

don't write *that* book!

Episode 64:

“Using Advanced Reader Feedback”

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 AJ Harper.

Okay, so we're going to kick off this episode by talking about Sister Wives.

AJ Harper: The TV show.

Mike Michalowicz: The TV show. That's a good point. I just pulled it up. I've never seen the show.

AJ Harper: Uh huh.

Mike Michalowicz: I do recognize the, the main character, guy, so tell me, what is the show about?

AJ Harper: So the show follows, it's in, it's in 19th season, which does not mean 19 years. No. I think it's like 13 years they've been on TV.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

AJ Harper: It follows this guy, Kody, who at the time the show started had three wives and I think 13 kids, and then in the first few episodes got the fourth wife. Now there's 18 kids.

I feel like you're just doing math like how many how many colleges how many what?

Mike Michalowicz: Relationally it just sounds horrible.

AJ Harper: Well

Mike Michalowicz: to me

AJ Harper: You, I think you are shocked, were shocked when I said I actually watch it.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, yeah. What is, is this your advice, is this your outlet?

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AJ Harper: Oh, God. Yeah. What do you,

Mike Michalowicz: what do you do? You sit back on the couch, grab a

AJ Harper: cigarette and say, yes,

Mike Michalowicz: Kody. Yes.

AJ Harper: Oh, I'm not, he's a, I'm not interested. No, I'm just into the wife.

Mike Michalowicz: No, no, no, no. Just like, like how horrible it is. It's like watching a train wreck. It sounds like,

AJ Harper: You know what though? I started watching it a few years ago. I, I didn't, I wasn't an early adopter, but I started watching it. I can't, I think because one of the wives was leaving. And then that made me go, Oh, I wonder what's going on over there.

So I went to watch and you kind of fall in love with the kids. That's the thing.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh.

AJ Harper: So I fell in love with all these kids. They're fantastic.

Mike Michalowicz: Do you feel sorry for them?

AJ Harper: No. No. They, I learned so much. Like, here's some things I learned. Okay. I learned that, um, that whole family was very pro LGBT. And I had this bias that I was like, because they had two kids come out.

Mike Michalowicz: Are they religiously based? (Yes.) Is it Mormon or is it?

AJ Harper: Yes, it's an offshoot. Of Mormonism. Because the LDS church does not.

Mike Michalowicz: Does not support polygamy,

AJ Harper: But they have these offshoots, right? Right. Um, and I had all these biases, you know, about horrible abuses and all this, and they were just living in this, you know, there didn't seem to be any abuse going on there.

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It was the choice they all made, but the kids were so great and they were all so close. And the women were helping each other. And there was some part of me that was like, God, that would have been great. Like, you know what I mean?

Mike Michalowicz: So it was communal, they were supporting. Is it harmonious or can't be?

AJ Harper: Oh my God. There's only one wife left. And it's the last one.

Mike Michalowicz: Did they, the wives, Did they have animosity toward each other? There's one toward him.

AJ Harper: Well, I mean, I think they've all kind of it's fascinating to watch because now They've all come where they used to say one thing. They've all come to realize this is not actually feasible Whereas they really felt strongly about it before.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay, so this model of a relationship or a family they said works It's perfect. And now they're like, no, no, no?

AJ Harper: No. Now, so he, he came in with three, and then got one more, and the last one is the only one that's left.

Mike Michalowicz: Is he holding onto the bastion that this is a good working function?

AJ Harper: No, now he's like, you know what, this is awful for them, it was awful for me.

Mike Michalowicz: Really?

AJ Harper: Yeah, so it's from... I love that stuff. Just to watch this from a sociological perspective, to watch this evolution. Yeah. Because they were adamant about it. He seems to be a pretty miserable guy in general. But he used to anyway, I got hooked because of these great kids. So why are we talking about sister wives?

Um, it is fascinating. I will tell you, you don't You know, you don't have to have it on and be glued to it. It's the kind of thing where they might be in the same week for like four episodes.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

AJ Harper: Kind of like a soap opera. So you could just be doing other things, which is kind of how I do it.

Mike Michalowicz: So why we're talking is.

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AJ Harper: We got a message from Brian. Yeah. Brian Harriot.

Mike Michalowicz: Brian Harriot tips us off. He gives a call and says, Hey, Profit First is featured, not featured, but is n

AJ Harper: no, who is on the show.

Mike Michalowicz: On the show, on the, on the show. So there's a scene, I guess he's, he Kody. Kody is walking in a room and there's Profit First sitting there.

I wonder if that, yes, if sales are gonna tank as a result. No. No. Most won't even notice. There's a background.

AJ Harper: You can't control who likes your book and who doesn't. Who is reading it.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. I wonder if that happens. Could you get a reader that is infamous? And it destroys your book, or is all news good news? Is all news good news?

AJ Harper: No. No.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, so it was very funny. So uh, it's on YouTube, or maybe Brian got us a clip, but he forwarded it on. And so I've talked to a few people that have seen Sister Wives.

