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Episode 79:

“Book Development”

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.

I wanna talk about the show. I'm a little bit excited. I can't say the title of the show yet.

AJ Harper: Your TV show.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, TV show. So we filmed for two consecutive days, six episodes. It's a full 30-minute program, which means 22 minutes of airtime, eight minutes of commercials. And, uh, I can't share more details about, besides I committed. I first spoke with Krista, I said, um, is it cool that I'm doing this?

And she's like, you're so stretched. You're constantly traveling. That's a concern. Um, and I, I acknowledged that's true and I said, I. I'm gonna make a decision. Either I'm going all in on this or I'm not gonna do it. And we had a discussion and the agreements do it. Um, because it's the greatest way to be of impact beyond books.

It accesses another audience that won't read books. And I said, I'm just gonna go all, all in it on it. And just how the universe works. Time freed up. Speaking engagements have shifted in a certain way. So it didn't actually negatively affect time like we thought it would, I put every ounce of myself into it, but so did everyone there, there was 18, I think folks in totaled on filming day from camera operators to. There's an effects person that's there because it's all this digital effects. It was green screen, but you can't tell. It's like I'm in a real studio, but it's all green screened. Instead of having a panning camera that swoops down on a arm, it's all digital.

The camera is actually looking at you the entire time, but it comes from above. I don't know how they do it. It's unbelievable. There was four producers there, there was a showrunner, um, there was a researcher just sitting there just doing research and I'd say, oh, I need a story on such and such. And they're pulling the information up live and speaking into my ear.

It was unbelievable. I don't think we could produce a better show. And so this airs in July. I don't know when I can announce the name and, and all the other details, but it's gonna air in July. And I'm really proud of it. I think this similar to the book, we can announce the title in a second. I think it's the best of us ever, this new book.

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I really feel this way. I think this T show TV show is the best of me in that capacity. Uh, and if it flops and fails, fine, I. But I, I put everything on the table to make it the best and I'm proud of that.

AJ Harper: Bet you loved it. Did you love it?

Mike Michalowicz: Loved it. It was fun.

AJ Harper: You loved, you loved the whole day, didn't you?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. I was exhausted at the end.

AJ Harper: You exhausted? Is that good Exhaustion.

Mike Michalowicz: Good exhaustion.

AJ Harper: I just had a feeling you were gonna just, I think, I think it's your, I think you need to do it.

Mike Michalowicz: I think it's, Krista was there. She starts crying. She's like, she

AJ Harper: she did?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. She, which is, yeah. She's like, I am so proud of you, which was beautiful. She goes, but this is so your calling.

AJ Harper: It's your calling. Just how you present. You're, I think you, you, I wish I would've seen part of it because I probably would've stamped, been crying. Crying there. Like, were these crying ladies?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Oh, the, the office came, there was like this little live audience, like seven people. And they even had a TV room where you watch it as if it was being broadcast on television in a different room. And I, I loved it. Not because. It was joyful, but I love it because the potential impact, like I can feel the people seeing this and saying, oh, I believe in myself. Now I can create a business.

AJ Harper: I'm so excited to see it.

Mike Michalowicz: So. I hope it lands. Oh, we're having a premier party. If you're interested in coming at my house.

AJ Harper: You are?

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Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Oh, I don't, I I may on the island, when is it?

Mike Michalowicz: In June.

AJ Harper: I will be on the island.

Mike Michalowicz: You'll be on the island.

AJ Harper: Oh, I would love to come.

Mike Michalowicz: I'll get you a recording of it though, to see it early.

AJ Harper: Will you?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, yeah. Totally, totally.

AJ Harper: I was thinking of you that whole week and I was thinking, oh, he's, he's love, he loves this.

Mike Michalowicz: What's so interesting, and this speaks to authorship, is all the work we've done over the last 15 years. It was like a culmination of all of those ideas and tips. So they're like, how do you come up with so many ideas? I'm like, I haven't, it took me 15 years.

AJ Harper: Yeah,

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Of these ideas and they, they just naturally flow out. Oh gosh. And gosh, we wrote it because we're so immersed in it, and I know everything so intimately. It's just easy to re regurgitate on television.

AJ Harper: I, I knew you would love it. I love that. I, I, so we still didn't do the thing. I, here's what I admire about you. That's what you say. Yeah. Yeah. And so the, I prepared today because usually I don't know what you're gonna say.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And I thought, uh, what do I really, I really wanna say something meaningful. I don't wanna sound silly, like I'm just playing off of what you're saying, so I'll lead it off then.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay. Cool.

