know about how it could mean ten times or quadruple. That it's not, It's not what you think. It's actually a much bigger deal than you realize.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Yeah. It's kind of like a—

**AJ Harper:** Lower in the, in the bestseller ranking. And incidentally for listeners, we'll put the calculator link in the show notes.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Yeah. There's a third party that does it. I can't remember.

**AJ Harper:** It's TK publishing and I don't know why they, why it's there, but I use it all the time.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I use all the time too. It's great. It T T K C publishing. So when we like that, yeah,

**AJ Harper:** It'll be in the show notes.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Let me share something else that's happening.

So this is definitely my wheelhouse. Uh, Amazon. Yesterday or this morning. I think it was this morning modified the *Profit First* page to capture the inflow of traffic. I'll tell you exactly what they did. So, but let me give you a little preamble Amazon and it's quite possible. Other sites do this, but Amazon is the 800-pound gorilla, currently.

And so we have to understand that other site works as best as we can. Amazon will modify the page on an hourly basis, if it's to their advantage. So if they see, this is my conclusion, this is not based upon their reports because they don't report some stuff, but they're monitoring the traffic that's coming to each page and they constantly optimize it.

They're modifying the page to optimize it. The price of the book went up \$2 this morning. So what they're seeing, it was selling for \$10.55. So I'm sure, sorry, it went up 3. It's now \$13.55. And if you're listening to this episode, I invite you to go to the Amazon page, look at profit first and see what the price is at that point, what they're doing is they're, they're saying, based

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upon how many people are visiting the website, what price can we charge to not curtail demand, but to maximize our profitability.

So they're constantly tweaking the price. But interestingly, at the same time, they introduced a coupon. This is a new feature in the last year and a half or two where you can click off on the coupon, which does apply a \$2.89 coupon, effectively getting the price back to the original price if you click on it.

Well, what I'm assuming, and this is clearly an assumption, a portion of people don't see the coupon or don't take the one additional action step. To get the price back to the prior price point. So some people just don't leverage that. And they're, they're paying a premium unnecessarily. Conversely, I wonder if Amazon does that to enhance the conversion.

They say, well, some people are shopping because it's a rush and they're not paying attention. Other people want the best deal. And so we can convert higher by giving a coupon to people that want the best deal, and the people are rushed? You're bad. You're losing \$3. And I wonder if that's how they're responding to the demand.

Okay. Perhaps, perhaps. So, um,

**AJ Harper:** Who's paying attention to that stuff? You, the only person paying attention to this stuff. That's great.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So we, uh, we in the office yesterday started high fiving. When we saw the tick tock video in the morning, hit, uh, Andrea Conway is our in-house, Marketing director. Uh, we actually don't have titles in our office, but that's the function she serves.

And she came in smiling ear to ear and like, what's going on? She's like, TikTok is hitting it. Let me give you the preamble. Andrea and our team has been working on TikTok for 14 or 15 months, like devoted to it. And it's been frustrating because we're like, what is the secret to having a video that goes viral, if that's the right word? And most of our videos get about 600 views. That's the average view. And it's just been a production of quantity, the video that hit. So here's what the thing is. I don't know what to attribute it to. I assume you have to make the effort of producing video after video after video.

It's not like you put one up and you got the right formula that time you nailed it. But maybe that's true. We did modify what we've done. So we were doing quick tips where I spoke to camera and just shared a tip and idea. We've done personal videos like, Oh, check out what I'm doing in my yard. And we did two newer format videos for us that seem to gain more traction.

One is I do another podcast called "Entrepreneurship Simplified" where I'm in our little podcast studio, not the one AJ and I use. That's a little more. Technically sophisticated. This

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is a little more hacked together, but more video friendly studio. And it's me and another colleague from the office, Amy, and we have a dialogue.

And what we're using is we're taking clips from that and just sharing these short 30 second or so clips of an idea that I have. Those seem to be doing better in general. So we're, we're clipping up content, but the one that hit was a speech I shared from a while back, but we started to do this now recently is taking a speech I do. And then taking out these 30 to 60 second clips and putting them on TikTok, that's what, that's what's worked better. Now, we've done a lot of these 30 second clips and they're getting, you know, 600 views. So, my final kind of consideration is, TikTok is the authority. It decides if you will, or they decide what goes viral because they decide, the algorithm decides, who sees what and when.

