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Episode 67:

Author Etiquette

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. It's funny that before we start recording, we have a little dialogue about the episode and, uh, I'm going to share a story and just a little bit and I'm like, ah, I've shared that before, shared it before.

And then one hit me. I'm like, oh my God, that was the biggest blunder. I probably ever made an author etiquette. That's we're gonna talk about today. And you're like, have you heard it for him? Like, yeah, I think, you know, so much. We're so in sync with our journey together. You probably know almost every story I've experienced as an author of significance.

Yeah, I think I divulge everything to you. And I feel the same is reverted back. I pretty much know. Most of the stories, where we have a shared book involved. Yeah,

AJ Harper: yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: Um.

AJ Harper: I love hearing stuff I haven't heard before, though.

Mike Michalowicz: It's fun.

AJ Harper: It's fun!

Mike Michalowicz: This is episode, uh, 67. We're talking about author etiquette. The ultimate, don't do that!

AJ Harper: Yeah, don't do that. Um, but do we shouldn't do intros? ,

Mike Michalowicz: I'm, oh yeah I am. I am.

AJ Harper: I'm sorry. I'm being a little bossy.

Mike Michalowicz: I like it, actually. You're promoting your own book?

AJ Harper: I did it one time.

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Mike Michalowicz: You're talking about your retreats?

AJ Harper: Well, that I feel bad, like, I, I, I, yeah, I want to tell people because what happens with the editing retreats is when people get around to doing it, I'm booked.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah,

AJ Harper: So I like to tell people get it get in there

Mike Michalowicz: and there is something extraordinary that happens when you're working in Collaboration with others not collaborative in parallel with others, even if you're just working on your own book and there's someone sitting next to you working on their book there's something magical there. And you get to observe AJ working on your book and other people's book, and you'll learn about your book. I took so I've, I've witnessed it. I've been there. It's unbelievable.

AJ Harper: That's a good way to introduce me, I guess.

Mike Michalowicz: There you go. That's your introduction. It's unbelievable. Well, you have this, uh, I can almost see it in your expression when it happens. When you're listening to someone. And all of a sudden you listen at a deep, such a deep level that you're, you're not just listening to them.

You're formulating the word, the flow. There's such a level of understanding. I actually don't witness that in many people in any aspect of life, particularly myself. You can go to a very deep level.

AJ Harper: I love that so much. There's this point in the editing retreats where I have, uh, and sometimes I change it up, you know, before every retreat, I, I read all of the submissions, I do copious notes. And then from that, I might change the agenda.

So if I, Oh, I'm seeing a pattern in these eight people who are randomly together, I might change the agenda. But one exercise I do, I have everybody, I got a whole wall that's just cork in the studio. So I have everybody take index cards. And map out their outline as they have it.

But I have them do it in a specific way, which I won't get into now, that addresses different types of feelings and things like that. So they're tracking things, reader journey, in an interesting way. And then I have them get up and tell everybody. So first they do it on their own and they put it on the wall.

And then they get up and they walk us through the whole book.

Mike Michalowicz: Wow.

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AJ Harper: And I'm listening. While they walk us through, I will stop them sometimes and ask questions. But then at the end, after they've done that, so they've done this very specific work about Reader Journey, shown us all of it, then I can see, oh, this, this, this, and then we can move things, we can, I see where we've got what we need to work on that week, what might need to shift, but it's, you're right, it's in the listening to what they're, And what's cool about doing it that way, it's the first thing we do, is that then that's context for the entire week.

So everybody knows about everybody's book because everybody's just done. A big old presentation about it. Anyway, I love listening to that because if I can see them talk about it, what they want, what they intend, I can see what we need to do. It's so, so, so fun. It's the most fun.

Mike Michalowicz: It's such a talent of yours. So A. J. Harper, author of Write a Must-Read, the authority in this space. You really are. Um, so if you're not familiar with A. J. 's work yet, my God. Who are you?

AJ Harper: And Mike Michalowicz, business author. But really, I think, um, don't you think you're more than that, business author? Like, I feel like you're on, I know you're on a mission to eradicate entrepreneurial poverty, but are you, don't you think it's getting bigger than that now?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, it is, it is.

AJ Harper: I just seen something happening to you that it's not, um, it was very contained. But I feel like you understand what people need to... It's not a coincidence that Profit First is the most successful. I think this deep pain we have about money.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: I think it's affecting you, especially all your interactions with people as a speaker and traveling the world and listening to people and all the emails you get. And I just see you evolving into helping even more people.

Mike Michalowicz: Maybe authors. Thank you. Maybe authors. It's not just author,

AJ Harper: not business author.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. I feel such a compulsion. I feel so compelled to serve the small business author, because they're the small business, uh, owner, because they're trying to lift themselves up, at least my opinion, by their own bootstraps.

It's the ultimate commitment or devotion to giving yourself spiritual and financial independence and other forms. But you know, with all the political stuff, not just in the U S

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and the globe, like all this stuff that's going on, you shared a few episodes. When I say a few, this could be like 20 episodes ago, I said, Oh, that's, she's totally right.

Work in your space. Like pick your thing and instead of being disappointed or upset, pick your thing that you want to serve. And I'm like, I got to serve the community that's struggling. Finances is the solution.

AJ Harper: Yeah. But don't you feel like even if you're not, it doesn't have to be a small business owner though.

That's what I'm saying. It's just finance. What you're really trying to do is help people who want to better their lives. In terms of money and finances and what that looks like. And I think this journey with the new book, it translates, it translates. That's

Mike Michalowicz: right. You're so good at this. I want to help people that want to better their lives and are doing it on their own.

AJ Harper: On their own!

Mike Michalowicz: You know? Yeah. Yeah,

AJ Harper: You're such, you're never gonna not be the DIY guy.

