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Episode 72:

“The Importance of Due Diligence”

Mike Michalowicz: Welcome back to the don't write that book podcast, where you can learn how to write your bestseller and own your authorship. Follow along with us. As we give you an insider's view of the book industry. Now, here are your hosts, myself, Mike Michalowicz and A. J. Harper. Yeah, you know it's a big deal when it's making rounds in both of our worlds.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: It's across, it's across the Atlantic. We do. We do. But

AJ Harper: still, we have, there are pockets that, of yours that I'm not involved in at all, and vice versa.

Mike Michalowicz: I was down in Florida, um, for almost an entire week, but I was just down there and I met with an author group, Dorie Clark, Michael Bungay Stanier, um, there was ten or eleven of us in total. And this subject came up, what's so interesting is we spent three days together and I would say one quarter to about half of one day was all around AI, um, and what it can do with pilfering from other sources. And so this, this topic came up and I think it's going to be so interesting for us to discuss, but just to set the stage for our audience, say we're going to talk about the importance of due diligence.

And, um, I actually have a very personal story about it too. And, um, before we kick it off, I'm joined in studio with my friend, AJ Harper. What I admire about you—

AJ Harper: I feel like sometimes it's my only chance to hear these cool things.

Mike Michalowicz: What do you mean it's the only chance?

AJ Harper: I don't know. You know, you get wrapped up in your day. People say nice things about the work you do, but you don't, I don't hear a lot of personal. My wife, of course, is very sweet, but, um, it's just nice. Like I come in and it's like, Oh, let's see what he has to say today!

Mike Michalowicz: What I like is you, and I may have said this before, but not in the context of an open, you have an infectious laugh. You really do. And the giggles don't hit you often, but when they do, like it's, it's infectious. It's really warm.

AJ Harper: Thank you.

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Mike Michalowicz: You're welcome.

AJ Harper: My wife has this story where she says. She just saw me throw my head back and laugh when we were early, kind of dancing around each other. And that was one of her like, uh,

Mike Michalowicz: This is my one. That's so great.

AJ Harper: That's the one. That's the one. Yeah, here's something I admire about you, and it's going to lead to a challenge that I was thinking on the drive in, I'm going to challenge Mike.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, great.

AJ Harper: You get so interested, just so dedicated to learning everything you can about something. You're not a put a toe in the water kind of person. Like if you have an interest in it. You're gonna be voracious, your appetite will not end until you really understand it, or you really experience it, or you really try it, and I love that about you.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, thank you.

AJ Harper: Yeah, so you're not like a dabbler.

Mike Michalowicz: Dabbler. How you said dabbler? Dabbler.

AJ Harper: But this is my challenge. What made me think of it is, How often are we hearing about the cold plunge lately?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah,

AJ Harper: You really love the cold plunge and you I'm sure you've studied Benefits of it. Yes. Yes You've probably can we say you've probably watched some content around it?

Mike Michalowicz: I have. I even cold plunged myself this morning. Okay,

AJ Harper: you've probably really researched which cold plunge to get. (I did.) Yeah. Okay. It's gonna go on, right? You're gonna keep thinking about it. Yeah. So you feel like you really get it. You know, the ultimate cold plunge is Lake Superior.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, I believe it.

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AJ Harper: So, I gotta warn you though, because the dates that you are coming up to the island, it, it's gonna be like 60 degrees outside. Like, it's, we're north. It's not gonna be, it'll be nice and warm here in New York, New Jersey, but then you're gonna go up there and be like, what the heck? You're gonna, you can't put, you can't put those down vests away.

Mike Michalowicz: No.

AJ Harper: But the challenge is, we have this, um, right up, 'cause we're right on the water.

Mike Michalowicz: Uh huh.

AJ Harper: There is a rock that you can, people swim out to, that's right outside. (Oh.) So my challenge to you is to just do the ultimate cold plunge when you're there and go swim out to the rock.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay. I think I will. And you can film it. Okay. So we have proof.

AJ Harper: So just don't forget, you need something to swim in.

Mike Michalowicz: Do you go into the water much?

AJ Harper: So I have, you know, I, right now I'm just like body like self-conscious, but yeah, I mean, we, I've used to, we used to take our biodegradable shampoo and just go out there and wash our hair and,

Mike Michalowicz: And how cold that water?

AJ Harper: It is cold.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, that's why I assumed,

AJ Harper: especially in May. I mean, right now, yesterday I watched, okay, so we're recording this on February 11th.

Mike Michalowicz: Correct. Okay.

AJ Harper: I watched on, I'm on the Madeline Island Facebook page and I watched them put this video of the wind sled and then the Christmas trees that they use to line the ice road. And is that lake is the one you're going to swim in. Like it's, it's February and in just a few months, like it's, it's ice right now.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

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AJ Harper: So of course it's going to be, it's going to cold.

Mike Michalowicz: It's really cold.

AJ Harper: So that's my challenge.

Mike Michalowicz: I love it. I love it. So we're going to talk about due diligence and an interesting story is in the news with Mel Robbins right now. Yes. I want to give a little context. I know Mel Robbins back 15, 16 years ago. We, there was a show called The Big Idea. She and I were on the show. And we had an ongoing dialogue for a period of time. She was an up-and-coming author. I was too. And I remember reading... So fast forward. We stayed in touch. I read her book called the Five Second Rule. She took it, she took a concept and made it so profoundly simple and effective. It's like, this is good. Then she made another book called the High Five Rule. Um, so the five second rule was...