So I don't know if it's measuring the consumability alone from the 600 folks and saying, wow, they're, they're watching more of this or if there's some variables are measuring, but they're also through the algorithm electing to present it to a lot more people. The thing is, People take action on this. We don't have a TikTok store.

I invite you to consider that we want to have one just because we have publishing arrangements, in this case with Penguin. We can't have a TikTok store. We can't sell direct. Um, the, the feedback we were getting from people that have TikTok stores is they move a boatload of books when they do have that.

But it just points to that people are willing to make the effort of watching something and then go and search this and pull it up and make a purchase.

**AJ Harper:** You actually uh, you could have a TikTok store for the books you self-published

**Mike Michalowicz:** for you self-published. Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, so you should make a store. You have *Toilet Paper Entrepreneur*.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, that's a good point for tpe. Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** *My Money Bunnies*, your children's book. And can we just say what if you tried to revive *Surge* and you even make a point of saying, "This is my book that tanked and it but it's a really good book, but I did a few things wrong. But this is a really good book," and here's the point. What if you tried to revive it on TikTok? TikTok loves an underdog story.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, that's an interesting—

**AJ Harper:** I'm just saying... Because why don't you try? Because you can sell it. How many copies you have sitting around?

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**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Not, not many anymore. We've actually sold out. Uh, we moved to soft cover. So we're on POD now with it, but print on demand.

**AJ Harper:** Okay. But that's easy enough. Easy enough. Just saying you could absolutely at least sell those and you could just say in your TikTok store, "You know everything else is traditionally published."

And then here's what you could do is If you don't have a TikTok store, you can connect to the bookshop. org They have a TikTok store. So that's the indie bookstore version of Amazon You, they have books, bookshop has their own, so you can link to that.

**Mike Michalowicz:** That's yeah. Is that book talk the bookshop or is that to do it now?

**AJ Harper:** Bookshop is its own thing. It's for indie booksellers. So it's an alternative. If you're not an Amazon person and you really want to support any booksellers, you can go to bookshop. org and, um, but they have a TikTok shop. So this is something I've recommended in my newsletter a few times. If you don't want to do your own TikTok shop, which you might not want to do because then you have to ship stuff.

Right. But, but that doesn't matter. You could, you could just link to bookshop. org and they're, they'll ship it because that's, that's what they do. They have their own Tik Tok shop.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And we, yeah, we're on there. We have an affiliate with bookshop.org. here. Here's one thing that we're doing that I don't know, AJ, if you know, we do maybe, so we track our sales of every book every week and record it in a master spreadsheet.

What I believed to be true, which AI proved not to be true, was the highly correlative effect that when a new book has movement, sells a high volume, that all the other books move in alignment, or at least get a nudge from it. During a launch, there is a minor nudge. So if we launched a new book, the backlist does get a boost, but it's minor.

But I also assumed that when what's happening with *Profit First* today, you know, at 591, we may move in the last two days, we may have moved three or 400 books above the norm, maybe even 500, 600 that, Oh, we're going to move, in the past, more *All In* books and more *Get Different* and so forth. I want, but, but AI did the analysis and said it was no zero correlation between that.

So a jump in one book did not correlate to a jump in other books unless it was a launch period and it was minor. I wonder now with this series, the part of series on Amazon specifically, correlative effect? So we'll track, we are tracking the data for this week. We'll track it for every week going forward.



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It may take time in retrospect to determine it. But, uh, we may have some anecdotal data at least at the end of, of next week, because we're always one week behind in, in getting the actual data in and see if there was a correlative effect. There's been another way we've been trying to move books is which is Amazon ads.

And we did this in three phases. One is we did it, we tried doing Amazon art ads on our own, um, and we tried the different mixed ads. You can have, I'll scroll on my page right now. You can have a section where it says, um, products related to this item. And as a sponsored section, those are people paying for those ads.

Uh, you can have, um, even near the triangle at the top, kind of the, the, the landing section for a book, you can have a, uh, a direct sponsor. So right now on *Profit First*, there's a book called *Systemology* by, uh, David Jenyns that is listed. And it's a big, boxed ad. That ad costs likely significant money because it's, it's the exclusive book highlighted there.