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AJ Harper: So. One thing I've known about you, and you'll say this readily, we've written about it, that your Achilles heel is ego. That that's the thing that always gets you into trouble even when you don't want it to get you into trouble, even when you know that's the earth problem. Like, "dang again. Foiled again." Right? But we went to the salon event for New York, based Page Two authors in, um. Down New York off Chamber Street.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And I watched you at that event and it was so fun for me because we were, I'm usually, when I'm out with you, it's, it's because I'm part of your deal. But we were there as the entourage.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: We were there as separate authors, but also writing partners, both. But I watched you the whole night and to just have conversations with people. You were, you were so touched and thrilled and excited about just talking to all these authors and community and connection, and I started to think about it and yes, your ego is your Achilles heel, but the thing you love most is connection.

Mike Michalowicz: Hmm. Thank you.

AJ Harper: And I admire that about you, is you want that, that's what you, the ego might be driving you sometimes, but the thing that you really want is to connect.

Mike Michalowicz: Thank you.

AJ Harper: I mean, I was, we're just in this little. Um, very nice little bar lounge.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: But you're just having the time of your life, just talking to other authors, just talking to other people and publishing and just loving it. You weren't given that opportunity at Penguin.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And so just, I'm just happy for you. Yeah. And I, and I, I admire that and people always say to me is, is that how he really is? And I say, yeah, totally. A hundred percent authentic.

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Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Oh, thank you. Um, what I admire about you, uh. Well, what I appreciate about you is I've earned your friendship. Thank you for sharing such powerful things with me, um, that you don't have to.

AJ Harper: But you know, I thank-- You're welcome. I am very close to the vest.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Um, private person. But I think that we made a mistake in our early creative relationship in not sharing more.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And then when we had our creative breakup which, for instance, we talk about in an episode

Mike Michalowicz: We do. Yeah.

AJ Harper: Um, I think we were better after that and I think we've been getting progressively better

Mike Michalowicz: Totally.

AJ Harper: About just being more

Mike Michalowicz: Open and honest.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: Here's where I stand, here's what I like, here's what I don't want, and

AJ Harper: And here what's going on with me right now. Yeah, exactly. Just so you know.

Mike Michalowicz: Exactly. Exactly.

AJ Harper: You can't be in in someone's pocket as much as we are and not share. This is what's happening. Just wanna let you know.

Mike Michalowicz: So the new book title reveal officially is The Money Habit. And I called you at like 10 o'clock at night or so. It was some weird time and I was ready to just jump off of a cliff.

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AJ Harper: You've never done that to me before. I know. I was in shock. Second time happens you said, talk me off the ledge is how you started the call.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, I was so, so

AJ Harper: Also that's like two hours past your bedtime.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh.

AJ Harper: Can we just say?

Mike Michalowicz: I was Mr. Cranky pants. Yeah. What's going on? I should be sleeping.

So what happened was, it was the second time I'd worked for four hours straight. On really mathematically complex stuff for this book to simplify it. And I set auto save, and when I, when you click on save and it, it says it's auto saving. I'm like, it's auto saving to the cloud, and then all of a sudden the screen just goes blank.

I'm like, mother gosh. It reboots. The word comes up. I'm like, okay, where's the auto save? I sit there, wait, wait, nothing, nothing. Um, then I start fishing around, there's nothing. Then the doc, a document comes up like, finally and it's all gone. And I'm like, I don't know what to do. So I called you and I'm like, just talk me off the edge here.

I was like, I can't recreate this. And it, there's this moment like, I just give up. It's just not meant to be. Um, and the best thing you said, the, the, the golden advice was. If it's lost right now, before you go to bed, write down or record just your bullet points. So I spoke into the microphone for 10 minutes.

I mean it's audio. And then I went to bed and the next morning I woke up at like 5:00 AM

AJ Harper: Grumpy,

Mike Michalowicz: Grumpy. 'cause I listened to the recording, I recreated it, and it's better than it was originally. Um, and now I'm like grateful, but it is so painful.

AJ Harper: Yeah. I know it's happened to me more times than I can count, including on this book. Krista does, just yesterday, she goes, why don't, why do you use Word if it bombs out? Is there any system that always saves it? I'm like, well, Google Docs is great at saving it. But it's not the standard.

AJ Harper: No.

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Mike Michalowicz: So we, we can't exchange.

AJ Harper: No.

Mike Michalowicz: You have to use Word.

AJ Harper: You're not changing that either. That's not gonna change.

Mike Michalowicz: No, I'm not. I'm not.

AJ Harper: But you could back up to Google Docs.

Mike Michalowicz: I do like now it's like every 10 seconds, like I write one word save, like I'm now like manic too much. So I have this massive save. I'll save the file. And this is something that you and I started the file name. We used to just have the file name back and forth.

Then we would put our initials after to see who edited. Then we put the date of the edit. Now there's the date and time.

AJ Harper: And our initials.

Mike Michalowicz: And initials, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Is super happy.

AJ Harper: We're a, we're a little nutty.

Mike Michalowicz: A little nutty.