AJ Harper: Count from five. Five, four, three, two, one,

Mike Michalowicz: ...and do it. Go. The high five rule is every time you see yourself in the mirror, give yourself a high five. I thought it's actually a really good book too. Her latest book, which is Let Them has exploded. I saw it ranked number one on Amazon as of just a few days ago.

AJ Harper: It's, they ran out of, they printed over 300, 000 copies and ran out within like, I think a couple of days.

Mike Michalowicz: Good for her. I want to share some of the positive impact it's having on my own family. So my wife. It's funny. I'm like, I know Mel Robbins, you know, back in the day, she's like, who's that? That's like her voice. (Right.) And even up to about two, three years ago, I was like, Oh, I read this good book by Mel Robbins. Now Mel Robbins got on some of the podcast circuit and that's where my wife discovered her.

Now my wife is an all-in devotee, and my wife has probably sold a dozen books, because she's bought them too, and they're coming into our house, and then she's giving some friends, I wonder if that's more indicative of female readers than male readers, I don't know, to buy and supply?

AJ Harper: I don't know,

Mike Michalowicz: I don't know, but it's taken off, but now there is, Some serious allegations.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

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Mike Michalowicz: Can you edify us?

AJ Harper: Okay, I will, but keep in mind that this is based on everything I could find to read, but that doesn't mean that it's definitive, right? So, here's what's going on. The Let Them theory is not Mel Robbins' theory, and I would argue that... So she has a great ability to take something and call it down just like you said 5 4 3 2 1 the thing about let them know is that it's actually not her theory. And I would even argue that it's actually been around forever.

Like, you can go back to Stoicism. You can, um, in fellowships like Al Anon and NarAnon, there's a whole Detach With Love theory, which is basically let them, you know, it's not terrifically new, but what sounds What makes it work is using the phrase, Let them. So if I say, detach with love, I need to explain it. You know, right?

Let them is so much easier. Just a short, once you understand the theory and you say, let them, it's your reminder. Same with 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Same with high five. The challenge is that's not actually, didn't actually originate with her. And she actually acknowledges it in the book.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

AJ Harper: But what she doesn't do is source who did come up with Let Them.

Mike Michalowicz: So, what do you mean, how can she acknowledge it and not source it?

AJ Harper: By not saying where she did hear it.

Mike Michalowicz: So she says, yeah, this is not in my idea. Right. That's it.

AJ Harper: Yes. Okay. So the, there's a poet, Cassie Phillips who wrote a let them poem that in 2022 went viral. So it's not just that there was a obscure poem, nobody read it. No. It was a viral thing where people were, um, spreading it everywhere. You can actually go look it up yourself and see people talking about it in 2022.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm.

AJ Harper: So. I don't know. I cannot say what happened, but Mel found out about it, and she did her own podcast episode about it, and then that itself became its own thing. People started getting tattoos. Let them. What's interesting is some people got tattoos with Cassie Phillips. There's like handwriting on the poem, like in the title. They got it in the same handwriting as the poem, but maybe they heard about it on Mel's podcast. So this is all very murky, you know, the lawyers aren't involved yet, or maybe they are and we don't know.

Mike Michalowicz: What do you mean yet? Is there indications?

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AJ Harper: Oh yeah, because fast forward, so the book is, obviously Mel has a bigger platform and it wouldn't, and then because it's so, it's first of all, we all need to hear this right now. It's, this is what happens, lightning in a bottle. It's going to be way, it's way more going to be, it's already exponentially more popular than 54321, which was her biggest book and that was big in and of itself.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Well, we need it right now that happens It just hits at the right time.

Mike Michalowicz: Yes,

AJ Harper: And it's speaking to people especially people of a certain age, I think., Like your wife's age, right and then it's simplified. So it's exploded but now she has filed a trademark, Mel Robbins, for the phrase, Let Them, and Cassie Phillips is at least publicly claiming to, she's going to fight it.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

AJ Harper: The problem is that, and maybe this is under advice, but a lot of people have been trying to, the poet herself has been trying to get in touch with Mel Robbins, other people have been trying to get her to comment on it, and there's no comment. So what's, what's the truth? We don't really know. You know, is it? I know Mel Robbins said she wrote the book with her daughter. Did her daughter show her the video? Did her daughter see the poem? Did Mel see the poem? Did they forget? Did they, do they know full well and they didn't want to deal with it? Did they have interactions with Cassie that we don't know about?

There's all sorts of things that we can't possibly know. We make it, we can make assumptions. But it all comes down to this. All of this would have been okay if she just did one thing. I first heard about the Let Them theory from a poem by Cassie Phillips.

Mike Michalowicz: If she in fact did.

AJ Harper: Yeah, but here's the thing. It doesn't, or even if you didn't first hear about it, because she did claim that she heard it somewhere.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: The only thing that was viral was Cassie's thing. Like, it's kind of hard to, it's not like there was another person with the let them theory. Mel calls it "let them" theory. Cassie has a let them poem which outlines the theory.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

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AJ Harper: It doesn't matter. Okay, you could say, "When I heard about the Let Them Theory, I did some homework and discovered a poem by Cassie Phillips."