So we tried that and we could not find a way for it to be profitable, meaning we were spending more on ads than we were generating when we were selling books. I also concluded because we turned it on and off, so we'd run it for two or three weeks and we turned it off for two or three weeks. We turn it on and off.

We also identified in that time that when it was off, our book volume of sales didn't drop or didn't increase, which meant someone was looking for, let's say we're advertising *Profit First*. Someone's looking for *Profit First* and they saw the ads, they clicked on it, but if they didn't see the ad, they were still finding it through the natural search.

So it didn't seem like it was influencing people to buy a book, at least in my case, that they weren't aware of. They were seeking it out. And they were just clicking an ad, which was costing me money, but not driving more demand. The second iteration is we hired a professional service. And they were much more focused on the low-cost ads to see if there was a conversion.

And the same thing, we did on and off, and there wasn't any gain. So we said the first time, maybe I still know the ads to write or run, and maybe I'm not putting good copy. They, they started doing this optimization and that didn't work after two or three months. So we disengage the service. About a year later, uh, up until the last month or two, we hired the service again, the exact same company. And what they identified is that Amazon had changed its, its advertising platform and they showed, and they showed statistically that they were able now to sell books at a volume above and beyond what it would be direct clicks. So we hired the service again, they ran it for three, four months.

And they came back and said, no, in your case, we can't sell more books. What the conclusion is, is that in a book that has a degree of popularity, that, and we did this with *All In*, by the way, not with *Profit First*, we did with all in because of the launch period, perhaps, but there was a degree of awareness about the, around the author, me and the book title.

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At least there's enough awareness that it didn't drive more sales. The other thing was the cost. So we were paying roughly \$4 to convert a book sale when clicking on ads. So that was our fee to Amazon. We make roughly, you know, \$3.50, maybe \$4 per book. If we're lucky about that \$3.50 books. So it was a losing proposition.

There's another side and we got to do a debrief about this in one of our episodes in the future around *All In*, we're doing a profit share and *All In* the first royalty check came out. Did you get the check by the way? Did Kelsey send you ..?

**AJ Harper:** I got money, but I don't, I didn't get any explanation. So.

**Mike Michalowicz:** All right. So we, we should go through it. The profit share in *All In* netted out my, I didn't, I have, I'm going to go in detail. I have a flight going to Australia. I'm going to dig into this, but, uh, we got about \$3.50 a book. It was about the exact same dollar amount. It looks like, and this is the first blush test is there's a lot of upfront costs that we're sharing with one-time costs with Penguin. So, um, we're carrying that burden with them. So if that's, if I'm reading that correctly, then future royalties, that one time cost now has been absorbed, will be greater over time. So per book.

**AJ Harper:** I hope so, but I don't think it's, I mean, I feel like it's to their benefit whenever it's net.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Totally.

**AJ Harper:** So when you, when you, when you're dealing with a profit share, you're dealing with net versus when you have typical traditional royalties where you're dealing with list price.

And so that's fixed. And listen, no one ever did an audit with a big five publishing house and came out in the win. Like they will always win.

**Mike Michalowicz:** find a reason,

**AJ Harper:** They will always win.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Yeah. No, this isn't, this isn't, yeah, I'm not accusing anything.

**AJ Harper:** Oh no no, I'm not actually saying anything nefarious. I'm just saying like, it doesn't work in it. It doesn't. Yeah. It's there are other reasons to be working with them. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So, our conclusion is Amazon ads does not work when potentially two cases. One is If your book title or you as an author are recognized enough that the consumer is seeking you as opposed to more consumers are seeking you out as opposed to, they know

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no one knows of your book or name and therefore you want to trigger that stumble upon with the analysis.

I would do is say, who else is in my category that I'm writing? So in the business space, I'm trying to think of someone that's super popular in the business space. Uh, let's say Michael Gerber, because that's an old name and maybe isn't popular anymore. And even folks listening in may not recognize the name, but he was a big name.

And when I was starting out 15 years ago, when we put *Toilet Paper Entrepreneur* out there, no one knew of that book. I wonder if the ads existed back then that we could have gotten captured that stumble upon someone looking for Michael Gerber, but we present *Toilet Paper Entrepreneur*. So if, if there is a large gap of awareness between someone else as an authority and you advertising may be an opportunity and something I think you should test.