AJ Harper: Uh huh. And they're like, oh my god,

Mike Michalowicz: and then they're all going to go back and watch that episode.

AJ Harper: Listen, if you are going to watch anything, they have a period of time where they decide they're going to open a business.

And that would be fascinating to see your reaction because they decide that a fourth wife wants to do my sister's, my sister wife's closet. is what it's called. Okay. And it's like jewelry and clothes and things like that, that it's inspired by. And they go to raise all this money and they put all this money into it and they're just not like they eventually shut down.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Yeah.

AJ Harper: Um, they had a lot of interest in it because of the viewers, but then hardly anyone buying.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, that's interesting.

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AJ Harper: So that was pretty fascinating to watch.

Mike Michalowicz: Um, yeah, maybe we can explore. Uh, a couple of things at the end of this episode, we didn't do it last week. We promised to give updates on our manuscript.

Uh, so why don't we give a little insight into what's going on, if that's cool.

AJ Harper: Um, we can.

Mike Michalowicz: And, uh, a little spinoff that's come out. Someone from the book, uh, that you know what's going on and then there's another thing that happened just yesterday, uh, I mean on Friday that I want to share with you, um, which came out from the book.

So it's interesting with the work we're doing together.

AJ Harper: We just, yeah, but we didn't just talk about it in the last episode. We're kind of talking about it organically.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, organically. We talked about it. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Um, but this episode we're going to be talking about advanced reader feedback. I'm with AJ Harper.

Who, we, what I appreciate about you, you come down to Boonton every time. You make that hour plus, well sometimes it'll be 45 minutes if you're cruising, but it's an hour drive. Door to door. And, uh, that, that goes noted. Thank you for doing that.

AJ Harper: Gotta do it. That one time that we had to do the Zoom.

Mike Michalowicz: It was bad.

AJ Harper: I know. And we had that great episode on Riders Black.

Mike Michalowicz: It was bad.

AJ Harper: And it keeps getting wrecked and every time it gets wrecked, I'm like, Oh my God, the sound on that was terrible.

Mike Michalowicz: The sound.

AJ Harper: Maybe we should redo that one. Cause it keeps getting wrecked.

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Mike Michalowicz: Oh, that's not a bad idea. And um, yeah, what I endeavor to do, because I travel enough that should that situation come up, I gotta have a good microphone with me.

AJ Harper: Yeah. Could you just take a Yeti or..?

Mike Michalowicz: yeah, that's what I think. Something like that. I try to get one of those USB microphones that plugs into, I have only an iPad with me. I don't carry a laptop.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: But what I did was I was in my hotel room and literally made a cave out of pillows. I'm like knock on people's doors.

AJ Harper: I can't borrow a pillow.

Mike Michalowicz: I got this cave pillows for sound buffer and it's still,

AJ Harper: no, it wasn't good work.

Mike Michalowicz: All right, so let's dig into it. Um, First of all, what is advanced reader feedback? Can you define it for me?

AJ Harper: Yeah, it's folks who read your book before it comes out, before it goes into the final edits, so that you can figure out if your book works.

Mike Michalowicz: Um, the, so the first draft manuscript is done, it's the full manuscript.

AJ Harper: You can do it at different stages. We actually did an episode on, it's called, I think it's called does this book work, where we broke that whole process down. I, there are people who do it way early, testing the idea, testing the fundamentals, testing chapter one, and there's, you know, I'm, I can see the value in that.

I'm usually falling the other direction. Because I think with a lot of first-time authors, you can get steered way off course and you can also end up getting feedback that stops you in your tracks.

Mike Michalowicz: That's a good observation.

AJ Harper: So I think if you're new to authorship, that that's tricky and you should wait till your manuscript is done.

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Mike Michalowicz: Did you do it with Write a Must-Read? Okay. Same thing? Manuscript done? Or at least first draft?

AJ Harper: Yeah. I also did a pre, um, survey. So, I did a pre survey. What's that? Before they read the book, I asked them to fill out a survey so I could see their starting point.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay. Okay.

AJ Harper: Mm hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: And what other type of questions did you ask in that case? Just to give me a sense.

AJ Harper: So Some general stuff about, what are you expecting from this book? What do you hope to learn? Uh, what problem do you want to solve?

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

AJ Harper: But then mostly it's, how capable do you feel for, so for my book was, do you feel capable of writing a must read? Well, how do you feel about your writing abilities? I wanted to see how that changed after they finished the book.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, that's really interesting.

AJ Harper: So then I could do the follow up questions after, because you can't get that data before they open the book. I mean, after they open, after they've read it.

Mike Michalowicz: Right. 'cause now it's jaded or it's, it's, they can't even perceive what they felt before. So what did you see with write a must-read the majority of the pre-read versus post reader and that emotional response of how they. Could, could they read my street question? How they respond?

AJ Harper: I was so happy because they felt, yes, I can absolutely do this.

Mike Michalowicz: After they read it. But what about before? What was the sentiment generally?