Or here's another way to say it in the book. Maybe you heard about the Let Them from Cassie Phillips poem that went viral in 2022. I've now given you three ways that you could acknowledge Cassie Phillips in the book that would be true, and that would have solved it.

Mike Michalowicz: Mmm.

AJ Harper: That would have solved it.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, if she gave, so let's say she discovered this from the poem. It's likely the situation. She specifies it in there, but now she writes a book titled Let Them Theory. She talks all about the theory. She acknowledges Cassie. Does that mean Cassie doesn't have a case, or Cassie's just content because she's acknowledged it? Would someone like that solve it?

AJ Harper: So, if Cassie had trademarked Let Them.

Mike Michalowicz: If she trademarked it, okay.

AJ Harper: Then there would be an issue. But she didn't. So, not a problem. Let Them is the title of Cassie's poem. Titles cannot be copyrighted. So, no problem. Then it's courtesy, as an author, to acknowledge the source of things.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, yeah.

AJ Harper: We wanted to do this podcast on due diligence before all this came in the news.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Now we have really big context for it because look what's happening now.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: So what's the due diligence part? Maybe she didn't know it was the poem. Maybe she just saw some viral videos talking about the concept.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: It's called Google.

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Mike Michalowicz: Yeah,

AJ Harper: Let them.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah,

AJ Harper: Let them theory. Go find it. This is your due diligence.

Mike Michalowicz: So, yes, it was so interesting. I had a situation which I can't share any details about.

AJ Harper: I know what you're gonna say.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, but you can google. It's very googleable now. And what's interesting is you can have an idea that's original to you, but it's already out in the world in some other capacity but not know it. So I use this title, this concept titles, not even concepts, just title. And, um, it was already trademarked.

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: By someone else, but the funny thing. And so then, then, and they're

AJ Harper: not the same. They're not the same thing. Not the same thing,

Mike Michalowicz: Not the same concept,

AJ Harper: just the ti, just the name, just the words.

Mike Michalowicz: So we n never even knew of it. So this what I did existed for the longest time. So we made a change. It actually helped the book is selling better now because it refreshed the

AJ Harper: all you did was change the title name of what yeah

Mike Michalowicz: yeah, and so... It was so funny. So we got people, so actually [whispers] in a kind of weird way almost have to say thank you to

AJ Harper: [Laughs] You're whispering on the podcast.

Mike Michalowicz: Because it came up with a new title and it was better it's better.

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AJ Harper: Yeah, but do you see Mike that the? It's in her book Mel Robbins says she knows the theory doesn't originate with her.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah

AJ Harper: There's a difference between you wrote a book you titled something gave something a name that had someone else had trademarked that was not about the same thing.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: You didn't know. But she did know.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. I, I could have still have gone through that diligence and

AJ Harper: You could have. Yeah. And should have. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. You should have. And what's nice now is with, and it's funny, when, when we were in this conflict, I told this person like, I'm, I am so sorry. I'm a never, that's just not who I am. And I'm, I didn't go through due diligence, nor did the publisher.

And, uh, they were so. My perception was so animated over this that it didn't matter.

AJ Harper: I mean, that's part of what's happening now, you know Incidentally you can get Cassie Phillips Let Them poem on... She released it on Kindle.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay I wonder is she getting more exposure now? Is she actually you winning in that regard because there's conflict

AJ Harper: I don't think she feels like I mean, I can't speak. I don't know her. I read a Facebook post that she put up about it. She seems pretty hurt. And then on top of that, I think maybe if the trademark hadn't been filed, I think that might've been the last step, the last straw.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: That Mel Robbins filed a trademark for the term, Let them.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Yeah.

AJ Harper: That's really,

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Mike Michalowicz: yeah.

AJ Harper: I got, that gives me pause.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Yeah. But I also, I presume a trademark means there's some kind of service behind it. Is she going to make a let them community or something?

AJ Harper: No, it can also mean. You know, a breakdown of a process.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, it's true. Yeah, it's just the system.

AJ Harper: I mean, honestly, it's got me thinking about what I need to trademark for the second book I'm working on.

Mike Michalowicz: The challenge with trademarks now is the enforcement. So...

AJ Harper: Yeah, but at least it exists.

Mike Michalowicz: At least it exists. But you still have to go through, enforce it.

AJ Harper: I mean, I think it's also just optics. A person can look up a trademark. What if Cassie had said, let me trademark, let them.

Mike Michalowicz: Here's the entire irony. Should Cassie just let them, or should Mel just let them, you know, like..?

AJ Harper: no, I, I, I really think this is important. I think that's why we wanted to do the episode in the first place. This is our responsibility as authors.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Is we have to, we have to go look and we have to. Dig deeper to see where did I hear that? Or where does that also exist? And then it's, it's more, you know, we're talking about this situation, but there's other things we need to do our due diligence about. And we can't, we can't just write stuff and not think about its impact and think about where we, how we came to understand that.

Mike Michalowicz: The probably in the greatest irony of all, Mel was on a podcast where she said, let them does not mean allow them.