AJ Harper: But we have a lot of tag. We have, we have a complicated system of tag,

Mike Michalowicz: but it works so well.

AJ Harper: It does work well.

Mike Michalowicz: This book is, do you feel the same?

AJ Harper: The Money Habit? The Money Habit.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, the money habit. Do you feel the money habit is our best, like just collaborative creation?

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AJ Harper: Yeah. I haven't reached the same stage I was with all In. But I will say when I was driving in this morning, I was thinking, this is my favorite time is we just turned in the first round of Substantive Edits a week ago.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And now it's a book in my brain. Yeah. Now it's a book.

Mike Michalowicz: It's a book.

AJ Harper: The hardest part for me is everything up to this. Now I'm just like, Ooh, the next round is gonna be just this glorious little tinkering and I'll. I'll, it's so easy for me. Like everything from now forward is cake for me. Uh, so we're cruising. Um, yeah, I think so. You know, I'm, has, I'm, I don't get there like you do as easily. I still wanna make sure I'm dealing with a couple little things until I can fully say that.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: What I do think that is extraordinary about it is. You know, it's 55,000 words, but we've probably written about a hundred thousand.

Mike Michalowicz: It's the most edits ever.

AJ Harper: We, I, from the get, the hard, one of the hardest things for me was just, okay, wait, bring, bring that back. Yeah. Just I was trying to shorten everything that we normally wouldn't be as focused on that. You realize our second book, Pumpkin Plan is like 85,000 words.

Mike Michalowicz: Second best-seller we have.

AJ Harper: So anyway, I, I'm really proud of it and I think. Um, I will say it's the best book. I think you get there faster. And I love that you say this every time.

Mike Michalowicz: I do say it every time. Ever. Yeah.

AJ Harper: It's the best book we've ever written. There's a reason there will be all caps. Send to me over text. Right.

Mike Michalowicz: And then I hate it. And then I love it again. Well, well, next week we're gonna talk all about this. Yeah. There's some, some reasons why I'm feeling this way now, and there's certain things we did this time that we've never done before.

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But let's get back to the topic.

AJ Harper: We're talking about book development.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. What the heck does that mean?

AJ Harper: Which is the first stage, so we're in a later stage of the book, but. So book development is basically, you get a book idea and you develop it into something worth writing. So it, it's a pretty long phase that a lot of people just rush through.

So think of it like this, "oh, I think I wanna write a book about this, or I wanna solve this problem. This is of interest to me." This is where you figure out, okay, who's it for? What's my main message? Is there a framework? What can I promise? How can I deliver on that promise? Those are all fundamentals that I talk about all the time.

And then, okay, then how are we, what goes in the book and should that go in the book or not go in the book and then, do I have to interview people to learn more so I can shape the book? Should I test my content to make sure that it works for other people and it's not just me? And then, okay, now what's the flow of information?

And that becomes a working outline. All of that is book development. Before you even write, or sometimes some of it you'll do while you're writing because it's not like, you know, we just did interviews. I just did an interview three weeks ago. We're at the end.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm.

AJ Harper: So sometimes you're still pulling in some of that development type work because you need a little extra something, but most of it is happening before you ever write anything of significance.

Mike Michalowicz: Do you have a script you follow or some kind of form this is what you need to be filling out or be aware of as you're moving through book development?

AJ Harper: Yeah, I mean, I basically laid it all out in my book, um, and that's what you and I do. So we do book development together. And it, but here's, you are doing book development before I ever get involved. You are doing book development where you write stuff down that you think is interesting. Plus you're kind of taking the pulse of your readership and what they need next, which is different than somebody who's starting a new book. You have a body of work, so you have to consider what am I giving to my readership?

And this new book, The Money Habit.

Mike Michalowicz: mm-hmm.

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AJ Harper: Is actually an expanded, it's a different primary reader for the first time ever in 15 years.

Mike Michalowicz: Yes.

AJ Harper: Which isn't to say that your Entrepreneurial reader won't come over to it. They will, but they're actually not the primary reader.

Mike Michalowicz: Is marketing planning effectively going on at the same time as you're, maybe not intentionally, but--

AJ Harper: You're thinking about it, but it's not the main deal.

The book development is developing the book itself, and I did. I think marketing comes into play, but it's not the main concern.

Mike Michalowicz: How do I know what my readers need.

AJ Harper: Well, lemme go back though. And say, so you and I, we'll go through the same process that I put in the book, but we have been working together so long that we can do it, uh, as kind of sped up process.

So we'll meet, we go on our retreats. We've talked about it before, but we start with the same stuff. So you're coming to me usually with three potential ideas. Maybe we're gonna do a book on sales, maybe we're gonna do a book on selling a business, maybe we're gonna do whatever. The personal finance book has been going around for, it's been one of the books to consider for years

Mike Michalowicz: For sure.