AJ Harper: Um, mostly like, I kind of like, you know, not like down in the dumps.

Mike Michalowicz: Interesting. Okay. And then when you find out what they feel like. Maybe, does that guide you on how to approach them psychologically, if you will, in the

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book? Saying, as opposed to, you feel you'll never get there. Do you kind of have a more of a, you might feel?

AJ Harper: No. I don't really base, because by then I will have already done all my tonal work.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

AJ Harper: Because I'm basing my tonal work on my ideal reader, not on the advanced readers.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay. Okay, that's super helpful.

AJ Harper: Yeah, you can really get in the weeds there.

Mike Michalowicz: You have a concept called a book club approach?

AJ Harper: Yeah, so the reason I wanted to do this episode is because my students have been doing some super cool stuff that I thought our listeners could benefit from.

Um, So, I, I have this little course called Test Drive Your Content. It's just a standalone, evergreen thing about seven videos that teach you how to test drive the concepts in your book, the frameworks, the systems, etc. So that you can be sure they work before you write a whole book about it. One of them is to do a chapter-by-chapter version of your book.

Um, test drive. And that's evolved into what we call now book club. So creating your own book club for your book, but in advance. Yeah. So, it's basically, and you can do it in a lot of different ways, but instead of just giving it to advanced readers in one fell swoop, it's, you still have the manuscript done, so you don't want to be writing.

Right? But you, are dripping it out. So it could be one chapter a week, could be two to three chapters a week, depending on how long are the chapters, um, do you have a lot of dense content? Do you have a lot of exercises? Are you going to ask them to do exercises? All those are factors in how many chapters you would drip each week.

And then you can ask for feedback along the way. And then I also have students doing zoom calls with the group. So in addition to the feedback, having like an hour zoom call where they can share their feedback and then you can also ask them questions.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, that's interesting.

AJ Harper: So that's the book club part because they're together.

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Mike Michalowicz: That's interesting. Would you suggest for a book club?

AJ Harper: I think you need the same with advanced reader feedback is you need a minimum of 10.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay. Is there a maximum? Can it get overwhelming?

AJ Harper: Yeah, of course. I mean, I think if you have more than a couple dozen people,

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

AJ Harper: that's hard, but if you had a facilitator, you could handle more.

Mike Michalowicz: Do you find people fade out like any other program? Yeah. So you start with 24, you end up at the very end, last session, the core six that stuck it out? Something like that.

AJ Harper: Yeah. If, but if that happens, you really need to go. You need to find out why. That's pretty drastic.

Mike Michalowicz: That's an indicator too, right?

AJ Harper: Yeah.

If that, I mean, it's normal for a few people to fall off because people are busy. And they really want to commit to it, but they don't, they can't complete it because life happens. So that's normal. But if you get numbers like that, where you went from 24 to 6, then there's something wrong.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

AJ Harper: So you need to figure out why couldn't they complete it. It might be too much information, you might be asking too much of them.

Mike Michalowicz: Maybe you stretched out the book club just for too long. I don't know.

AJ Harper: Maybe, I mean, there's, there's a lot of factors, but I'm just saying those are numbers that would be a sign for me to say, Oh, we have a problem here.

Mike Michalowicz: You know, this isn't really advanced reader feedback, but with the new book, Made for Money is the working title that we, I accidentally revealed a few times now.

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Um, I did a course with the A-1 Garage Company, so this isn't really advanced reader feedback.

AJ Harper: No, that's a test drive.

Mike Michalowicz: You can get a test drive and did over 12 weeks and the feedback I just read did another one. It's only four weeks. The feedback is the four week program is so much more doable.

AJ Harper: Oh, what's different about it?

Mike Michalowicz: It's the exact same stuff, but it's not belabored. So my thought initially was let's do it over 12 weeks because that's three months. It gives people the time to adopt, adapt, listen, learn, and one finding is I could just do this stuff faster and get it going. Um, Sam Horton, who we've been talking about, who we were working with, in one day, he had the whole system set up.

And he's on the path to the, the learning is actually in the doing. And he's on the path.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: And what I think I found in the first group of doing over 12 weeks is the, the doing wasn't happening, therefore the learning really wasn't happening.

AJ Harper: Because it's too much theory and explanation?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. It's too much discussion.

AJ Harper: It's just, it's like anything, you have to front load your test drive. Just like you have to front load the book.

Mike Michalowicz: Yes. You have a case study, Amy Kemp's book.

AJ Harper: Okay, so this is why I really wanted to talk about this, because the, the, this podcast is, episode is about how you can use it to build momentum. So, Amy Kemp is one of my alums from Top 3 Book Workshop.

Her book *I See You* came out last year. Uh, let me get that subtitle right, I put it in here.

Mike Michalowicz: It says a guide for women to make more, have more, and be more without more work.

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AJ Harper: Yes. She has a great core message for her book, *You Can't Outwork Your Thought Habits*. Yeah, it's really good.

Mike Michalowicz: I like that.