Mike Michalowicz: It's always DIY. It's always DIY. That's it. Yeah. So I'm feeling that. And the most efficient way.

AJ Harper: Yeah, so you're expanding. I love that. I love seeing that.

Mike Michalowicz: On today's episode, we're going to talk about author etiquette, and I often start off the story, but I think you have.

AJ Harper: Well, the episode is inspired by, um, I had a, yeah. So I, okay. So, you know, my zoom, if you get me on zoom, which, uh, my anybody pretty could on pretty, pretty much could on a, if you're in my writing spring community, I'm there on Fridays. But if you're in a meeting with me, my background, you know what it looks like. There's a shelf behind me and on the shelf for books, surprise, a bunch of my student books. And then one shelf is a Profit First on a shelf. And I have the little book stands and I have, I think, Clockwork, Profit First, and All In. And you know, I'm proud and I also like to promote. I don't in any way have any expectation that anyone knows my involvement in those books.

Like I do not, that's, that's never, I also have zero expectation that anybody knows who I am. So I'll give you that context. I, somebody from a group, Somebody asked, how do I say this without revealing, I mean, just think. I'm trying to anonymize the experience. Somebody

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asked me to have a meeting, you know those discovery calls where it's like, let's get to know each other.

How can we help each other? But they wanted to talk to me, and I said, sure, that's, that's fine. What do you, I get on the call, and the first person, the first thing this person says to me is, looks at the books on the book stand and says, I see you're a fan of Mike Michalowicz. And I was taken aback, I was like, what?

I mean, I guess, like, sure. And then I thought, oh, I said, she said, I am too, I'm a big fan. First of all, I was thinking, what kind of stalker gets bookstands to put their favorite author's book facing out so it's on Zoom the whole time? But then I thought, oh, she doesn't know.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, clearly.

AJ Harper: Now, I don't, again, do not expect her to automatically know, of course. But we are all in the modern times, folks. What did I do before the call? Went to her website, checked it all out, made sure I had some context. It didn't take me that long to have some context.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: I, it was, it was very interesting. I was like, I, I, um, yeah, I know my, like, I have some involvement in the books behind me.

Um, it's always awkward for me because to me they're always your books. Do you know what I mean? Like the, I don't.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, I understand, the intellectual property, but the co writing.

AJ Harper: I know. It's just.

Mike Michalowicz: I get it.

AJ Harper: I was aghast and it kind of went downhill from there because this person was trying to tell me how I can, um, How I had initially been contacted was

I was in a group talking about how I have a new book idea for myself and I got a message in the chat that said, I can help you publish that. I'm like, um, You know, let's just do a little Google. Let's just, just Google.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

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AJ Harper: Just a little to say I don't. So anyway, it didn't go well. It just went downhill from there that prompted me to say we need to have a conversation about how we interact with other authors. And let's just... for, here's the first tip, read someone's bio before you get on a call with them.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Or before you ask for a call with them.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Um, I've had, I've also had podcasts I've been on, Mike, podcasts, where the person had no idea why they booked me.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, my God.

AJ Harper: I didn't ask. This was an inbound.

Mike Michalowicz: They're like, why are you here?

AJ Harper: They were like, they didn't know the book.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, yeah.

AJ Harper: They didn't know what I was all about.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: It honestly takes almost no time.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Uh, especially if the person like myself has sent along the information that you need to look. that's very quick to read. But that inspired me to say we need to talk about author etiquette, just the whole gamut of this, um, blunders we've made or that others have made toward us.

Because when you become an author, I mean, some of it's just common sense just for humans, just humans interacting. But also there's some things. Now that you're an author, you probably need to be aware of that. You need to not. That's an interesting

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Mike Michalowicz: story. The analogy I use, and it's just the best I have to work with is really, it's a band. So we're in a band together.

AJ Harper: Yeah, we're in a band.

Mike Michalowicz: And I'm the front man, meaning I'm the singer of the band, but you're playing the guitar or the drums, whatever the instrument is that keeps the beat going, or is the melody or whatever you want to say. But the fan sees the singer and sometimes conflates a band as being the singer.

So it's, it's interesting, the celebrity ship of the Mike Michalowicz celebrities on three word, but the awareness of the Mike Michalowicz, it's character like the front man is, is growing in this year in 2025. It looks like it's going to amplify extraordinarily

AJ Harper: Because of the...

Mike Michalowicz: Well, the television show and we now have a podcast that's being backed by the tune of six figures in marketing dollars by another company.

I can't share the details there. Just about entrepreneurship. Um, we've got a studio, the whole thing and they're putting like, when I say six figures, not mid six figures, but not low six figures like we're talking, you know, mid between those type of things can amplify exposure and you never know, but it's a band.

And so. I think the consumer, uh, understandably so, thinks, Oh, that dude is all of it. Like, that dude writes all that stuff, um, does all his social media, is out there doing all the keynotes, uh, is everything. It's one person. No, there's like, at the, at the next level of support, if you will, the people that aren't the frontman, the musical or band now, seven or eight people.

AJ's keeps the beat going. We got Kelsey who's got going, Andrea, who's been remarkable. And then you have kind of the whole orchestra behind that, too. Like it's massive.

AJ Harper: I mean, it's the same for me. I got my band. I've got Sade and Laura.

Mike Michalowicz: Right. But everyone says, Oh, it's just AJ.

AJ Harper: Yeah, it's not.

Mike Michalowicz: It's not for those other people. At times it can be frustrating, frustrating and difficult. Sometimes it can be, I'm sure extraordinary too. that there isn't this awareness. So I kind of get it.

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AJ Harper: No, but I'm just referring to the fact that etiquette is, if you're going to talk to another author,

Mike Michalowicz: do your research.