That's my words for it. But let them is if it's... Whatever they're doing for their own life journey, don't allow that for their life journey, but if it affects you, that's not to be allowed. So

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it's ironic. What Mel Robbins may be arguing is, is Cassie come after me because let them, unless it damages you then do not allow that.

AJ Harper: Yeah. And again, I'm telling you, man, let them is the same as detached with love, which I'm, I'm in, you know, they're all like Al Anon, Nar Anon, all those Anons for people who have family members who are substance abusers.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: That's the whole tenant of it is let them.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And it doesn't mean, Again, it doesn't mean let them violate you, but it means they're going to do what they're going to do. And don't get enmeshed is the term we would use. Don't get enmeshed in their stuff. Don't, it's just, it's just not a new concept. It's just the way it's been presented is simplified. Except that this one time it wasn't Mel that simplified it.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: So that's a problem.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, really interesting. Um, why does due diligence matter for us rank and file authors?

AJ Harper: I mean, well, um, this big, big hairy example.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: I mean, she'll probably weather it because most people won't know about it.

Mike Michalowicz: Do you think there'll be a... What's the term when, when you're erased, uh, by

AJ Harper: Canceled.

Mike Michalowicz: Canceled? Will it be canceled?

AJ Harper: Doubtful. Doubtful? Unless somebody, unless like it's in the news-news.

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Mike Michalowicz: That's what I'm thinking. Yeah. Because I think someone can get too big for their britches. And there is almost this penchant,

AJ Harper: We want to tear people down.

Mike Michalowicz: We want to tear them down. So that's why I have a bad feeling is that people say, well, maybe she needs to learn her lesson.

AJ Harper: Well, it's um, we don't, people don't like it when somebody lies or when they steal.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: So yeah, I don't know. She's got super fans, so it'd be, it's going to be a challenge.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. That'll be interesting.

AJ Harper: Yeah. But I mean, I think for the everyday author, no matter how successful you are, It can, it's always something that could happen, and you, once it does, you have no control over how it might snowball.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Who, who bears the burden for fact checking, due diligence, trademarks?

AJ Harper: Authors.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

AJ Harper: Period. Full stop.

Mike Michalowicz: Damn it. I wish I could say the publisher...

AJ Harper: No. And I think people sometimes misunderstand the role of say copy editors. And in terms of fact checking, for example, they think that the copy editors are going to get in there and find anything that's incorrect.

Mike Michalowicz: Do you have like a checklist that you go through for..?

AJ Harper: I'm checking the sources for scientific, you know, so I'm thinking about your book right now that we're working on. There's a few times where you would put in, I want to

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reference this theory, but then not mention who originated it. So I would go back in and find who originated it and then add it.

Mike Michalowicz: So here's an interesting thing. And tell me how you address this. In the new book, I reference the snowball effect,

AJ Harper: Dave Ramsey.

Mike Michalowicz: Dave Ramsey, but that looks like it was originated by BF Skinner. But, and I'm not sure who originated the term snowball, but Dave Ramsey popularized it.

AJ Harper: Yes. So, you have both referenced in there, which is great.

Mike Michalowicz: Which is great.

AJ Harper: Most people would stop at Dave Ramsey and actually most people would just call it the snowball effect and not even credit Dave Ramsey.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay. Proper attribution is the person who popularized it and the original source if there is like...

AJ Harper: If you if you can I mean if you if yeah, I mean. It gets complicated because there could be 50 people down the line.

Mike Michalowicz: That's what I was thinking.

AJ Harper: Yeah, but a concept is there's still somebody who originated the concept and sometimes you don't actually know

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah,

AJ Harper: and you can acknowledge that too, you know,

Mike Michalowicz: yeah

AJ Harper: For example, people are always misquoting quotes in their books that that person never said or didn't say that way. So we have to do our due diligence in checking, is this quote correct?

And also, um, is it in the right, sometimes it has to be in the right context. So don't just assume 'cause you find it on Pinterest. Or, even in someone else's book, I once had an author, I argued with them about, they were pulling some sort of Native American legend. I talk

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about this all the time, and probably people who know me are sick of hearing me say this, but I think it's really important.

“I want to talk about this Cherokee legend.” I was like, that's not a that's actually not a Cherokee legend.

Mike Michalowicz: Cherokees.

AJ Harper: It's not Cherokee In fact, it's not even American. It's not even Native American. It originated in this book with this Christian group, this blah blah blah, because I had done my homework.

I went to go find it. You can't and she's well, here's my sources. Well, the sources were this blog this blog somebody's just... All they're doing is just perpetuating

Mike Michalowicz: Mythology

AJ Harper: That, that this is a Cherokee legend when it's totally not. So, yeah, who wants to have to go through all that? Well, you have to. There's checking the provenance of things. Provenance.

Mike Michalowicz: I like that. And it does serve the reader. It gets the facts straight. You're the, you're the person who can stop the mythology and put it back in alignment.

AJ Harper: So you've got to do that work yourself. You cannot count on your publisher to do that work. They put all of the onus on you and you know, some editors will catch it and say if they happen to know, but it's not their job to know.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay. So how do I know the things I need to do this fact checking on as I go through my manuscript? What are the ones I pick out?