The other awareness is if it's costing \$4 to get someone to convert. That's on a, on potentially a known book title, known author name. Maybe it's going to cost up to 6 or more. I don't know for you to convert. You got to do it in a sustainable, profitable way. So if you're self-published where you can net eight, maybe \$10 a book, but let's say \$8 a book after all costs, well, now you're coming out ahead and now you, you know, it costs you six, but you get back eight.

Now you have something that's a perpetual motion machine and could tip the scale. So just a thought.

**AJ Harper:** Just just that stumbled upon, that's the actual term in the industry called it. Yeah No, no, not that way. You said it but it's called the discover ability So there's there's find ability and there's discoverability. And there's, those are two different focuses in book marketing.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Can you, just for clarity for our audience, can you define each one, findability versus discoverability?

**AJ Harper:** So, discoverability is just, we say, is, does somebody discover the book, how, how, how can you increase the chances that a person will, as you put it, stumble upon a book and say, oh, hey. And so it's everything from, uh, spotting a recommendation on.

Online on amazon too. Uh, is it something that you encounter when you're walking through a bookstore? And how do you increase the chances of discoverability? Examples of discrete increasing chances for discoverability are the books facing out at the bookstore. Is it on the front table? Is there a display of some kind?

All that stuff is for discoverability. Um Then we have, you know, online versions of that, right? Then findability is, can a person find the book they are looking for? And you might think, well, how hard is that? Well, it can be if you aren't using consistent metadata. So

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metadata is the information about your book, the title, the subtitle, the author, the book description, the price, the ISBN, the page count, the pub year, you know, all that stuff, just the, the data about your book.

And you'd be surprised how often it's actually inconsistent. And part of the reason is as you are in the ramp up to publishing, sometimes a cover changes, a title changes, the book description gets tweaked. Now you have it's different here or there. And there's not consistency. And then that makes findability more difficult.

And there are other factors with findability, but so one is, can you find the book you're looking for? And it's not just the metadata. It's also, is it available where it needs to be available? You know, that sort of thing. And then the discoverability is the stumble upon.

**Mike Michalowicz:** While you were sharing that, I wanted to pull up some of the data analysis. It is TCK publishing, but you can also Google Amazon book Sales Calculator to find it. But I also did a comparative. I went on chat GPT. This is something I've never done before. So this is talk about raw and live. I went on chat GPT and said, the book ranking for private first hardcover is 591. What does that translate to?

It says, uh, roughly, you know, it's an estimate of, uh, it always discounts or, or it's a disclaimer in, and it says a hundred copies per day, the bestseller ranking calculator on TCK publishing says a 591 ranking, uh, sales per month are 31 3,164 a KAA hundred a day. So I guess either one is a pretty darn good, accurate, uh, measurement.

What's interesting is the book calculator, the TCK publishing one also gives you a one-day sales, which will sound at, at first blush that they, there's not a correlation here. It says 211 books likely sold in one day, but the sales month will be 3000, which is much less. You'd think a 200 a day, you'd have 6, 000.

And there's a kind of a laggard effect when a book jumps to a high-ranking point, it's because there's a surge of sales. If it sustains there, I believe it's an averaging over time and to be as sustained five 91, you're sustaining actually a lower volume, but a certain volume consistently. When you have a big jump, you have a surge of sales.

I believe that's how the calculation works. ,

**AJ Harper:** Yes. Because part of, part of the factor on Amazon is momentum relative to other books in that category. And well, if it's the main BSR relative to all other books.

**Mike Michalowicz:** You know, what got us excited about TikTok was just watching what Colleen Hoover did. Colleen Hoover, uh, how many books does she have in the top 100 at any given time on Amazon?

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I mean, still has three or four books in the top 100. I think she's the best-selling fiction author in the last five years. (Probably.) And, and there was an interview, I think I shared it on a different episode of our podcast. She was interviewed in the wall street journal or New York times. And they said, what do you attribute your popularity to?