AJ Harper: So she did something cool. We, when in, I have this membership called Author Collective for this man up of my alums and I'll ask some authors who do really well with their book to come and do a debrief about six, six months after their launch.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

AJ Harper: So they come and we just grill them. How did it work? What'd you do?

Mike Michalowicz: What? Oh, cool.

AJ Harper: Yeah, it's really great. So Amy came and did a debrief. And she talked about this one thing that she loved that she thought because I like to ask what did you do that you don't want to do you wouldn't do again and what did you think was really great what she did was she had it I have she did as I told her she's one of my students that followed everything and she did advanced reader feedback but what she did differently was once that was done you near her book launch, she got galleys, so that's an uncorrected proof, she had them bound, and she brought all those advanced readers into, I think it was her living room, but it might have been some other space that looked like a living room, to meet in person with the book and have a conversation about it.

So, if you're old enough to have watched Oprah before she quit, she used to have Oprah's Book Club, and she would bring to the whole world Was reading the same book, but then she would have a special episode and the author would come and then they would pick certain readers and they would all sit in a very nice candlelit living room, which was probably not Oprah's living room and talk about the book.

They would have book club discussion. And so that's what it reminded me of when Amy told me she did this. So they're all with a book in hand. Then she had a videographer to record it, so smart. Now she has all this footage of the book club, where people are just having organic conversations about the book.

And she did this cool thing where she gave everybody, uh, you know, part of her swag was bookmarks. But it was a page of bookmarks that you could cut. So, like, maybe you had, like, I don't remember how many she had on there, maybe eight or ten. So, eight and a half by eleven sheet, and then the bookmarks, you could cut them out.

But they actually said things, I don't know what all of her sayings were, but imagine, like, I want to remember this, don't forget this. Or, this really changed my thinking. And she had

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them slip it in the book where it happened. So they did that in advance. They come to this book club and they've got their book with all the little markers in it so that when she asked the question, they can just turn to the page.

Mike Michalowicz: That's so good.

AJ Harper: They had this amazing conversation because there wasn't a lot of, Oh, um, where is it? Um, 'cause he had already marked it. That, by the way, that's great swag to have a set of bookmarks that actually are specific to don't forget this, this is a must do.

Mike Michalowicz: That's so much better than the one bookmark with your website link on it.

AJ Harper: Yeah, and you cut them out and you stick them in, you could do them with post its, you could. Anyway, so Amy's telling us all about this incredible book club experience she did with her advanced readers. So it's taken it to the next level. She did the advanced readers, then she just brought them together at the end.

That became a big part of her launch. But what's interesting is she told me, she said, you know, that was one of the highlights. I said, 'Of the launch?' and she said, 'Of my life.'

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, wow.

AJ Harper: Like a peak life experience.

Mike Michalowicz: Wow. With galley copies.

AJ Harper: Yeah, she said galleys. You don't have to have the finals.

Mike Michalowicz: I remember my mom, back in like the 70s, 80s, they had Tupperware parties. Hey, look at this plastic, that'll destroy the planet. Ugh, buy this.

AJ Harper: I mean, they're reusable.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, yeah. Well, I don't see Tupperware in anyone's house anymore. It's all in junkyards. What was interesting was the side conversations. You know, I'm, I'm 10 years old or whatever, but you hear people talking about the product, and then they start talking about, How they use the product.

They start talking about their recipes. It was just interesting. The side conversations that have come about. And I wonder in this personal gathering, if Amy was experiencing the same thing.

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AJ Harper: No doubt. Especially because of the topic.

Mike Michalowicz: Did she mic each person?

AJ Harper: She said that she had a videographer there. I don't, I don't recall.

Mike Michalowicz: That's such an interesting.

AJ Harper: But I, I, I feel like that's so brilliant. And I wanted to share it with listeners because. I think we can take that advanced reader experience to the next level and use it for marketing.

Mike Michalowicz: For sure.

AJ Harper: So it can be, so for example, and I've got a bunch of students doing this right now. I've been pitching this to my, I did to my last cohort which ended, uh, right before Thanksgiving. And a whole bunch of them are doing it in different ways. You know, however they want to do it. But I think it's also a great thing for you to do to incentivize a street team. So, Mike, think about it for your book.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: You could say, okay, I'm gonna do a book club for this, which means you're gonna have early access to the book, plus we're gonna meet on a weekly basis and talk about it. And then in exchange, you're part of the street team. And then here are the things that you need to do to help market the book. And the only way to get to the book club or to get into this book club experience, which I'm only going to do one time is to join the street team.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And in that case, you could have a whole bunch of people. You wouldn't just have to limit it to 24 people or whatever.

Mike Michalowicz: That's really interesting. I love the bookmark thing is just resonating in my head. Like, Oh, how do you,

AJ Harper: That's Amy, Amy Kemp, man.

Mike Michalowicz: It's a different deployment of something we talked about, um, episodes back and I can't remember the book. It sells in parallel to your book often. Uh, the book where you highlight red, yellow, green.