AJ Harper: Yeah. Spend 20 seconds looking at their freaking bio.

Mike Michalowicz: So I'll give you an example.

AJ Harper: Let's hear, let's hear one. You doing a blunder.

Mike Michalowicz: You know this story now I think about it. And it's a blunder that was corrected, but it was a blunder on my behalf. When writing *Get Different*, the title is *Different is Better*. I knew that Sally Hogshead had a concept that *Different is Better Than Better*.

That's her thing. And she's got videos out there and stuff about it. And I had awareness about it, but I'm like, the book title is *Different is Better*. And I'm like, this is, it just makes sense. Not that there's anything wrong with that. I can title a book. Anyone can write a new book called *Profit First*. Like that's... And they do. But you can. Like there's no legal requirement or restriction, but there's this ethical thing. And there's also a moralistic thing. And so while at a subconscious level, I knew she had this, consciously I was like, I didn't even consider it until I asked for endorsements I get a what?

Oh, I didn't mean to swear. Oh,

AJ Harper: we're gonna beep it. It's gonna be beeps. Yeah. God,

Mike Michalowicz: I'm so sorry. 'cause we have like eight year olds listening. I'm so

AJ Harper: I know, but it's gonna get beep. Just put a, give a note to a and note to no a
Yeah, just beep it.

Mike Michalowicz: Lemme put the word beep in here. Um, so sorry about the swear. So, and I'm trying to swear less anyway 'cause I don't, I dunno.

So Sally calls and goes, what the f? And I said, uh, what do you mean? And, and she goes, you know, whatever. So we, we address it. And there's this last minute, last, you know, 12th hour kind of adjustment. And we changed title to get different.

AJ Harper: I, I, I

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Mike Michalowicz: You were there.

AJ Harper: I . Yeah. I have the, there's another blunder in that whole thing.

Story. But go ahead.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay. And I think that title was actually a poor selection in retrospect. No. 'cause it

AJ Harper: should have been one st a third option. You came up with it later. Something about getting noticed.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. It should be marketing. That can't be ignored. That's a better, that the subtitle is a better title.

AJ Harper: Or Get Noticed.

Mike Michalowicz: Get noticed. Yeah. Yeah. Get, yeah, exactly. get noticed. Yeah. So that was a, a blunder and. Whatever. The relationship with Sally is so much stronger, and she actually was on stage at an event, and I was at the event, and she points, and she's like, I want to tell you about this guy, and she just starts going on and lauding that I changed the title. We should have never, we should have never had a situation in the first place.

AJ Harper: But the blunder was, you know, you're in somebody's world. Yeah. And you can see them talking about it. I still stepped down. Just a courtesy call. Yeah, that's it. That would be author etiquette there. Yeah. Just a quick call.

Mike Michalowicz: So, do your homework. But also, I think authors, what's unique about the author community is it truly is a community of abundance and that the performance of one author elevates the performance of another. And what I mean by this is if Sally's books are popular on the subject of marketing, someone will fall, if they fall in love with her book, they fall in love with the concept of marketing.

They will have the propensity to consume more bargaining books, not just Sally. Some people of course are loyal to their authors. Anything produced by Bob Berg, I'll read it. If you're as a go giver about anything, I'll read it. You love Bob. I love Bob. But. The concept of contribution has inspired me to read other books on that subject.

So I don't read Bob's books only because they're Bob's books. I read Bob's books and I'm inspired to read other books. I think my sense is the majority, but the small majority of authors get that, that the more I promote to other authors and their work is successful and impactful, it will come back to the community.

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AJ Harper: That's author etiquette too is promoting other authors, or we call it literary citizenship. But I, I feel like authors make mistakes. And we wanted to talk in this episode about don't do that thing.

Mike Michalowicz: So tell me about expanding the network of authors.

AJ Harper: Can I just say, I didn't plan to share it, but since you mentioned having 12 hours to change the title for Get Different.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AJ Harper: You remember what happened?

Mike Michalowicz: You remember, uh, Nicole Papadopoulos, I think it was her name? I can't remember her name.

AJ Harper: Do you remember that we had an editor named Chase? At the time. It was, it was just very brief.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, vaguely, vaguely. Okay,

AJ Harper: So we got, uh, it was between Kaushik and Noah.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, was Get Different between Kaushik and

AJ Harper: Noah? Okay, yes.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay. And then what happened with Chase?

AJ Harper: We had to change the title, and we were on a Zoom call with the marketing department, and you, and I think Kelsey might have been on the line, and the new editor, and I remember because I had to take the call outside the physical therapist's office because my son had had a basketball injury, and he was inside, and I was in the parking lot.

And I'm listening mostly, uh, to this call, and I, and, uh, this editor is pushing, pushing, pushing for one title. I'm like, what the frick, this person, this is a terrible title, and it finally dawned on me. Oh, I don't think you read the book.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, I do remember that.

AJ Harper: And so meanwhile, I'm on the Zoom with you guys, and then I put myself on mute and started texting you.

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Mike Michalowicz: I do remember this.

AJ Harper: And I said, Mike,

Mike Michalowicz: You didn't read the book.

AJ Harper: Yeah. And then just like in the movies, 10 seconds later. You were like, hey, uh, Chase.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. I confronted him.

AJ Harper: You did. And he, he hadn't.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. And he said it.

AJ Harper: Yeah. So author etiquette, don't tell people, whether you're an editor or another author or anybody, do not tell people you read the book.

Mike Michalowicz: When you didn't. Yeah, don't lie.

AJ Harper: Oh, you know what, you'd be shocked how many times this happened. I've, marketing directors I've talked to, oh, I love the blah, blah, blah. Had not read a freaking word. Yeah. And authors know.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Yeah, you sniffed it out. It was coming, it was maybe becoming more obvious to me. You sniffed it out right away. I do remember that guy now.