AJ Harper: Well, there's basic fact checking, you know.

Mike Michalowicz: But can you give me some examples?

AJ Harper: Yeah, well, for example, if you're talking about a theory, who came up with a theory?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: You know, figure, see who, who is it attributed to?

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Mike Michalowicz: What if you, you come, so Profit First, I'm like, I think I'm the first to come up with this theory. But at the same time, I'm like, no, this is the envelope system. It's this and that.

When you come up with a theory and you give it a name, your own unique name, we need to check, make sure that's our own unique name.

AJ Harper: Well, yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay. Do we look at the, all the original sources? The envelope system, the pay yourself first principle and look at who originated that

AJ Harper: Yeah, and on the envelope system, that's rough because that goes back to yeah putting your money in jars.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, and then that's okay.

AJ Harper: Yeah, just say that.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah

AJ Harper: Just don't look don't pretend like you're that you came up with it.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, which I think only enhances your integrity.

AJ Harper: It does and also it's it also I would argue it actually builds credibility for the concept.

Mike Michalowicz: It's true, right? It's the backing matter behind it.

AJ Harper: Yeah, in fact, that's how we did it. That's how we approached it in the new book, which is a personal finance book based on Profit First. Is to explain look how people have been doing this for all this time, and it works But you have your own take on it.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm hmm,

AJ Harper: And that's okay to say, okay. You know if Mel Robbins had said well, this is this, you know heard about this it went viral There was this poem Cassie Phillips, but this is my take and she does have her own take. Because she then has “let me.”

She has the flip. Remember in five, four, three, two, one, I think she also has one, two, three, four, five?

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Mike Michalowicz: I remember that.

AJ Harper: I think so. Someone can correct me. She has the flip and I think it's kind of her thing.

Mike Michalowicz: Right. That's cool.

AJ Harper: So she did make it her own. So, okay. And she can, there's nothing wrong with that.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: It's just acknowledging the inspiration for it.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Um, we've got to do that. But there's other due diligence we have to do. We can't expect copy editors to correct, say, let's say you had a lot of, you're writing for the US market, which is English, but you have a bunch of Spanish in there, or Chinese, or, they're not going to go check to make sure you did it right. They're not, that's not their job. So make sure that that's correct, you know. They'll check things like, did you use the right URL? Is that really the spelling of that person's name? But that's kind of their limit. You know, they're not going to check if your science is bunk.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: They're not going to check if you use the wrong word in Russian.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, that's true. I, um, had a translation of, uh, was it toilet paper? I'm sure. Or maybe it's Profit. Maybe it's Profit First into Spanish. So this is not really fact checking. It's just a funny story. They, Took the URL, mikemichaalowicz. com, and spelled it phonetically, uh, in Spanish. So his it's so wrong in the book.

AJ Harper: What is it? Wait, what does it say?

Mike Michalowicz: So in there it says

AJ Harper: I want to know what it says!

Mike Michalowicz: Oh my God, it's so funny. So here's how I found out. People were trying to email me. It wasn't, it wasn't the, it was the URL of the email. So in the book it says, you know, Email me, I've drawn the line in the sand.

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AJ Harper: Yeah. Arena,

Mike Michalowicz: arena is sand.

Uh, and I get an email from someone in Mexico saying, I can't email you, your email address is wrong. And it's, it's like Miguel. Okay, that was good. That was good. But then, uh, at Mike Michalowicz and it was like, M Y K I and Michalowicz is so bastardized. So I called the publisher. It's also Penguin. They have a Penguin.

AJ Harper: Oh great.

Mike Michalowicz: And I say, Hey, this is, this is not my email address, not even close and I go, we'll fix it. And like, you're not going to fix it. So here's what I did. I bought the domain. Yeah.

AJ Harper: Smart and have it forwarded in.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, and forwarded in.

AJ Harper: Yeah. What else can you do?

Mike Michalowicz: [trilling noise] And all of a sudden, all these emails come pouring in that have queued up hundreds, right?

AJ Harper: Smart.

Mike Michalowicz: Um, yeah, so it's kind of funny side story. What about, um, anything else we should be fact checking for when it comes to...

AJ Harper: I mean, all your facts, any fact it is on you.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: It is on you.

Mike Michalowicz: What about permissions?

AJ Harper: That's on you, too.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay. And what would, what would be some examples of that?

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AJ Harper: Um, well, I think it's always good to get permission to use someone's story that you've interviewed. Right? But if it's in the public domain, you don't have to do that. For example, we did that, uh, little anecdote about the woman who got lost in the jungle in Hawaii.

Mike Michalowicz: Amanda Eller?

AJ Harper: In, um, I can't believe you remember her name!

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, 'cause, well, I shared it on stage. Oh, it's a great story. That's why.

AJ Harper: I was gonna say you pulled that right out.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, I was like bing! Um, that was in 2018, 19. Around then I think.

AJ Harper: So we don't need Amanda's permission because I pulled all of that content from, from various news sources. So this is a tip I'll give you. You sent me how. You sent me a link. "Oh, here's an interesting story. We might use because she got lost, and we can liken it to a compass."