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AJ Harper: Oh yeah. Write Useful Books.

Mike Michalowicz: Write Useful Books. Um, so we've been using that strategy and it's interesting because you find Areas that are landing with people that you didn't think would and you need to amplify or build on it and so forth.

It sounds like she just has a even more engaging version of that.

AJ Harper: Well, I mean, that was, um, that's for the whole book, right?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Um, you know, I'm not a huge fan of the red, yellow, green. For every single chat, analyzing every little moment from multiple people.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, it could just be overwhelmed.

AJ Harper: It could be a thousand responses.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And who do you listen to?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. When it comes to advanced readers, how do you find who the best ones are? Do you go to your historical readers if you had other books?

AJ Harper: No.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

AJ Harper: It has to be the people who identify with your reader statement.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay. And how do you find them?

AJ Harper: Um, easy. Uh, you just go to the places where they hang out, or it could just be social media. Um, if you don't have access to groups or places where your reader might hang out, find, you know, ask someone you know who does, and they can just post about it. It's not that hard.

Mike Michalowicz: Does there need to be some form of currency exchange, meaning?

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AJ Harper: No.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay. I'm not saying financial dollars, but I'm saying like,

AJ Harper: No currency exchanges.

Mike Michalowicz: You get to read the book before anyone else does.

AJ Harper: Yeah. Sneak peek.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Okay. Yeah. Okay. Tell me about, uh, Michelle Begina.

AJ Harper: Yeah. *Be Good with Money*. She did a book club, but she had a facilitator.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, okay.

AJ Harper: So that took the pressure off of her. So then when they met every week, she was not the one leading.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, that's actually interesting. So did that give her an opportunity to be more observational? What's going on?

AJ Harper: Yeah. And also take the anxiety out of it.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay,

AJ Harper: Someone else is handling that component. So that's one way to do it. Um, but I think... You know, I wanted to talk through this because we are probably sleeping on advanced readers and sleeping on doing this sort of marketing stuff early in the process.

Yeah, which could give you if you recorded everything think about all the Footage you'd have.

Mike Michalowicz: I know. I know.

AJ Harper: I mean, you could have these big moments. If it's just, even if it's just a zoom call, they could end up, you could use for TikTok later that you could use for anything.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: So we're totally sleeping on this.

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Mike Michalowicz: Oh my God. That reminds me. I'm going to have to run after this and get a video record. We supposed to be recording this right now. There's a note, make sure you pick up the recorder, which I didn't do for TikTok for this, our own show right now.

AJ Harper: Well, we're not on TikTok talking about it right now. You won't see this convo on there.

Mike Michalowicz: No, you won't see this one, yeah.

AJ Harper: But my point is, this seems like a no brainer to me.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: To, to do it. Here's the challenge. You need time.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: So advanced reader feedback, you could just knock that out in two to four weeks. But if you do book club, it's longer.

Speaker 5: Yeah.

AJ Harper: So you just have to be prepared to do it. But there's... If, you know, you could still do it if you aren't worried about it, you know, here's, here's an alternative, still do advanced reader feedback that you're using, which in my book, I go through the whole process and I have a whole chapter on it. It's the same process we use with Mike's books.

You could go ahead and do that for the purpose of editing the book accordingly. But then you could do book club as a marketing tool. So it wouldn't be as much about did you like the book, but more about discussions about the book. So that way you aren't holding up the editing process. So you could do both.

Mike Michalowicz: That's super smart. I want to ask you a couple more questions. You referenced some of the classes you're doing though, and sometimes I mentioned at the end. Bye as one. Are our listeners to have the opportunity to work with you? So where do people go for that?

AJ Harper: Oh, you can go to ajharper.com.

Mike Michalowicz: Do you have anything coming up this year in 2025?

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AJ Harper: So I have something new that I did. I don't think I told you about, uh, is I have a membership now.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, I love it.

AJ Harper: So it's the top three membership. Um, and so it's like an all-access pass to all my Mastercraft classes, even the live stuff, like it was a zoom.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, that's amazing.

AJ Harper: It does not include workshop. Which is once a year. I accept 15 students.

Mike Michalowicz: As in person? Oh, what's the one at Madeline Island?

AJ Harper: That's not... Those are my retreats.

Mike Michalowicz: That's not workshop, that's retreats. Okay.

AJ Harper: I have a membership that allows you a big deep discount on those retreats. And, um, but it's all of my master crafts, my Get Ready to Write a Must-Read program, which is kind of like a slow entree, we did that last year.

Uh, it's a six-week editing class. I'm doing a three-part, uh, marketing breakdown class. So basically it's like all access pass. Like, you know, how may have masterclass and you can just watch everything. It's kind of like that.

Mike Michalowicz: And the community itself.

AJ Harper: Oh, and the sprint community. And then every week I do an hour long, uh, Q&A.

Mike Michalowicz: To me, that's my favorite. The support these authors give each other. That they're going through the journey together.