AJ Harper: I got it. Can I text while I'm on Zoom? I wasn't sure. So that's another bad etiquette. Don't do that.

Mike Michalowicz: Don't do that. Chase, um, how about expanding your author network? You know, some authors want to be friends. For certain reasons, others want the business advantage and are they coming from a genuine place?

AJ Harper: Number one, you know? You can't just say, we should be friends because it's advantageous to me, which is what a lot of people are doing. So I think that speaks to what we just said, which is know a person's work. I mean, can you really want to be friends with someone if you don't at least have an idea of what they're doing, who they serve?

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Mike Michalowicz: Is there, there's certain authors I want to be friends with. There's other authors I want a great business relationship with. I'll give you an example, Michael Bungay Stanier. I wish I was his best friend

AJ Harper: I know you've become you're super and you're super fanboy.

Mike Michalowicz: A super fanboy, but nothing... Like, I love is just hanging out with him.

AJ Harper: I mean, yeah

Mike Michalowicz: Jay Papasan. I would love just to be his buddy. Joseph Wynn, authors that I would like to have great relationships with and are extraordinary. Business relationships, but I wouldn't want to seek a friendship, Dorie Clark. I love Dorie Clark, I love her business acumen, but we just, there's not this, this commonality or connection like, Oh, I want to go have some coffee with Dorie, just to have coffee.

AJ Harper: So then the advice is, you know what I'm saying? Yeah, so then if you want to be friends, be friends in a normal way, the same way you would make friends.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Like this weird etiquette of like, um, trying to cozy up to people in, it's not you, it's not what you would do, but I see people kind of calculating, how am I going to get to be friends with this person?

Mike Michalowicz: But should I categorize first? Like, Dorie is a, and I think she feels the same way about me, like, I, I don't think Dorie would call me and say, hey, just want to hang out and watch a football game together?

AJ Harper: I don't know her, so I can't speak to her.

Mike Michalowicz: But you see him saying, like, like, I'm just saying, I don't think she feels like she wants to have a, uh, a relationship that's outside of, of the businesses that we're in.

Where, like, with Jay, or, and I don't have relationships with Jay or Michael that way, but like, hey, if I was in town, like, let's not say a word about authorship.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: Let's just go watch the basketball game.

AJ Harper: Yeah, but I, but I think—

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Mike Michalowicz: Do you categorize those relationships, kind of, in your mind?

AJ Harper: No, just be like a human being that's just be like, Hey, you want to like, you want to hit the movies?

You know what I mean? Like, just, just like you would any relationship. I just think a lot. I just, what I hear from you, I really like, I feel like we could be friends. It's okay. You got to put yourself out there, but don't do it in a way that's in any way. You're not going to, the etiquette is do not ask for a single thing.

And be respectful of that person's time. The thing about authors, especially successful authors, is they're dang busy.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And I'm seeing too many authors who are coming up who have unrealistic expectations about how much that author can do. They don't realize the demands on their time and so they're trying to do, get their attention asking too much right off the bat and or asking them to do something too fast.

Mike Michalowicz: I got a moral dilemma for you.

AJ Harper: Okay.

Mike Michalowicz: See how I did that hand like I'm an Italian? I'm like, I got a moral dilemma for you. (You did.) Oh, I forgot to be filming this. On our next episode, I'm going to run across and get our cameras so we can film. Okay. There are people that go on TikTok. Actually, I'm going to film from my handheld, you.

AJ Harper: Do it.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay. But, uh

AJ Harper: You can just flip the camera and film yourself.

Mike Michalowicz: No, but I can't see that. So, here's my moral dilemma. There is I got to be careful because I don't want to reveal names, a very recognized person where I have an opportunity to speak at their event, which is they host a very large event, bigger than most stages in the entrepreneurial space.

I also question, not their ethics, but their approach and style is absolutely contrary to mine. Um, so this, this brand is much more, we're great, you're, you're not. You suck. Ehhhh. It's,

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yeah. You know, me, it's, we're all great, let's just elevate each other. The community this person represents is a community that's not, not familiar with what I'm having, so it can, it can expand and I can serve a lot of people that aren't exposed to this approach.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: I'm just wondering if you have, perceivably, and I don't know this person personally, so maybe it's just the way they position themselves. If, if you kind of have a moral conflict?

AJ Harper: Uh huh. Ethical conflict? Uh huh.

Mike Michalowicz: How do you handle that?

AJ Harper: Say, you know what, I'm booked. Okay, so. Seriously, you can't, you can't do that. You gotta stick with your, you gotta stick with who you are. You can't ever, ever stray from it.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Ever.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, but could, could I go on stage and say, hey, listen, we have different opinions. This is just the way I present myself and just still be authentically myself.

AJ Harper: But you just said that, like, so if, if that person is having that sort of attitude, then that person is also attracting those people.

Mike Michalowicz: Could be, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

AJ Harper: But do you really want to align yourself with that person?

Mike Michalowicz: No, I don't want to align with them, but at the same point, I wonder if there's people in that community,

AJ Harper: There could be, but you would still be perceived as aligning yourself with that. That's a good point I want you to imagine yourself on a poster next to that person.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Oh, that's a good one

AJ Harper: And then say do I want to be on that poster? I'm telling you I got so many people from my past that people like why don't you hit that person up to help you with this or

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that because I... I know too much. I can't, I know too much to ever want to be on a poster with that person.

Mike Michalowicz: That is a great technique.

AJ Harper: Yeah, I just thought of it. That's good. But it's really, you feel tempted because you think, but I can still be of service. But actually the perception is you're with that person.

Mike Michalowicz: Right.

AJ Harper: You know?

Mike Michalowicz: Right.