And again, I'm paraphrasing. She said, "It's not my writing." Like she argued, she's not the best writer in the world, but she goes, it's my popularity on TikTok. My belief is because I've watched some of these Tik TOK videos of people talking about Colleen Hoover. I was so interested. I've read some of her books. It's just not my genre. So it just didn't land with me. I read, I think *It Ends With Us* or something just didn't land with me, but it was interesting. Um, it was my wife read it too. And she goes, Oh, it's highly consumable. She goes, it's, she's the cotton candy of books. She says, like you get this instant flavor and it dissolves and you put some more in your mouth and it dissolves.

What I've noticed is the TikTok emulator. So one person says, this is the book you got to read. Other people are like, you got to read Colleen's book. In some of them, they were literally holding her book. There wasn't a crack in the seam. I mean, in the spine, I mean, I don't think they've even read this book.

They're just saying it because someone else said it. So there's this emulation, I believe that happens to on Tik Tok or anything that goes viral like that.

**AJ Harper:** But we hear Colleen Hoover all the time, but there's a lot of other people who've had their whole careers launched on TikTok. I did some research and saw that she Sarah J Mass or MAHs, M-A-A-S, who's a fantasy writer, actually waste her past Colleen this year.

So Colleen did something like 1.2 or 1.6 something books this year, which keep in mind, she didn't have a release this year. So that's what she's selling.

**Mike Michalowicz:** That's not too shabby for a backlist at one point.

**AJ Harper:** That's pretty good. But, uh, Sarah Maas, sold 3.1 million copies. Um, and that she has sold more than the top 10 new books combined, combined.

**Mike Michalowicz:** TikTok specifically?

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. She's a fantasy and she's a fantasy author, but then nonfiction is harder. Nonfiction doesn't get the numbers that fiction gets. Um, book talk, which is a, a subculture on TikTok. So TikTok has different subcultures and book talk is a big one, and that's really just anybody who's, it doesn't, you don't have to be an author to be on BookTok.

In fact, it's mostly just people who love to read and talk about it. So BookTok is primarily for fiction, but don't discount nonfiction. It's just a lot of people are reading fantasy, romance,

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thriller, these very consumable. Yeah. Um, yeah. And, and, and loving it. Um, and also young adult is really big. But then everybody heard about, and I think it's Kayla, K E I L A, if I'm mispronouncing her name, I apologize.

Shaheen, she, everybody's heard about this, um, she self-published a shadow work journal, and that sold over a million copies, and then she got herself a multi-book deal with Simon Schuster. Um, it was just a journal about shadow work that she published. Um, so that's, that's nonfiction. So don't discount nonfiction.

It's just, um, maybe we need to go about it in a different way. So one of the ways that that worked for her is, um, an, a person on TikTok was talking about the shadow work journal and holding classes for the shadow work journal. And so helped push that over the edge. Um, so another person was talking about the content in that book.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So interesting that she then got a multi-book deal from, from Simon Schuster. That does seem like this is the current status of traditional publishers, that they're that're moving to the proven, like, until a book is working, it's too big of a risk for them to make the investment.

**AJ Harper:** I don't know if that's true.

You could be right, but I feel like they just my view is whatever exciting thing happens with social media is they decide that's the way and because of that discoverability factor that they still can't crack. Right? So they don't really know. Do you know what I mean? They have a pretty good idea, but they don't really know.

And so when someone breaks through like Colleen or Sarah Moss or, um, um, Kayla Sheehan, who wrote the Shadow Work Journal. Oh, it's like, they all just run like lemmings. That's, you know, now it's TikTok and before it was something else. And, and right now it is TikTok. So, you know, when I'm working with authors on book proposals or whatever, they.

Or thinking about it. Say, just get the dang TikTok. Just do it. I mean, don't fight it. Yeah. You know, don't fight it because that, that's where it is right now and it's gonna be something else later. But, you know, if the, if the publishing industry thinks that there's money to that's the way, then that's where they're gonna say, go do that.

Even if they don't understand how it works, even if it's not working for everyone, they're still gonna say it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I think there's, there's tremendous value there. I was the guy who wants to fight it. And my argument to myself was, well, TikTok is going to burn out. So I didn't join it soon enough. And therefore I shouldn't pursue it.