AJ Harper: Yeah, so, I have a membership, and you can pay monthly or annually, but it's a way something that people in my community ask me for. (Love it.) Because they don't want all the a la cartes.

They just want to be able to pay and just do all my things.

Mike Michalowicz: Love it. And one little plug for myself. Uh, we have Simplified, which is an imprint, my own imprint.

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AJ Harper: How's that going?

Mike Michalowicz: Great. We signed an author. We have a major mainstream traditionally published author that's now looking to move to us. We have a call with that person.

AJ Harper: Oh, I know. I know who that is. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: In two days. Um, they're seriously considering.

AJ Harper: What a coup.

Mike Michalowicz: What a coup. Uh, we have some other authors that have applied. If, just, if you're a listener and you're writing a nonfiction business book, uh, and you have a profound concept that simplifies something. John Briggs wrote about a whole new paradigm on the workforce hours. Um, that's the type of authors we're looking for. So you can reach out to this website, uh, through the Don't Write That Book website for a Simplified.

AJ Harper: I think that's your, your jam.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. What do you mean?

AJ Harper: Working with business authors,

Mike Michalowicz: Business authors. Yeah. That's our simplified, radically simplifying concepts, profound ideas. Um, and we're being highly selective, but you got to start off by at least reaching out.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: We're not, it's not like, Oh, just sign up. It is a hybrid publishing model and uh, it's, it's my own publisher. I'm publishing under simplified myself. Uh, oh, you are. Yeah. Yeah. The new book. It's going to be through simplified, which is not a business.

AJ Harper: No.

Mike Michalowicz: I know, but I talked with them. They said they want it through there because of Profit First. So Kind of weird to start off a little askew. But you have other authors that you're working with right now. They're going through the advanced reader stuff Brian Harriot.

AJ Harper: Brian did it and I think he might be almost done and—

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Mike Michalowicz: I love that guy

AJ Harper: Right?

Mike Michalowicz: what a great personality. What a great vision. What I think he's doing is in my opinion is taking that four-hour workweek concept that Tim Ferriss wrote and really putting it in a more modern more doable format but a simplified format.

AJ Harper: Well, he knows how to, he knows how to adjust, he plays with things in a way that's so interesting. Like, there's no, so everybody, he's writing for people who really want that time freedom, um, and the financial freedom that comes with it, but really it's time freedom, and he's figured it out for himself.

Mike Michalowicz: Totally.

AJ Harper: He, he takes the summer off, he's up at the lake in Wisconsin. And, um, but he did it in a way that we're always thinking it has to be one way. He did it in a way that's a, an interesting formula. Um, that he figured out for himself so that he's still the type of work he's doing, how he handles investments, how he thinks of his life as seasons, he has this whole, and you can piece it together in a way that makes sense for you, whereas I feel like four hour work week, while great, it, you know, it's a whole point of it was outsourcing everything.

And it, I don't know how many people were really working four hours a week, but

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, no, no, it

AJ Harper: His is more what life is like, where there's going to be times where you're working a lot and there's times when you don't have to work at all and it seemed, it seems more true to how life works.

Mike Michalowicz: Tim Ferriss himself said he doesn't work four hours a week, um, and I don't think he ever has. It was, you know, that title was a cherry-picked title.

AJ Harper: Yeah, I know. Yeah, it could have been six-hour, five-hour, twelve-hour.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Uh, any other authors?

AJ Harper: Scott Todd, who's doing, um, um, Fix This Next for Real Estate Investing.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh right. Okay.

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AJ Harper: He's doing it. Vicky Lanthier, who we interviewed for your book, High Agency Human. Um, they're, they're, they're all doing it.

Mike Michalowicz: All doing the advanced reader feedback.

AJ Harper: Yeah. So I, I want to encourage people to think about how can you do these things in advance to build the marketing momentum. It's the key here is about building marketing momentum.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Because yes, you want to glean these insights, but I think what's really cool is how you can then build off that to get footage, feedback, testimonials, um, buzz, all of that built around advanced readers.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, I like that. I like that.

AJ Harper: I want, I think you should do it. You know, one of the things I think you should do is a challenge.

Mike Michalowicz: The made for money challenge. A big challenge. Yeah.

AJ Harper: Mm hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah,

AJ Harper: And you could incorporate it with a book club.

Mike Michalowicz: I like that too, and it can be the made for money systems design that it could be a 30 day Yeah, keep it short.

AJ Harper: Yeah, and you could also if it works out you could do them on a rotating base on a revolving basis

Mike Michalowicz: I do like that. It reminds me of... We've talked, I think we brought up once before, body for life. We talked about that. They did a, uh, a body transformation challenge. The cool thing was when you bought the original book, I don't know how it is now, it was hardcover, you take the dust cover off and inside was a picture of maybe two or three hundred people that won all these different categories.