That's, that's what you sent me. It's like, all right, cool. So then I go chase that down. What do I do? Read a number of articles. about it, right? So that I can get a sense of it. I'm not going to rely on a one person's blog.

That's due diligence.

I'm going to see, okay, what, what's the full story credit? Of course, wherever I pull a quote, but it was in the news so that we don't need her permission to talk about something that was in the news. Does that make sense?

Mike Michalowicz: Totally makes sense.

AJ Harper: Public domain.

Mike Michalowicz: What if you have a really unique story that is referenced in one blog. It may be factual or not. And you want to dig into that story. Do you have to become journalistic?

AJ Harper: Yeah, ask, ask. Reach out and say, can I talk about this? If it's someone's personal stuff that they're writing. Again, one would argue it's public domain, but it's also technically copyrighted. So, I don't know. There's, there's, there's courtesy. There's author

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courtesy. Just reach out. Don't, you know, and also you don't know. Is that person telling the truth or is it fiction? What's going on?

Mike Michalowicz: In lacrosse, which I used to play in college. There was a play that I remember was hearsay called The Armadillo. And the rules permitted at one point that you could hold the ball in your lacrosse stick and other players could surround you like an armadillo. You're just it. stand there. And if another team, the other opposing team trying to get the ball, there would be a penalty against them because they're hitting other people in the back, which not permitted to do. Just, the rules allowed this.

There was a game supposedly of a superior team, I don't know, versus an inferior team. The inferior team scored first and they went into the armadillo for the rest of the game. So I'm like, is this true? And it was like little blogs. I called the guys. How I found him called his house. I never spoke to him. His wife answered and I said, his coach. So, so.

She said, no, he's, he's out golfing. She said, what may I ask why you're calling? I said, because of the armadillo. She's like, you know, he gets a call about once every six months about this. And I'm like, yeah, I bet. I said, I'd love to talk with him because I wanted to include it in a story in a book. And then we decided now it's not a fit and it, it went by the wayside.

AJ Harper: But you confirmed.

Mike Michalowicz: At least through the wife. I never spoke with him.

AJ Harper: But here's the thing, how much better is that if you do include it then?

Mike Michalowicz: Oh yeah, totally.

AJ Harper: Now you get to say, I called and spoke to the wife.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, yeah.

AJ Harper: I mean, that now we've changed it. Now it's your version of things now. It's your take on things. I always tell people get exclusive content, create your own intellectual property. I mean, part of the reason we fall into these traps is because we keep looking to quote everybody under the sun except ourselves.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Like, what do you think? What is your theory? What is your story? Like. Look, are you leaning too heavily on other sources? Probably. And maybe sometimes you'll find it so tedious to do your due diligence that you'll just lean on your own stuff. It's just, I think, I

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think, uh, if you're going to use somebody's stuff, like if you're going to do the armadillo, it's so much more fascinating to say, I heard it from the source.

Now you have. You're not just mentioning it. You have exclusive content. So for example, if we thought it was worth pursuing, which it wasn't enough for us to pursue it, but we could have contacted Amanda Eller.

Mike Michalowicz: Totally.

AJ Harper: And then we would have had something really cool, right? So interview people.

Mike Michalowicz: I think you find a story within the story.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: So the, in the news, for example, the same story echoes over and over. And this Armadillo story, everyone knows kind of the theory, but I wonder. If we decide to pursue that, and I spoke with the coach, if there'd be a story behind the story, that becomes actually far more appealing.

AJ Harper: Far more appealing. Or maybe you get... You get new insights that he has now, right? Oh, you know, if people are asking him about him every six months, what does he think now?

Mike Michalowicz: Mm hmm.

AJ Harper: Now we have something interesting and cool and we're not just regurgitating the same stuff. But rights and permissions. You also need to get that for if you're pulling specific things, for example, um, long, Excerpts, long excerpts, you would need permission.

Mike Michalowicz: Versus it was what, what justifies long,

AJ Harper: I mean, it's sort of, I am not, I am not an intellectual property or copyright attorney. So let's be real. You have to double check these things, but irrespective to the overall length of the work, right? So you can't take big chunks of something. For example, we did a section, we used a reference to, what is his name? He did the make your bed. Um, Admiral can't remember his name. I apologize.

Mike Michalowicz: Make your bed... Turn the ship around?

AJ Harper: No, no. He's like, make your first thing you do is make your bed. He's a military guy.

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Mike Michalowicz: Don't worry. I do not recall. Tomorrow I'm sorry.

AJ Harper: I'm embarrassed right now. I got it.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, here we go. Mid show. We're stopping so AJ can look it up.

AJ Harper: Make your bed. Military. It's great. It's a great speech. Navy SEAL, um, uh, McRaven. William McRaven. I just think we can't talk about. We have to do our due diligence on the podcast and actually accredit him in the moment.

Mike Michalowicz: There you go!

AJ Harper: We can't just say, oh, that dude. So you wanted to include There's in the speech, he talks about the Navy SEAL training and horrendous training, and there was something you wanted to include. So I paraphrased, like set it up in terms of what's the context, because it's a speech.