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The reality is you don't know how long it's going to last. You don't know what the next thing will be. We thought it was going to be Clubhouse. This is a few years back. If you remember that platform and tons of people ran to it and went nowhere. So, so it's not too late. We only started TikTok. We only started TikTok a little bit over a year ago and it's been a slog and we, and we think it's not working.

And then this may be the only hit we have on TikTok for another year. I don't know. Um, but we're having momentum and we're seeing an impact.

**AJ Harper:** So, I, I do want to say that I think a big factor was that I can't, I don't know the gentleman's name who, um, promoted, Shehan's shadow work journal, but one of the cool things about tech talk is you can get an affiliate commission, but the person who is giving the affiliate commission can set the commission.

So on Amazon, you get an affiliate commission of three to 4%, but the author can set a higher commission, which then is attractive to various peep BookTokers who want to get the commission. So the dude who was talking about the Shadow Work Journal, he, and did some classes around it and the whole deal, he sold 40, 000 copies of the Shadow Work Journal, which gave him 150, 000. So he's super motivated because she was able to set the affiliate rate. I think it was at 15%.

**Mike Michalowicz:** That's it. Yeah. Yeah. Because you're talking about over \$3 a copy.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. But it was, you know, she's self-publishing a journal. Like it's all, it's, you know, there was money there, but that can tip, maybe you aren't going to keep doing it, but it can tip you over so that enough people are talking about it.

And then you can change the commission if you need to, but you can't do that on Amazon, but you can do it on TikTok.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So interesting. Yeah. So interesting. So the, the takeaway is get on these platforms and test them out for yourself. You have to measure what's working, what's not working, but be aware of the big trend.

The Amazon ads may work for you, but I wouldn't just do it because you hear it can or doesn't work. I would test it. Same thing with TikTok. I wouldn't, I wouldn't ignore it. I would see what others are doing, but I would test it and try it out. The thing we realized in TikTok is it took us a good six months to learn how to produce relevant, good content that was consumable without much effort.

Literally, I was getting four- or eight-hour blocks, like, like a full day. Erin just managed my schedule where Andrea's like, we need Mike to produce videos. And I got to sit there and think of these really novel ideas to get a concept across. And while they ended up being what we believe to be interesting and consumable videos, We're getting the 600 views again.

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And then when we took an established presentation or speech, many of them got 600 views. It was no effort. I already did the keynote and took it. The other little tip I have too, is I have, uh, I think five or six keynotes coming up in the next two weeks. And, um, some will be on *Profit First*, but I'm also doing *Get Different* speech.

Uh, I'm also doing fix this next couple other ones. When I do these presentations, even if it's a routine one, like profit versus very routine for me, there will be elements that are new. I'll try something new or something. And then I just, now we're just carving those out and saying, Oh, Mike did the *Profit First* speech.

He did one, we're just going to carve that up and we're done with his *Profit First* speech. We're taking each one. And we're carving out either new segments or an established segment that may just presented with a different flavor or different juice to it. There's always something new every time you record something.

So the ultimate repurposing of content.

**AJ Harper:** So I've been wanting to get on TikTok. Well, okay. Let's be clear. I don't want to get on TikTok. Let's just, let's just. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** (Laughs) I hear you.

**AJ Harper:** Sade, who's my marketing director, who's amazing, would really like me to be on TikTok.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** He's given me assignments. I have to say I have avoided them like the plague.

So I totally get it. But now you're opening my mind. I have all this content. that I've recorded, free stuff I recorded, really good stuff. It's honestly on my YouTube channel. Um, stuff like, uh, why I rejected manuscripts, um, when I was an acquisitions editor. You know, you could cut up that whole hour and it breaks down all these sort of red, I have a whole video about red flags that editors see and how to not, not have them.

Um, you know, the things you might not know the editors You're like, Oh, next, I'm not reading that, um, stuff like that. And I wonder, you mentioned Descript before we did get it by the way.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, how do you like,

**AJ Harper:** I asked my team. I don't know my team that I don't—



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**Mike Michalowicz:** That's a business owner. That's a business owner. Well answered.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, but I think they like it, but I wonder if they could just take some of that content while I get the, while I get the nerve up to be on TikTok, they could just put me there without, you know, me having to record something new just to start, just to get it going.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And I'd argue that may be your entire campaign.