AJ Harper: So, you do have to be careful, especially once you've reached a level of success, you're telling people, everything you do is telling people who you are.

Mike Michalowicz: Yes.

AJ Harper: You have to be careful about it.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, that's so interesting.

AJ Harper: You, you're not wanting for people, just dig deeper into who else is like you.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: Talk about, um, wanting endorsements or some other kind of support?

AJ Harper: Major, major etiquette. We've talked about it before. Uh, don't ask people, uh, total strangers to endorse your book unless you have some, you gotta have some sort of Relationship introduction, referral, you've done something quirky or weird, or someone entered something. You can't just go in cold and expect that. Um, also don't send books automatically through the mail or through email.

Please don't do it. I got a request. I'm getting more of these now.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

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AJ Harper: And I'm always shocked because I'm like, why you want me? I'm the—

Mike Michalowicz: Because of your book, Write a Must-Read?

AJ Harper: I guess, but it's just, uh, odd.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

AJ Harper: I got one that was so terrible. What do you mean? I had such feeling for you. Because I know you get these constantly. It was, the request did not acknowledge me in any way as like, hi, I, whatever. I think we kind of knew each other once upon a time. The book was absolutely horrible. Like, I, I did open it and look on the, and I was, I was absolutely shocked. Shocked. Like I can't, couldn't in my wildest dreams ever endorse such a thing.

But mostly it was the approach, you know, of just, um, I need an endorsement. And also they wanted it in like a week. So that's the other etiquette piece. If you see how you laugh immediately, you've got to give people time. I tell my students, you need months. You can't, especially if you're going after someone big.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: They don't have time for this stuff.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: So don't come in at the 11th hour and say, and I need it by this time, uh, in a few days, you're not getting it.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: Or even if it is your friend.

AJ Harper: Can you imagine if I, I mean, you'd do it for me if I said, Oh my, I forgot to ask you.

Mike Michalowicz: For you, I'd do anything.

AJ Harper: You would, I know. But you would also be like, are you freaking serious? It's, what are you, what are you doing?

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Mike Michalowicz: Well, we have a relationship. It's such an established relationship. I, I will take the bullet and you've taken the bullet for me so many times.

AJ Harper: For sure. But you would also give me a heart. You'd be like, are you, come on now.

Mike Michalowicz: What, what I don't like, let me ask you about this. Um, not liking is not the right word, but authors will go to you.

AJ Harper: Yes.

Mike Michalowicz: And say, can you do me a favor? They're trying to leverage you to get to me.

AJ Harper: All the time.

Mike Michalowicz: And my response, of course I'll do it because, because I also trust your filter. Like, you're, you're not going to say to everyone, okay, you filter. So I'm like, okay.

AJ Harper: I don't give you everyone.

Mike Michalowicz: I know, I know you don't. That's because I know you're filtering. And the same thing, I've come back and say, hey, just make this person make an extra effort. I can't think of, and maybe some of these others have, I can't think of more than one.

Or two, what I call, extraordinary efforts from someone, uh, to seek an endorsement from me, ever.

AJ Harper: I, I sent you, um I sent you one and you, they did do an, yeah,

Mike Michalowicz: that's maybe the one or two. Um, so here's what I mean. Extraordinary. First of all, it's compassionate of the burden or the request you're making of someone else.

Yeah. Secondly, is that you're seeking permission before you make the ask third, it's done in a way that is. unique to that person and caring of that person. Um, we shared this example before, but when we went to Seth Godin and Michael Gerber and stuff to see the whole...

AJ Harper: Operation.

Mike Michalowicz: It was a whole operation, but it was caring, unique, thoughtful.

AJ Harper: Thoughtful.

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Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. And it was very low burden for them.

AJ Harper: We also had the best time doing it.

Mike Michalowicz: It was so much fun.

AJ Harper: My favorite ghostwriting experience of my entire life was that. Trying to get endorsements from those heavy hitters, which now I'm People look at your endorsements and think, well, of course you got those.

But at the time, every single one of them was a long shot. Every single one of them was like, Oh, how the hell are we going to get that?

Mike Michalowicz: But it was respectful, thoughtful,

AJ Harper: respectful, fun, thoughtful, some creativity put into it

Mike Michalowicz: over at the author office down the street from here, from our podcast center, we have a table, actually a room now that's stacked with people sending unsolicited books.

I also feel guilty about discarding them. So we try to donate them. And they just file up. But it's, it's almost predictable. It's a custom box. Like this is like the high-end effort. It's a custom box with their face on it or their book cover on it.

AJ Harper: The book kit with everything. You open it up.

Mike Michalowicz: There is this stuffing material that it's like shredded paper, colored paper.

It's such a waste of paper and it falls all over the office. Then there's some Cheesy Chotsky associated with, yeah, but it's like, but itself, it's like a quote on a piece of metal from their own book for me to, to do what on a necklace so I can wear around my neck or it's, um, uh, just a weird. quote unquote gift that has her logo emblazoned on it.

John Rulon, who sadly passed away last year, this, he would go mad over stuff like this. He's like, no one gives two hoots about your logo. If you're going to give a gift, give something that is caring for them. Send them a piece of metal with their book quote on it.

AJ Harper: Yes.

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Mike Michalowicz: That's what John would have done. Um, so we had these piled up. These are even more annoying than some, uh, I'd rather get the email saying, uh, please endorse my book by tomorrow morning than getting these, these kits.

AJ Harper: Don't, don't send anything without asking.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Always ask permission.

AJ Harper: Don't send anything without asking. Unless, well, hang on now.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: We did send the letter. To we sent letters so you could send a letter without asking but don't send the book itself or—

Mike Michalowicz: You know, oh we got, we sought out Gerber and all

AJ Harper: We sent the letter, right?