AJ Harper: Because you've been testing, thinking about it. So we first try and think about that, and then once we decide which one are we gonna go for, we do the fundamentals. Who's the reader? How do we describe the reader? What's the core message? What's the promise? And then we bang out an outline.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah,

AJ Harper: and we do it in a high-level way, and then we go into a tighter, very detailed outline after that, trying to see what is the flow. We get all that done in a day and a half.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah,

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AJ Harper: That's a hyper book development process.

Mike Michalowicz: I consider it almost like a product test or prototyping. So I'll give you an example. One book that we've been kicking around, maybe it's gonna come about is selling a business. You mentioned it.

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: But the. The problem about selling a business is that the vast majority of people who sell businesses don't prepare their business for sale. So most books are written, there's this five-year preparation, clean up the financials, blah, blah, blah. Achieve this, make sure profits are a certain level, get the people out, and then you can sell business. I think about 99% business that sell. It's like, I'm done. And how do you sell a business when there is no time?

It's kind of developing a product in that we sit there and say, what's a problem that's not being solved? And then do we have a unique solution for it? Something that's different. And when you and I meet on these retreats. There's a lot of back and forth because you asked me questions about it really qualifying, is this the right time for it?

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: Is, is it really differentiated?

AJ Harper: Is it, yeah, because we have a set of immutable laws.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm.

AJ Harper: And one of them is, it must be disruptive. And it must be mandatory reading in the genre. Mm-hmm. And so if it's not disruptive, yeah. Then we're just not gonna write it.

Mike Michalowicz: Exactly. And it has to be mandatory, which means top three.

AJ Harper: Yeah. So we have to, it has to be worth reading and become a classic.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: We have no con, we have no control over whether it does or not, but you have to write it with that intent.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, a hundred percent agree.

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AJ Harper: So those are, you know, we go, we ask ourselves a lot of questions that I think listeners could ask themselves, such as, you know, you are asking, what do your readers need next? That's always the question.

But for a new writer, it could be, what do my, is this gonna serve my clients? Is this the most pressing need? Is this, is this urgent right now? You know? Those are questions to ask.

Mike Michalowicz: There's also a reflective question about yourself. Is this important to me?

AJ Harper: Yeah. Well, does it align with your purpose?

Mike Michalowicz: Yes. What about your book? Write a Must-Read. Yeah, which is a must read. To me it's so obvious it aligns with your purpose. Yeah. Did you evaluate that? Did you consider that? Is this natural and it just comes out because I. This is what I, who I am.

AJ Harper: I've told the story before, but I didn't intend to write it.

And the only reason I wrote it is because I felt that frankly I was being elitist because I only take 15 students a year from my workshop. And by then I knew it worked. I knew that it wouldn't just work for me. 'Cause everything, everything I teach, I used as a ghost writer. Right? I used also co-writing with you.

But I wasn't sure I could teach it. And once I had proof that it actually worked for my students as well, I realized, oh, this is still, this is bad because I'm only helping 15 people a year. Or at the time it was, I think 30. But now I'm only teach once a year, so I knew I had to write the book because of my values, that I wanted more people to have access to it since I knew for sure it worked. I just wanted you to be able to get it if you had 27 bucks or a library card, instead of having to figure out how to pay for my workshop or get into my workshop. 'Cause there's only 15 slots. I didn't, I didn't like that, doesn't sit in well with me.

So it wasn't like I had to say, oh, I'm gonna write a book. Does this align with my purpose? I felt like I had no choice but to write it.

Mike Michalowicz: Big, big ask. You're hearing it live first on our show right now. We got the author meetup this July.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: Uh, would you wanna present there?

AJ Harper: Like, you told me that I wasn't allowed to come 'Cause I hadn't sold a million books.

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Mike Michalowicz: No, but as a presenter you could. You can't be a attendee. You could be a presenter.

AJ Harper: I mean, you sold over a million books that I helped write.

Mike Michalowicz: I know.

AJ Harper: Um.

Mike Michalowicz: But as a presenter.

AJ Harper: uh, yeah. When it, well, it depends.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Okay. Yeah, because I, I just, what I just pictured as these are like top performing authors.

AJ Harper: Yeah. And I know, I know many of them you,

Mike Michalowicz: You know many of them. For you to sit there in front of 'em and say, here's how you, this is what I think we need a lesson on how to write better books in the world of AI now, and you're the only person that knows this. The answer

AJ Harper: I, I dunno if I'm the only person, but I definitely do know the answer.

Mike Michalowicz: You do know the answer, how to write the next level. That would be awesome.

AJ Harper: Yeah, let's, all right. Yeah. Just tell me, okay. Whenever you tell me when. Yeah. Look, I have a, I have a editing retreat in July.

Mike Michalowicz: In my, in my mind, what I pictured was there's 50 folks in the room. Everyone has Write a Must-Read open.