You don't have to necessarily do something new. I believe on those platforms, there is a lot of desire for the voyeuristic experience. So it's the fact that you already have something out there and I get to be a fly in the wall and consuming it. I don't need something where you're designing something specifically for me.

I just get to observe something from afar. Um, I was on TikTok for a while, but I noticed also the addict, how addictive it is for me. Uh, one particular day, I was like, I'll be on TikTok for five minutes and I ended up watching it for, I don't know, a guy watching—

**AJ Harper:** What were you watching?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Guitar videos.

**AJ Harper:** Guitar videos.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** I watch. I like to watch, um, people talk about Sister Wives.

Like I don't, I don't have anything else going on. I'm just watching like on tape. I should be watching your stuff or whatever stuff about books.

**Mike Michalowicz:** No, no. I'm just,

**AJ Harper:** I'm just listening to people rant about Sister Wives.

**Mike Michalowicz:** But I noticed when I was watching my guitar videos, I was watching some of the lessons. And then up comes these historical videos of guitarists.

And I was like, wow, I was just watching this. So, uh, um, I'm thinking like, uh, Chuck Berry has like a crazy amount of content out there and he's—

**AJ Harper:** Oh, that would be addictive.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** right? He's long past. And Eddie Van Halen whose past has content out there. So, uh, you, you can take your historical videos. There there's proof of it and people want to consume it because there's a voyeuristic component.

There's something exceptional and extraordinary about that or within it. And, um, you watch it. I discovered there's this guy named Bucket Head. He's a guitarist. The guy is wickedly good. He's, he may be the best guitarist. I wouldn't have discovered him otherwise I've ever seen. And he has performed with mainstream acts, but that's not his thing.

And what he, his little kind of costume is he puts a Kentucky fried chicken bucket, a bucket on his head, um, and wears a Michael Myers mask. And part of it was just to be invisible to the audience as a personality and just demonstrate his guitar skills. This guy's wickedly good. And so there I spend hours and hours watching him do stuff I've never seen done on a guitar before.

**AJ Harper:** So you're watching a dude with a Kentucky fried chicken bucket on his head.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** That's how you're spending your time these days.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I know. And I'm like, I'm done with TikTok. Look at me. Look at me. Sitting there, popcorn in the bed. I'm laying there. It's like three o'clock in the morning.

**AJ Harper:** I'm not any better. I'm just listening to a total stranger pontificate about other total strangers on TV.

**Mike Michalowicz:** This is like the, we are two weirdos episode. That's what we should have titled it.

**AJ Harper:** I mean, that would be a long episode though. This was a really informative episode. I learned a lot from you, Mike.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Well, thank you. Thank you.

This has been a blast. Thanks for letting me share this stuff. And what we'll try to do and post it next week's episode, because we're recording right after this, I'll keep an eye on Amazon and only updates every six hours, but maybe there'll be another ranking update and I'll see if I can get Andrea to share what's going on with TikTok too, so we can get some fresh content on, on the status there.

Historically, by the way, it is short lived. So when we've seen TikTok videos go viral, It's a couple of days historically for us that we see the big surge and it starts to fade away. So we'll

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see what happens next week. We're going to talk about managing your inner critic troll. That's going to be interesting, especially when you're a weirdo who watches sister wives or buckethead guitarists.

I do want to invite you. We say this every single time, but please listen in. And if you feel compelled to act on this, it would be great. This is our website. It's DWTB. Let's don't write that book. Podcast. com. There's free materials there. We'd love for you to be on the email list because that will keep you posted on current episodes.

We'll give you bonus content and my big dream. And you got to email us. Some people are starting to email hello at dwtbpodcast.com. I want to do a live show, AJ and myself up on stage, you in the audience, but we need a hundred people here. We got to rent out a small theater and do a live episode. And maybe that's the one we convince Steve, as AJ would call him, or Steven Pressfield to show up.

So, uh, email us and tell us if you want to come to the event and you'd be willing to depart with, I don't know, a hundred dollars or something so we can fund that event. We'd love to see you there. Thanks again for joining us with today with thanks for joining us today. We look forward to seeing you on next week's episode.

I want to give you that reminder that you should always remember, maybe get the tattoo, don't write that book, write the greatest book you can.