Mike Michalowicz: But the thought behind it was the or the positioning was this wasn't a letter from me asking it was the strange circumstance where my mother Who doesn't even know how email works, decides to send out a letter, and inserts my pictures on it.

That was marketing asking them permission.

AJ Harper: The other thing is, author etiquette, I feel, this may be hard for people to swallow. But it's actually quite a lot to ask a person to read your stuff. (Yeah.) And you think it isn't, but authors read all the time. Authors read all the time. And don't have time to read your stuff.

So, By sending, I get this too, here's my book, would you, you know, I read, I read your book and I was inspired by it and would you hear, would you like to read my book? You know, in a perfect world, I could read everybody's book, but I don't think people realize how much authors or people like me who are also editors actually read.

We're reading all the time constantly and we don't actually have time.

Mike Michalowicz: That's right.

AJ Harper: We don't have time and there's no mention of like Why? It's to read it Because it, and the, the phrasing is like

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it's to read it to see how great the book is, but it's not to say, you know, I think you would love this book, Mike, because lately I know that you've been really, um, focused on learning guitar and I've got this whole thing I did. I did this deep dive on the history of like, I don't know, the slide guitar, and I just thought you would just get a gas out of it.

So. I don't expect you to read the whole book, but here's this page. 67 through 70 is a story you may have never heard. And, um, I put a post in it for you in case you just want to check that out. You would probably pay attention to that because somebody made the point to say, Mike would be interested in guitars.

Mike Michalowicz: It's the thought they did the work of thinking,

AJ Harper: This is my awesome book that I need you to read to tell me it's also awesome.

Mike Michalowicz: Right?

AJ Harper: Like, no. That's not happening. And I'm not going to read your book to tell you if it's any good and I'm not going to read your book to refer you to an agent,

Mike Michalowicz: You know.

AJ Harper: Like this is all bad etiquette. All bad.

Mike Michalowicz: You know, what's funny is, um, let me flip the camera on me now. So I have this recording here cause I forgot bringing cameras in. You know, it would be kind of cool is if someone sent me their book saying, I just wrote a book. I don't expect you to read it. I don't think you'll read it. And I'm not sending you this for any other purpose.

I know that you're big into guitar and I wrote a guitar story and it's these pages like they can literally send a book. I realized part of the ultimate goal is they have promotion, but it's still caring for me.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: I've received that so much better.

AJ Harper: You would so much. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: The swag, the unnecessary swag. Almost makes me angry when I receive stuff.

AJ Harper: What would you want in a swag, if you... Just the book, man!

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Mike Michalowicz: With, with me asking for it. Me saying, yes, I'd like to read your book.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: Or how you explained it, saying, hey, I'm just sending you a book because it's one page. I think you'll love it, but please don't feel any obligation.

It's when I swag, I don't know what to do with it. You're, you're putting obligation on me to get rid of stuff. Like, oh, more for the junkyard, more for the landfill. Like, I don't want that.

AJ Harper: Yeah, you know, um, I'm thinking of, um, So, you know, my wife gives me flowers every week.

Mike Michalowicz: I know. She's on that for ever since you've been married.

AJ Harper: Well, since we could afford to. Okay. We were broke for a lot of those years. Cheeseburger Tuesdays at McDonald's.

Mike Michalowicz: I remember you telling me that story.

AJ Harper: 29 cents. Um, and I used to put the flowers positioned on my desk so that on the Zoom call I could see the flowers, because I was on Zoom so much during the day that I was never seeing the freaking flowers because I was staring at a screen.

So I thought, oh, if I put them right here, I can see them while I'm on Zoom. But then everybody else saw them while I was on zoom, right? And, um, I got, I started noticing that when people would thank me for things, it was always flowers. And which was great, but that's thoughtful because like, oh, I see that she likes flowers or I say all the time, time for cake.

That's sort of my code for like celebrate, you know, which incidentally I didn't do when we turned in our manuscript, which is against my own guidance. Well, we got tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow I will. But if somebody was really wanting to get my attention, you know, cake.

Mike Michalowicz: Interesting.

AJ Harper: You know, although I don't know that I would want to eat a cake from, it would have to be from like an established bakery.

Mike Michalowicz: Correct.

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AJ Harper: Right. Correct.

Mike Michalowicz: Because you wouldn't be nervous about what's in there.

AJ Harper: I'm not from the eighties, man. Razor blades in the apples, poison candy.

Mike Michalowicz: The Tylenol?

AJ Harper: The Tylenol. But anyway, that, you know, I'm giving an example of like, you know, or I'm talking incessantly about Lake Superior. So if somebody's like, I found this, you know, cool book on Lake Superior, or I found, here's a key chain with what I, I would be like, aww. Because you listened. That's what, that's all it is. You listened. You listened.

Mike Michalowicz: When you get a bad Amazon review. What's, what's the author? I think they differ on this. Yeah.

AJ Harper: The worst thing you could do is get defensive and publicly defend an Amazon review that's bad or respond to it.

Mike Michalowicz: So you're saying just silence?

AJ Harper: Silence.

Mike Michalowicz: yeah.

AJ Harper: Let me explain why. Yeah. Reviews aren't for authors, or for readers, not authors.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm.

AJ Harper: We think they're ours. We think it's about us. It's not. It's to tip off other readers. Yeah. That's not our space at all. And in fact, there's a whole website dedicated to what's called BBAs, Badly Behaving Authors.

Mike Michalowicz: Is it called that?

AJ Harper: Yeah, I don't remember the exact URL, but yeah, it's the BBAs. It's very prominent in the fiction world where people will go off on a bad review, but what happens is Reviewers, because they're all connected on Goodreads and other spaces, they will rally their troops then, because you're not supposed to respond.

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And if you get upset over a review and you get defensive and you, and you try and prove that that's wrong or you get upset about it, they will come for you.