It's like that AJ Green photo from the Philadelphia Eagles. We take one picture. Everyone has a copy of your book and you're like, the world's top authors are reading, write a must read.

AJ Harper: Oh, you're funny. Yeah. Thank you for considering that. So you, so you might not be compelled like, I felt compelled to do it or, but you do need to think about your own mission, you know, and is the book gonna help you fulfill your purpose, move forward on your mission?

And you know, here's a big one.

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Mike Michalowicz: Yes.

AJ Harper: Um, do you want to write it?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Do you wanna write it? Is is a huge one.

AJ Harper: Do you, do you actually get excited thinking about writing? Is this something you want to do? I, there's a lot of authors, uh, when they come into my workshop, they answer a questionnaire and I'll, at least three or four of them will come in saying, well, there's this book that people want me to write.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm.

AJ Harper: It's almost like you can hear them saying it, and it would be smart for me to do. La la la.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. If you have to do it,

AJ Harper: And then they're, then they'll say, there's this other book, and then they get excited. Yeah, yeah, yeah. And I really, but I probably should write the one that seems practical. You know what, man? Life is short. You gotta go for want. If you don't wanna write it, don't write that thing. 'cause it shows.

Mike Michalowicz: It's the exact same thing in the entrepreneur space. I know entrepreneurs that say, I'm building this business because I want to do something else and this will be my funding for it. I'm like, no.

AJ Harper: Oh my God. No.

Mike Michalowicz: no. You're half Harding something. Oh, so write what you feel called to write. You say, are you willing to promote this for a certain number of years? What's the number? Oh my God,

AJ Harper: people get at least 10. My God, people get so mad at me when I say it.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah,

AJ Harper: but it's true.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah,

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AJ Harper: it's the life of a book is longer than you think, and you're cutting yourself off when you decide to give up on it a few months in, or even two or three years in.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And it doesn't mean you have to stay at a maximum capacity with it. But if you can't imagine yourself still talking about the book and trying to get people to read it 10 years from now, then don't write it at all.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Which also points to the writing style, this evergreen-ness. We were talking about that while writing the money habit.

Certain things like, oh, is it, I think you were actually flagging it. Or Kendra, is this evergreen?

AJ Harper: Yeah. I was flagging a couple things that are, we we're still gonna think this or talk this way. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: In 10 years.

AJ Harper: So there's other stuff you have to figure out and you, you do wanna think about. Okay. Once you've answered those questions and you feel like, all right, I wanna write it, it's aligned with my purpose and I, I feel like this is something that people will need. It's urgent.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm.

AJ Harper: Okay, good. But then how are you gonna monetize it? How does it fit in your business plan? The answer might be, I don't give a crap about monetizing it. I've definitely worked with authors who've said that's not my top priority.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm.

AJ Harper: Okay, cool. But I do think you have to think about where does it fit in your business plan, because you are gonna have to separate from your business a little bit to promote it and it's better if it's works in tandem.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. 'cause monetization translates to me to sustainability of the book and monetization, just so I'm clear, is beyond the book. It's, it's maybe consulting around the book. It's perhaps speaking engagements. Is that what you're talking about? The monetization?

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AJ Harper: Yeah. It could be licensing, certification, whatever. Maybe it's just getting clients, maybe it's membership

Mike Michalowicz: Sponsors.

AJ Harper: When people say to me, why do you think Profit First was such a big success? There's a lot of reasons, but a chief reason is Profit First professionals.

Mike Michalowicz: For sure. Right. They carry it for,

AJ Harper: there's a business, there's a multimillion dollar business aligned with this book, and it can fuel one fuels the other.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And, and that's a huge factor,

Mike Michalowicz: A huge factor. And also alignment. Like we are aligned very closely with Relay. We're, we're about to consummate a deal with another extraordinary bank banking platform, I should say. And, uh, it starts becoming this one plus one equals 11 type of mentality. The relay, the banking platform's winning because of exposure to Profit First and their integration of the system and vice versa.

So the more exposure relay gets, people are being turned on to Profit First. The more profit first exposure gets, the more Relay is getting. Um, so these collaborative partnerships are something they consider too. Um, what about the time to write it? It, it takes a long stinking time. And I'll tell you, you can do an 18-hour day.

I don't recommend it. Um, but I've done a couple of them in the last few months to just because of necessity. You've done them.

AJ Harper: I know. When you, when you told me that I was, there's a part of me that was like,

Mike Michalowicz: weak! You're weak, Michalowicz!t, you go

AJ Harper: I live that way. Yeah. I mean, I don't anymore, I'm not kinder to myself now, but I think part of book development is also asking yourself, how much time do I have to devote to this?