The speech is X number of words. At max, that speech was, I got to look it up how long it was, but if it was say 45 minutes, which I don't think it is. Okay. Let's say it was 15 minutes. Then we know it's around 2000 words. We can't pull a big chunk because the total length is only 2000 words. So I knew that. And I thought, okay, I really want this paragraph. So then I just set up the context. So now I'm not, we're not quoting him too much, but, but Kaushik was like, I still, I still want you to take it down. So I had to go back in.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh yes, I remember this now. What book that was?

AJ Harper: Um, I don't remember. It was a Kaushik book.

Fix This Next maybe? Maybe. Um, so at any rate, Kaushik still, even though I did that, I did my due diligence, he still said, let's make it even shorter. Because the length you're excerpting matters with respect to the overall length, which is why you can't put someone's poem. Back to poems... You can't put someone's poem in the book without asking their permission and getting official rights to include it because the poem could be 50 words,

Mike Michalowicz: Right.

AJ Harper: You can't put that in there,

Mike Michalowicz: Right,

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AJ Harper: you know, or even have one line Maybe this is why we can't do song lyrics never ever ever ever ever And the authors I work with are always so bummed when I say you can't take these out Take it, take it all out.

Mike Michalowicz: That's so funny, because the never ever ever ever is actually in the new book for now. Which is from a song lyric, but it's transposed.

AJ Harper: Okay, but it's from what, Taylor Swift? Taylor Swift, yeah. But the reason we can use it, because I left you a comment in there, is because you did a, you Took the lyric and made it your own

Mike Michalowicz: Variant, yeah, made it variant.

AJ Harper: Almost and that call that is classified as a parody.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, right. It's a parody. Right,

AJ Harper: right. So you're allowed to do that. The one time we did do it, though, that we got away with it, which was, um, What's the...

Mike Michalowicz: Sammy Hagar? No, I can't drive 55.

AJ Harper: No, we did not but that's the song title So we could have put that in quotes and that would be fine. Yeah, what's the wiggity wiggity wiggity?

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, oh, yes, that was Kris Kross, Jump Jump.

AJ Harper: "Kris Kross will make you..." So good

Mike Michalowicz: Great song

AJ Harper: We did it because it's kind of nonsense,

Mike Michalowicz: right?

AJ Harper: But I mean, we shouldn't have said that. I don't think Kris Kross is listening, but you can't use song lyrics. So anyway, there's you, but that's your job. The publisher expects that you have secured all your rights and permissions.

Mike Michalowicz: I have one crazy question when we wrap up the show. It's out of left field. Just hit me though. Okay. Um. Any other things we need to talk about? Due diligence?

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AJ Harper: I just think it's the ultimate putting the reader first. It builds trust. I mean you just come on And if you're going to be a career author if you're going to be if you're in this You can't break that trust. What are people going to say about the next book that Mel Robbins does?

Mike Michalowicz: Right now she's compromised at least among Some people

AJ Harper: among some. Well, listen, I'm is all over my community and your community is talking about it and then, you know, publishing is talking about it. They're just not saying anything. What's it going to do? That's a risk.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. And being it's interesting. Her response of silence is such a risky move. Maybe she's being advised to be quiet.

AJ Harper: I would say.

Mike Michalowicz: At the same time, it feels like she's covering something if, if she's quiet.

AJ Harper: I mean, it's a gamble. Like, most people aren't going to know about it. But, so they probably figure it probably

Mike Michalowicz: I remember, it was like a horrible, horrible murder of that young girl. But, Brene, uh, Brene, no, Bran, Ramsey? Last name was Ramsey.

AJ Harper: Jean Benet.

Mike Michalowicz: Jean Benet Ramsey. And I remember, this was back in the 80s maybe? And the parents hired attorneys right away. And so, their process in protecting themselves, everyone's like, they're guilty! And then they're found that they're not guilty. Right. And maybe they are. There's still, there's a lot of weirdness.

AJ Harper: I don't, I don't, I don't know. That gripped the nation.

Mike Michalowicz: It gripped the nation. And it still does. There's like documentaries. My only point is, is that Mel Robbins may be taking actions that she's being advised this is what you need to do. "You are innocent, Mel, of any wrongdoing here, but you better be quiet because you're just going to aggravate the situation and cause more problems." And maybe she's taking that advice, and now there's this cascade of doubt over her. I don't know.

AJ Harper: I mean, it's interesting because one of the reasons that her book is such a huge success is because she was immediately on Oprah's podcast.

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Mike Michalowicz: Mmm.

AJ Harper: And Oprah said, it was, I think, and I'm, I could be misquoting, so apologies. I think Oprah said that was the best self-help book she'd ever read, and that's Oprah.

Mike Michalowicz: That's Oprah.

AJ Harper: Oprah's book club, the woman who originated the book, the celebrity book club. Here's the thing, do you remember James Fry, A Million Little Pieces?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah and he was a B.S.er!

AJ Harper: And he was on Oprah, and she was pissed

Mike Michalowicz: Oprah was?

AJ Harper: Because he said it was his life that memoir. It was an international bestseller It was in Oprah's book club when she still had the show. And he had to come back on the show and do a mea culpa.

Mike Michalowicz: Crying.

AJ Harper: Yeah, the whole thing. And she was not happy.

Mike Michalowicz: It was a Jerry Falwell type of, uh, I'm a sinner...