Mike Michalowicz: They will?

AJ Harper: They will come for you. So you have to be like, that's not my space. That's cool. Um, and you have to refrain, you have to let it, let it be what it is, take it in or not, but just move on.

It doesn't, you are not responding. Zero, zero, zero. On the flip side though, this is one of the other reasons I want to do this. Now you're an author, never, ever, ever, ever, ever leave a public review that is less than four stars.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. I made that mistake. Oh, that was bad author etiquette for me. I did that once.

AJ Harper: You did it?

Mike Michalowicz: I read a book. My opinion, it was like a two star. I don't know who the author was. I read the book. I was like, this book is horrible. It just said the same words over and over and over. So, in my review, I said this is not a good book.

AJ Harper: With your name?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, I put my name on it. So that author, ironically, who talks, the book was about um, Uh, about candor and kindness calls another author who then says, uh, basically threatens me, uh, not, not that author. He's like, this author is really pissed. And I'm like, okay. So I said, I'll delete it.

AJ Harper: Yes.

Mike Michalowicz: And I did, but, but, uh, it was honest. So that was a blunder.

AJ Harper: That is a big blunder. Like those days are gone. Once you're an author, you don't get that freedom. You don't get the freedom.

Mike Michalowicz: So I didn't realize that. That's how I learned it. The other thing that's interesting is my opinion is the most important review is the one-star review because it attracts a train wreck. My opinion is changing now. Oh! Because Amazon's implemented an AI summary system. The number one thing that's getting looked at is not the one star. It's the summary first now.

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AJ Harper: Yeah, I noticed that.

Mike Michalowicz: So you, what I believe how we handled reviews in the past as a consumer, I look at a book, I would look at the overall star rating. Is it a four star, four and a half star, five star or something? Then I look at the quantity. Does it have 10 reviews or 10,000? The more reviews, the more likely it's a qualified book.

Then I would scroll through the reviews to go through the one stars and say, Is there anything that is, um, uh, appropriate? Why this book is not of quality or is it just someone trolling? Yeah, and you can kind of distinguish that that was the fastest way to get that information. Now the fast way to get the information is what's the overall star review?

What's the quantity reviews and what's the summary say because I trust that and so I don't even go to the one star anymore. And I think that's the behavior now. So I used to say with the one star. If you've got one that's trolly, people can distinguish it. You can just leave that alone. But if someone says something that's not factual, you have the opportunity to go in there and say, well, I understand and appreciate your desire to point out what could be improved.

This is actually not factual. I look at, we rent Airbnb, Krista and I occasionally, and I'll see an Airbnb that has all these wonderful reviews. And there's a couple that are just slamming the place like filthy. And then I look at the response. And if the owner's like, Um, I understand your concern, but let's just lay out, let's the facts.

You came in, you brought a dog, and there's no dog permitted here. Your dog crapped in the living room, and you guys slipped on it. And now you're saying that we leave a filthy place. Understand we had to incur a cleaning fee because you didn't follow the rules. Then I'm like, oh, this is why the person's being retaliatory.

I, that's the time I think that you can use it.

AJ Harper: You know what? I had to disagree.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

AJ Harper: I think it's fine for Airbnb. But I don't think it's fine for books.

Mike Michalowicz: This might be one of our great debates.

AJ Harper: I don't think it's fine for books. I think books are different. Books, the reviews, I don't think it's the same as a service type business like that. I think, um, let it go. Just let it go.

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Mike Michalowicz: Just let it go. Um, what if, um, you don't like an author's book and you want to give them credit? Feedback on that. Is that even appropriate outside of the review system?

AJ Harper: No,

Mike Michalowicz: Just, just let it be?

AJ Harper: No, the etiquette is shut your freaking mouth.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

AJ Harper: Seriously. Find something you do like. So if this is a friend, it's really bad when it's a friend

Mike Michalowicz: And you don't like their book.

AJ Harper: Yeah, it's really bad. It's really bad. So what do you do? Well, find something you do like and be specific so people can tell when you're kind of hedging. So what I recommend, the easiest thing you can do to make an author happy is to find a certain line or phrase that you really loved and say, you know what I loved on page 97 you said this and I loved it so much.

I folded the corner down. And highlighted it, take a picture, send it to them. No, I'm serious. Tell them I wrote it down, it's in my wallet. You can find one good line in a friend's book to do them a solid, okay? Now everybody's gonna be like, wait, someone took, AJ said that on the podcast. Oh no! No, okay, but the point being, find one thing you do like.

I like the way you XYZ. Um, and, and then let the rest go. Honestly, let the rest go.

Mike Michalowicz: Is there any blunders you see when it comes to acknowledgments, any way in writing the book itself? Dedication? Can you make a dedication blunder?

AJ Harper: Sure. I mean, I don't know. What that would be, but I guess...

Mike Michalowicz: "I dedicate this book to anyone who's not an idiot."

AJ Harper: Okay, that would be a little bit. That would be a choice. Yeah, but a blunder and acknowledgments is not acknowledging the people who helped make the book possible. So that's your own personal team you mentioned On, I think, an earlier episode. Was it last episode we were talking about us being in a band?

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Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, it's like a band.

AJ Harper: Yeah, so, acknowledge the band. Just like at the end, they're about to play the encore. They're closing up, and they say, So and so on drums!

Mike Michalowicz: Exactly.

AJ Harper: Right? I mean, you gotta make sure everybody in the band, and in the wings.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, the roadies.

AJ Harper: The roadies.

Mike Michalowicz: The producer back there with the music board.

AJ Harper: Get your Oscar speech ready. But especially do not forget to acknowledge the people at your publishing house. It happens all the time. It's a very bad form. You know, at a minimum, put their names. That should be your editor, uh, If you knew your copy editor's name, sometimes you don't. Anybody who, managing editor, anybody that's project manager, if you know the marketing director, all their names go there.