How am I gonna make this work? You know, I need to make space and make room for it. Um, it's takes much more time than you think to--

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Mike Michalowicz: Yeah,

AJ Harper: --write it, edit it, get a deal. All of it. So that's part of book development is, okay, now I've got it, and how, where, where, how am I making space for this? And, and plotting that out as part of book development,

Mike Michalowicz: you're not a big AI, are you using AI? AI?

AJ Harper: Absolutely. Zero.

Mike Michalowicz: Zero. Okay. So ai, I. Um, the chat GPT version has, you can talk with it and you can do some really interesting iterative stuff around book development. You can say, here's a concept I have, but I'm concerned about readers.

And it'll start questioning you. Well, have you considered this and why not that? And, and you can tell it challenged me every step of the way. Defend the reader, and it really could be a good dialogue platform to discuss your concepts with it.

AJ Harper: I think another thing you have to think about in book development is what type of publishing path you wanna pursue.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm.

AJ Harper: People wait till late to think about it. So you don't have to make your mind up entirely, but you need to start thinking, okay, am I gonna pursue traditional publishing? Because that changes the timeline. It, it also changes maybe. Uh, uh, how much time you're gonna have to spend on book development, because part of book development is a book proposal.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm.

AJ Harper: If you're self-publishing, you don't need to do a book proposal. So considering a path is part of it, and so that you're prepared for that publishing path.

Mike Michalowicz: I we just did, um, I set a call with some authors. They were asking me some questions. I did like an Ask Mike anything type thing, and a couple authors were there and someone said, I wanna write my book. I wanna get my book out quickly and so they say I have to self-publish. And my thought was this is that I, I think getting a book out quickly is not necessarily the right thing to do and that doing a hybrid or traditional publishing path may actually slow your role and put, allow you, force you to put more thought into writing, making a great book.

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I think some people just rush it out to get it out and they think it's all about timing and they skip the quality part.

AJ Harper: Previous, my whole career. Right? Was me fighting against that. Yeah. Which is, you know, I definitely had clients who required that and I would definitely have been part of that machine. I, I, you know, if you're feeling that I just gotta self-publish to get it out faster, I would ask you why you need it out faster.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

AJ Harper: Really, be realistic. Is it because you have an event coming up that's not a good reason.

Mike Michalowicz: Right.

AJ Harper: That's a terrible reason.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. There's some books that are specific to timing for sure. A new election or something.

AJ Harper: Yeah, for sure. Publishing can move really fast. Like it's a glacial pace publishing—

Mike Michalowicz: Until it's not.

AJ Harper: Until it's not, you know, they wanna get something out that's super timely because it's related to the news and they, you like, how do they get that book out so fast?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah

AJ Harper: They can, they're just not gonna normally do that.

Mike Michalowicz: They will rush. Yeah. If, if, if there's a major news event, they will rush to, to match it. Yeah. What, what else do we need to figure out at this stage? Anything else?

AJ Harper: Well, again, it's just timing, you know, just making sure that you're making space for all of it. That's part of book development is considering, alright, how, where am I gonna fit time in also for marketing and launch and all of that. And I think it's important to get a little plan. Your plan's gonna change.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm.

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AJ Harper: You're gonna have to tweak it. Life happens, but if you have no plan at all. It's much harder for you to execute anything really.

Mike Michalowicz: I gotta share with you the marketing plan for The Money Habit. It's my best marketing plan yet.

Yeah,

AJ Harper: really. I saw glimpses of it when we were in the meeting,

Mike Michalowicz: so I've been working on it and just cleaning up more and more and, but it got to the level of like. A section just dedicated to basic consideration, the BISA

AJ Harper: BISAC.

Mike Michalowicz: Bi sac, not bi sic bi sac. Uh, and evaluating that and making a determination and just getting to that molecular level. 'cause all these things come together. But how do you make it simple?

AJ Harper: Remember they wait with the BISAC codes, they wait. The first one is the most important.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. That's how I put it. Yeah. So I put a first secondary and tertiary rankings

AJ Harper: Because that's how they know where to shelve it.

Mike Michalowicz: Yep. Yeah, so, so I did an analysis on it, pro and con analysis and what to do, and, uh, sent, submitted to Page Two and they said, oh, we actually prefer these BISAC codes over what we had originally selected. So they're changing 'em now. Interesting.

AJ Harper: I love that you did that. That's great. I used to have to pick BISAC codes for my publishing company.

Mike Michalowicz: Why does the author...? I don't think the author is general aware of those.

AJ Harper: No they don't. No, don't know. Realistically, Mike, they just don't know enough to be able to make those decisions,

Mike Michalowicz: but the publisher doesn't even educate them on it. It's just a sign that seems can't. Why would,

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AJ Harper: that would be an exhausting,

Mike Michalowicz: it'd be, well, our listeners, check it out.

AJ Harper: You can actually look at all the BISAC codes, which is how librarians and booksellers know how to categorize books and you can go look them up. That's not a secret. They also change periodically. New codes are added all the time.