AJ Harper: But that's pretty bad. You don't say, don't say it's a memoir, then say it's based on true events or fictionalized. But he was told that it would sell better if it was a memoir. And he made up, made up whole people and situations that. People thought we're real and she thought we're real and she yeah,

Mike Michalowicz: you heard it here first DWTB audience. Oprah is gonna be pissed.

AJ Harper: I mean, maybe maybe

Mike Michalowicz: maybe

AJ Harper: I don't know cuz we don't know what really went down, you know?

Mike Michalowicz: We don't!

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AJ Harper: But I think there's some the sum up here the takeaway is you can avoid all this If you just do your due diligence because there would have been nothing wrong in saying that my inspiration is this poem?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, that would have, if that's the truth, it was solved it.

AJ Harper: Even I thought of, I heard about this viral thing and then learned it was connected to this poem, which I had never read again. There's another way of doing it. I could do a dozen right now. Different ways of saying just nipping that in the bud with one sentence.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, yeah. And now she's elevating the original source and herself

AJ Harper: Do your due diligence.

Mike Michalowicz: What a great episode. I have a out of left field question for you. I don't know why it struck me your own book or books. Once they're in the market, Do you ever revisit it and re-read your own book?

AJ Harper: Not the whole thing. I don't sit down and read the whole thing, but because I'm teaching, I frequently pull, pull from it, um, sections that I know I need to talk about or show people. But, no. Do you?

Mike Michalowicz: No. So that's why I'm like I might have to re-read my own books.

AJ Harper: Oh, because you might have some due diligence that you

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, no, no! Oh--

AJ Harper: Uh oh. Don't open that box. Oh, my God.

Mike Michalowicz: Thanks for waving that red flag. (Sorry.) Um, no, I just I'm curious to see how the journey's gone. Like, Toilet Paper Entrepreneur is going to be a different read than All In.

AJ Harper: Have you read that?

Mike Michalowicz: Toilet Paper Entrepreneur.

AJ Harper: Uh huh.

Mike Michalowicz: No, I haven't.

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AJ Harper: I have.

Mike Michalowicz: yeah, I... Don't make that face.

AJ Harper: No, it's just I love the evolution of you. That's all.

Mike Michalowicz: Thank you.

AJ Harper: I'm just proud of you for it. That's all. I tease you mercilessly.

Mike Michalowicz: I love it.

AJ Harper: But you know, I think you should see how you've evolved because what you what you thought you had to do for that book wasn't really true.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, so I think maybe that's gonna do every so often I commit a year to an activity. So this year is I'm watching every single Super Bowl since Super Bowl one.

AJ Harper: Oh my God. [laughs]

Mike Michalowicz: So I know it's absurd, right? But you find out these bizarre facts. Super Bowl one, because I went to Virginia Tech. Had a Virginia tech football player. The first Superbowl had a guy. Yeah. You can imagine that. I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it. Um, I watched Joe Namath come out with his wildly furry jacket and say that they're going to win the Superbowl, and they did in Superbowl three.

AJ Harper: I mean, I'm trying to feign excitement.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay. This is, you would get a kick out of this. The pantaloons the refs wear.

AJ Harper: You love that word. You're saying so much.

Mike Michalowicz: I love that word. I love that word. The, the, the, the flowy plumey pantaloons. But because of how television was, it was, you know, it's very rudimentary when they call a signal, they had a signal to one side of the stadium, then turn around and signal the same sale to other side of the stadium. The ref is like a whole theatrical performance and they over gesticulated. Like they really consolidated a signal. So it's hysterical to watch the refs in, in Super Bowl One through Five.

AJ Harper: So you realize that the thing I said I admired about you, how you go all in on something, you've just,

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Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: you've just demonstrated it. Now it's all the Super Bowls ever.

Mike Michalowicz: And I may, I may start studying referee signals. The history of referee signaling.

AJ Harper: So I fully expect to get a, a note that this should be included in a book.

Mike Michalowicz: I know, I think it should be. It's inevitable now. All right, well, hey, email us this. Do you read your own book after it's out there and published? We'd love to know go to DWTB podcast. com to get all the resources that we have available for you. They're all free. AJ's work is there, and she has the Top Three, uh, course, if you don't take this, my God, and there's an editing opportunity. Are there any slots left, AJ?

AJ Harper: Yeah, actually, um, for editing retreat this summer, I think we have one left in July, and then we have spots in October, but you definitely want to jump on it because I only do it for eight people at a time, and it's pure magic.

Mike Michalowicz: Could you imagine, if you're a listener right now, being in this room with us right now just listening to AJ's magic? I'm serious. I meet with people and they say, I love DWTB. I love the show. AJ is a genius. You literally have an opportunity to work with the one and only in person at her house her retreat. Join now go to AJ Harper.com Also any questions comments any show details? We're hearing from readers or listeners regularly now We love it emails that hello at DW TB podcast comm by the way if you're writing a book In the entrepreneurial space, we do have an imprint at Page Two called Simplified. Maybe, just maybe there's a fit there. Thanks again for listening to today's episode and every episode.

We look forward to seeing you next week. And as always, the great reminder, don't write that due diligence or non-due diligence book, right? One. That's the greatest book you've ever have with the greatest due diligence you ever have.