Mike Michalowicz: Our experience with Ronnie, she is the liaison, uh, at Page Two, and she's doing some exceptional things, in my opinion.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: Um, When someone does something exceptional, do you give them a little more matter?

AJ Harper: Yeah, so acknowledge why they're exceptional. Explain. Um, you know, most people, the average reader isn't going to pay that much attention to it, but Ronnie is.

Mike Michalowicz: Uh, what about people who endorsed your book?

AJ Harper: I don't think you necessarily have to thank the people who endorsed your book in the acknowledgments, because they haven't really done any heavy lifting, unless they also were a special, like I thanked you. You endorsed my book, and I thanked you in the acknowledgments, because of our personal relationship.

Mike Michalowicz: And you have me in your book. Yes. That is very kind of you.

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AJ Harper: Yes. Um. And I think, you know, Michael and Amy Port, for example, because for me, it was formative my experience with them in terms of stepping out from behind the curtain, that kind of thing. That's meaningful. You should say—

Mike Michalowicz: That's a book title.

AJ Harper: “Stepping out from behind the curtain” probably exists. Probably does. But thank them with, um, in some other way, you know,

Mike Michalowicz: So, uh, a thank you card, or like..?

AJ Harper: You do shadow boxes.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, we send shadow boxes, uh, and I'll do it for everyone that has a story in the book. Yeah. And I'll send them a copy of the cover, then an excerpt from their page where they're highlighted, or at least reference the page numbers if it's a longer story, and I'll write a personal thank you note.

Yeah. Um, there's actually, we're here at the Profit First Professionals offices on the wall. I didn't notice that Ron has, he's in one of the books, Clockwork. He's got that shadow box on the wall. He's, he's honored that he's in the book.

AJ Harper: Yeah. And it was a conflict story.

Mike Michalowicz: It's a conflict story, which is, you know, speaks to him.

AJ Harper: Yeah. He has strong character. He's got good character.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Um, what about in any blunders with the editor in the communication? We, we did substantive editing last week. We talked about that. Any blunders there?

AJ Harper: Um, the biggest blunder you can make with your editor is to send them a hot freaking mess and help them figure, Ask them to figure out how to fix it.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah,

AJ Harper: but um, here's a simple one. This may sound obvious to you. Could you just run spell check before you turn it in? No, I'm not kidding.

Mike Michalowicz: No, I know you're right because I know now,

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AJ Harper: Technically, Microsoft Word does not follow the Chicago Manual of Style, so not every grammar selection is going to be correct according to Chicago.

That said, I, you can be dang sure that even me, an editor of many, many decades, Not many, many, two, two decades. Still ran spellcheck before I turned that in last Monday. I sure did.

Mike Michalowicz: Spellcheck within Word or you did it separately?

AJ Harper: It sounds so silly, but you think you got it. You don't got it. I still had 20 spelling errors despite going over it myself, but I just didn't notice.

Mike Michalowicz: When just flowing. Yeah. Oh, actually, this is something interesting. As I was going through the book, as we're going back and forth and I'm reading, if I saw a spelling error, I fix it to in the moment. Yeah. I just think, Oh, just leave it. Just get to the white need to do. But no, if you see an error, fix it.

Of course, because I'm like, this will now passing the burden, someone else to find it. And what if it doesn't get caught because I know in our proofreading when we do proofing, there's still errors.

AJ Harper: Oh, yeah. It's a whole thing. It's like that's our game though.

Mike Michalowicz: They call it half-life with nuclear decline.

Like if there's a radiation, um, and say within one hour, it The radiation declines by 50%. One hour later, it'll be 50 percent of that 50%.

AJ Harper: We do say that in editing too. We say every single editor gets rid of 50 percent of the problems.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay. Or errors. I think it's called half lifing. What's interesting is by mathematical law, it never goes away.

That means there's always something, there's always some nuclear waste. into perpetuity, because you can only, you have to have something exists. Um, you know, one blunder I think authors make is not calling themselves an author, like acknowledging to yourself guilty as charged. And we've talked about this transition to where people say, what do you do for a living?

I'm like, Oh, I'm an entrepreneur. I own a business. Oh, I happen to have written books. No, if you're an author, um, devote your, the title, the ownership of that to yourself,

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AJ Harper: Bad etiquette towards yourself.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, it's denying yourself your identity, uh, and I think that's shameful. Don't be that author.

AJ Harper: Don't do it.

Mike Michalowicz: Anything else you got?

AJ Harper: I mean, probably. I just, people... Oh, man. I just, I just feel like, use common sense and realize that as an author, you have a new duty. That's respecting people in your life in a different way and understanding that... You're part of it's not just the band. You're part of a whole community now. And so think about your actions in that way and be respectful.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm hmm. I think it's a perfect summary.

AJ Harper: Yeah, I just don't do dumb stuff

Mike Michalowicz: Next week we're going to talk about the list every author needs the burning questions and chief concerns. Get your writing hand ready because you want to take the tons of notes I want to remind you, there is a book that you need to get stat, say it with me, write a must read by A.

J. Harper. It's at your favorite bookstore and you know what, support the local indie story. Why don't you get out of the house, go there and say, I demand this book. They will have it. And if they don't have in stock, they'll have access to it and get to you immediately. Also visit our website. It's dwtbpodcast.

com. You can sign up for our email list there. We have tons of free materials for you. I'm still pining to have a live event. We have 12 people interested as of our last survey. And we want to hear from you. If you want to come to a live event, we need a couple hundred people committing because that means 50 or more will show we're going to rent out a little small theater and we're devoted to getting Steven Pressfield there for that event.

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