Mike Michalowicz: Other considerations for, uh, book development?

AJ Harper: Um. Yes. Once you've done that, then you have to figure out, okay, do I have to test anything? Most people do not test, and this is a problem. With prescriptive nonfiction or a teaching memoir. Anything where you're asking people to do something, change something, exercises, reflections, action steps, a process, a system. Does it actually work? For people other than you and you, you've gotta get, go through a testing process so that you can determine if it does, because otherwise it's a disservice to readers. We tell people about books that help us. If the book doesn't help us, we are not going to tell people.

Mike Michalowicz: If you can underline something in a podcast, underline that. That's it!

AJ Harper: It's true. We tell people about books that help us. Oh my God, it's so simple. And if you don't know if it's gonna help people, if you just think it will or you think it should, that's not good enough. You have to find out. So that's part of development is deciding, okay, what am I gonna do to test that? And you can be, you can write while you do it. It's okay, but you and I don't even start on a book until you've done significant testing.

Mike Michalowicz: Right. That's generally the rule. And we're, there's also testing of the book itself.

AJ Harper: Yes. And that comes later,

Mike Michalowicz: but that's, it's the same idea as like, okay, so you can teach it live. That's one thing, but can you teach it just through the word.

AJ Harper: Well, that's the second part. So first it's, does it work? Yeah. And then will it, how am I gonna modify this for the page? Because I can no longer look at a person's face to see if it's working. I can't hear the pushback. I can't hear the follow-up questions. So the only way for you to anticipate that is to do it in a live setting in some capacity, A class, a speech, a focus group, something so that you can anticipate that and then put that in the book, which we've been doing with The Money Habit.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm.

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AJ Harper: Okay. Wait, this isn't connecting with people. Oh, this is really hard. And then you also go through an advanced reader feedback process later, but that's when you have something written. Right now we're just talking about what's book development before you dig in and get serious with getting a lot of words in.

And the last thing to consider is, you know, honestly, do you have to do more with your author platform of visibility?

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm.

AJ Harper: That's me right now, honestly, because the second book that I'm starting expands my readership. It's also you, 'cause your book is expanding your readership. I gotta work on expanding my visibility to a wider audience outside of just prescriptive nonfiction. And that's part of book development is just thinking about what am I gonna do to do that?

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm.

AJ Harper: You know, how, what's my process for that?

Mike Michalowicz: One of the big things I'm doing to serve the new audience is I'm writing a newsletter, but I'm writing the full year in advance of these. Individual tips each week, each say Monday

AJ Harper: For personal finance.

Mike Michalowicz: For personal finance.

AJ Harper: Nice.

Mike Michalowicz: So one tip is about using a dedicated credit card for subscriptions, which I just got my statement yesterday and I was shocked. Again, why paying subscriptions.

AJ Harper: But see, now that's in the book.

Mike Michalowicz: No, I understand. But it's still a tip.

AJ Harper: No, and you can, but I just wondered, and I'm, I'm asking you this live, but do you really want those tips in the back of the book, or do you wanna put them in the newsletter?

Mike Michalowicz: Oh. No, I think in the back of the book, I think it's nice to have—

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AJ Harper: In the appendix?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. It's nice to have a collection, a resource.

AJ Harper: You can, but there's nothing stopping you from pulling from every single one of those.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, for sure.

AJ Harper: Yeah,

Mike Michalowicz: For sure. Um, and then there's like an idea on a new account to set up, um, that we didn't talk about in the book. I'm like, oh, I'm gonna put this in. But I'm actively working on caring for this new community and expanding my visibility and platform.

AJ Harper: I'm happy to hear that. Yeah, just like one tip.

Mike Michalowicz: One tip every Monday, shorty.

AJ Harper: Little shorty.

Mike Michalowicz: A little shorty. Just to get people into it and to you. I love that line. It's like if it doesn't, people will talk about stuff that helps them. So talk about a newsletter that helps them.

AJ Harper: Yeah. If it's helpful.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. So. That is the ultimate test. Hey, do you have more, uh, VIP days coming up? What's going on?

AJ Harper: I do, yeah. I wanted to share with everybody that this, you know, I'm gonna be doing this for a select few people a year. I mean, I'm talking just a handful of folks where I take people through, uh, one-on-one with me through this development process over the course of two days.

Mike Michalowicz: Is it over online or in person? Or...

AJ Harper: I can do it online, but you could also come up to the island and stay at my place.

Mike Michalowicz: That's amazing. So gi, give me one of your favorite kind of stories or experiences. So, so our folks listening in could say, oh, that happens there. Or maybe they can take a tip just from this.

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AJ Harper: What do you mean a story? Well, I mean, it's basically the same thing I do with you.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. So what's one of your favorite things that have come out of that experience? I'm just trying to give people a tease with you. With you.