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AJ Harper: Oh yeah, all the pictures.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. You know those people are like, you gotta, you gotta buy this book. Like, it reminds me of like a restaurant when you see the—

AJ Harper: It sold me on it.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, it's holding me up, but those people that got recognized, those were the advanced street team, they're definitely big promoters of the book. They're featured in it, truly, via picture.

AJ Harper: Yeah, so I think, let's go beyond. Getting advanced reader feedback for the book and think also about creating experiences that build marketing moment. I love

Mike Michalowicz: that Yeah,

AJ Harper: I would really love to see you do something like this

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah,

AJ Harper: I don't think doing I think you could do book club slash challenge after the fact after advanced readers

Mike Michalowicz: Okay, I agree.

Anything else we want to talk about on this topic

AJ Harper: Um, just to, just so people know that if you're looking for the feedback specifically to shape the book, that you want to do that before you have to turn it into your developmental slash substantive editor. Just people always wondering, when do I do this?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AJ Harper: That's why I can slow it down. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: Um, I wanted to give some updates. So, first of all, With the book we're working on, uh, we're past, the manuscript was due, but we're past it, and there's certain life circumstances that, uh, present itself that there's no way you're gonna, we're gonna turn a manuscript into time.

Um, but now we're in this kind of tag state, you have the manuscript, I have the manuscript, you have the manuscript. How's that work for you at, at this stage, this tag thing? Is it because

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of, we're now at the deadline? Is it effective, or is this something that naturally comes about and should be happening anyway?

What's your thoughts?

AJ Harper: I mean, we've always done it like that.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Well, except for Pumpkin Plan.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, Pumpkin Plan, I think it was like, basically it was one big tag.

AJ Harper: I think you wrote the whole thing and gave it to me.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah,

AJ Harper: but we weren't working in a collaborative way yet.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Yeah, it evolved. I prefer the collaborative way.

Mike Michalowicz: I prefer the tagging. I, I like when there's like, like one chapter two, it's like, there's just a few thoughts like, just give me stuff. And then you just let me just put my junk in and then you clean it up, take it out, ditch it or whatever for me is effective.

AJ Harper: Yeah. I mean, I can't get to. So for the listeners, we'll exchange individual chapters. I can't get to the, uh, I don't write in order. I know you like to read in order.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, yeah, yeah, that's, yeah.

AJ Harper: But I can't, I don't.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. What do you write on? What do you feel called to write about? Yeah. Okay.

AJ Harper: Mm hmm. Then once we finally, I finally have most of it done, then we can pass the manuscript back and forth.

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Mike Michalowicz: What was, I don't know if the word's jarring for me, but the, you started with the introduction.

AJ Harper: I've never done that.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, typically it's the last thing. But what was interesting, In that process, you said, Oh, this is not a Profit First book. We actually even had that revelation on this show.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: And there's still references to Profit First in the intro chapter one, but significantly curtailed, because it's not a proper first book.

AJ Harper: No, it's not.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Uh, this book's been a challenge for me, just because it's not our same reader.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, it's a whole new

AJ Harper: And I've been sitting in that safe zone for 14 years.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, you know the reader inside and out.

AJ Harper: And it's kind of the reader. So, you're gonna get all your, your readers are gonna get it. They're gonna buy it.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: But it's not who it's for.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. It's so interesting meeting these folks. So I just did a presentation to about 250 employees, company employees. And it's a, it is a different thing. Like there, there isn't this for entrepreneurs, there's like, I will eat what I kill type of mentality.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: And for the employees it's, I know what's coming. There's a much greater form of predictability when it comes to income. And so their behavior around

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finances seems to be much more around I know what's coming. Let me manage with what I have coming. Um, it also seems, my conjecture is they're in a little bit of a longer play.

Like an entrepreneur says, I want to live a something, something dream. If I just sell really hard this month, I'll get there. But the employees I've been talking with, like, I want to own a house. But it's I know it's 10 years away like there's more reasonable.

AJ Harper: They're more reasonable, right? I know I I have that mentality to like well Okay, I'll just figure this out for the so for the next five years It's just gonna be like this for for two.

I'll just I'll just create a new product. I'll create a new thing I can make it happen. Yeah, but that's not the same mentality

Mike Michalowicz: So when presenting in the book, but also to people in person, it's like, yeah, you have a dream. You know, you talk to entrepreneurs, like we can do this. Like that. I actually feel that we can do this.

And in the miracle, you will pull it off in three months. But these folks, you say that this people glaze over and like, this guy's an idiot. It was the hype man. You got to speak in terms of long term play and they're used. To that.

AJ Harper: Yeah, I think it's fine. It's

Mike Michalowicz: the majority of the world like 99. Yeah.

AJ Harper: I mean, I've been leaning heavily into Worrying about money feeling bad about past money mistakes.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah Yeah.

AJ Harper: Um, coming up short.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: I think we're doing okay, but it's been a learning curve for me.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Uh, just honestly, because I didn't have to, I, you know, I retired from ghostwriting in 2015, maybe?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

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AJ Harper: It's been a minute.

Mike Michalowicz: That's 10 years. It feels

AJ Harper: like it was just a little bit ago. 10. So, I'm just writing for you, man.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh my.

AJ Harper: And I got into my, you know, like I know our people

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Underdog entrepreneurs,

Mike Michalowicz: Underdog entrepreneurs know what,

AJ Harper: know what to do there.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: So it's just a little bit of a, I don't, it took me a while Yeah. To get into my mojo.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Um, couple other updates. So I have a television show now. We were at the studio, I think.

AJ Harper: Oh yeah. I don't, I don't know anything about what's going on with that.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. So the working title for the television show selected by Visio is the. Distributor, which is the TV makers owned by Walmart, um, and it's gonna be distributed through what's called fast channel, which stands for free advertising supported streaming TV, F A S S T.

And, uh, the show's called the four-minute money makeover, which is the title they want. Fine. I think they're also into alliteration apparently like I am. So we went to the studio. There's a studio in East Hanover. We're coming in. Tracy Morgan from SNL's walking out.

AJ Harper: I love Tracy Morgan.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, he filmed, he wasn't physically walking, he was there the day before.

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They were showing work he was doing. This studio, I couldn't believe what a sophisticated show, a studio is, you know, 15 miles from here. And, uh, they're filming movies there, um, commercials, national syndicated television. And so, this is where we're going to be filming. What's so cool is The studio has all maybe 15 rooms you mentioned the Oprah book club where you heard they have like three of those rooms

AJ Harper: living room

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, you're in a living room nondescript modern Country, you can pick one you want and you're in that room and that's what they, the show may have that like, Oh, a guest comes in.

Let's talk with them at their home while you're in little country studio and you walk upstairs and now you have a green screen behind you and you walk to this other room and now you're at a bar. It was pretty remarkable. Um, that's going to be filmed starting in March, broadcast in May, six episodes, uh, 10 million impressions guaranteed by Vizio and we'll see.

But the thing that happened on Friday is, I can't say who the sponsor is yet, uh, got a major podca podcast. So it's gonna be, I don't know what the working title is, but the Mike Michalowicz Major Podcast backed by Big money. Um, and it came from the popularity of these books. They said, you are the authority in this space.

AJ Harper: Oh my.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Yeah. So it's exciting. So 2025 could be a lot more exposure for our work.

AJ Harper: I'm so excited for you.

Mike Michalowicz: Thank you. Yeah. So kudos to our... huge shout out is probably the right words to Andrea Conway. She is our marketing director. We don't have titles at the office, but that's what she capacity she's been negotiating or in conversations with them for about three to four months. And they called him Friday and said, we're doing it.

AJ Harper: Um, that's huge.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. So Wednesday I have a meeting and they're like, we're, we're finding a studio or building a podcast studio for you.

AJ Harper: where?

Mike Michalowicz: maybe my house. So we have an extra room. So Andrea proposed like we need a studio, but Mike can't be flying out to Texas. He's got gigs all over and they said,

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well, we'll find the near studio. They found one. They said, we're going to do initial ones there, but they said it may be more economical to build a studio. Do you want us to build some of your office? And we said, you know what? Could you put it in Mike's house?

Right? Yeah, absolutely. So we'll see. We'll see. Interesting. So exciting things going on. Could be a big year for us. 2025 for all of us. Um, Plus, you'll be moving to Madeline Island, like, permanently. Is it, are we almost there?

AJ Harper: Well, not for the whole year.

Mike Michalowicz: No, but, like, like, it'll be done.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: Is it, what, what percentage of the way along are we right now?

AJ Harper: Probably, like, 95.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh. Okay, good. I'm coming out, I got it on my calendar.

AJ Harper: I know.

Mike Michalowicz: I think it's in May.

AJ Harper: It is.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, so.

AJ Harper: Mm hmm. I'm warning you that it's going to be a little chilly.

Mike Michalowicz: That's okay.

AJ Harper: Cause it's, it's up there. Yeah, no, I know. I know. North country. That's okay.

Mike Michalowicz: That's okay. It's a little chilly down here right now. So I think a little more chill is okay. Thanks for listening to today's episode. If you haven't purchased AJ's book, what's going on? Write A Must Read. It's available at every indie bookstore. It's on Amazon. It's at Barnes and Nobles. If you're interested in applying for our imprint, we are now officially looking for business authors, but you have to have a profound concept.

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You got to be all in on authorship. This has to be a career commitment. Like you are an author. Not a side gig writing books, then we at least want to start the conversation. You can do that by emailing us at hello at DWTB podcast. com. Adayla, who does our production behind the scenes, she'll put you in touch with, uh, the right folks to get the conversation going.

So, uh, also anything you want to do, uh, with questions, comments, feedback about the show, we want it. Hello at DWTB podcast. com. That's also our domain go there to get our free materials. I think we're done today, AJ.

AJ Harper: We're done.

Mike Michalowicz: We're done. So thank you for joining us today. As always, the grand great reminder, don't write that book, write the greatest book you can.