AJ Harper: Yeah, sure. I mean, I mean all the books, man. Yeah. Like what's, what's more like they're born there, you know, and, and also, um, the process of thinking through. How does this all fit? The puzzle of how does this all fit? And taking in what's a good idea and turning into something that gives you goosebumps all over, like that's what we're going for. When, you know, we're not just trying to get it organized. We're like, oh man, like this is it. Yeah. You know, and it doesn't mean that we don't, things don't change and evolve over time, but to take an idea and get it to the goosebump stage, but to also leave, you know, when you and I are done, we have the whole thing ready to go so that a proposal can be knocked out. We usually knock one out the week after.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: 'cause we have every component we need for that.

Mike Michalowicz: Yep.

AJ Harper: And you, we've already kicked around. Oh. You say, oh, I can see how I'm gonna market this. I'll ask you, what are you gonna do to monetize? All those things factor into the writing of the book. People wait too long to think about all these things, but it actually impacts the book itself.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm.

AJ Harper: So having some idea of, first of all, this is hot. This is an amazing idea. Okay, here's how, here's what I need to do. We also have next steps. When we're done, we, you know what you have to do. I know what I have to do. Your team knows what they have to do. You're just the one relaying it to them. So that's what happens in the book development phase that you can just go, you know?

Mike Michalowicz: And to do it collaboratively, like the author's emotionally attached. I fall in love with my ideas, but you look at it with a, the, the perception of a reader and is this consumable, is this desirable? And it, it, it's, it really brings about the best ideas.

AJ Harper: Yeah, it's, I'm, I'm a gentle, I'm gonna challenge people. I challenge you all the time.

Mike Michalowicz: All the time.

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AJ Harper: All the time. But you, but it's not mean. It's just like, well, how's that? You know?

Mike Michalowicz: It's, it's so supportive. It's so helpful.

AJ Harper: Yeah, absolutely.

Mike Michalowicz: When we were in New York, remember that bear incident?

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: I thought there was a woman in a fur coat bathing in our lake.

AJ Harper: It was the teenage bear. It was just hanging out.

Mike Michalowicz: . It was a teenage bear, swimming around. I remember we came out with a full, I can't remember what book that was, or did we even It's the sell but sell your book. We didn't write it. Sell your business book.

AJ Harper: Sell your Business book.

Mike Michalowicz: That's what it was. But we had some remarkable ideas.

AJ Harper: Oh my gosh. It's fantastic. It's just, the problem is we couldn't execute on it because we just didn't have, remember we started interviewing up a storm?

Mike Michalowicz: Yep.

AJ Harper: We were ready to, we ready to roll? Yeah, we were ready to roll. We, we train, left the station. We did the interview after interview. I'm like, what the heck?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, exactly. The interviews were going and there was one guy, Justin, I can't remember his last name, who said, I'm willing to start testing this and deploying it in his brokerage firm. 'cause it was a, it was a radical shift. It didn't pass the test phase yet.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: It's actively out there, but not, not a big book.

AJ Harper: So what's happened is we have developed the beginning of that book.

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Mike Michalowicz: Yep.

AJ Harper: But now you have to determine how. It just, it didn't pass the field test. Let's call it a field test.

Mike Michalowicz: Field test. Yeah.

AJ Harper: Yeah. Which is the first time that's ever, that's unusual, actually.

Mike Michalowicz: it passed the bear bathing test.

AJ Harper: You know why I think that didn't pass? Because you're not actively doing this, Mike. Like your best books.

Mike Michalowicz: That's right. You live your best book.

AJ Harper: You, you have a body of work now, so you're, you've been looking for, what do I write next? But the challenge is you wrote the definitive books.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Already.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And so you have this desire to continue serving, but you're not a person who's just routinely selling a lot of businesses.

Mike Michalowicz: I wonder. You know, one thing I've lived and we've been resistant to, uh, is building a personal brand.

AJ Harper: Mm.

Mike Michalowicz: And, and now we have so much experience under our belt, how I follow this path, what we've done together. Maybe that's gonna be a book ,

AJ Harper: Maybe and related to specifically for underdog entrepreneurs.

Mike Michalowicz: yeah.

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AJ Harper: Which is different. You know, you, you're not talking about thought leaders, like a lot of people do personal brand for thought leaders or influencers, but what about personal brand for just like, you know, Jose and Jorge?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Yeah.

AJ Harper: Do you know what I mean?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: That's, Hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: Mmm. Yeah, I think it's like the, the meek will inherit the earth kind of concept.

AJ Harper: But, but I also, my prediction for you,

Mike Michalowicz: yeah.

AJ Harper: Is that because you're moving into personal finance that there, that it's, there's gonna be additional

Mike Michalowicz: personal finance books.

AJ Harper: Personal finance related books.

Mike Michalowicz: It is interesting, the inquiries I'm getting already for, Hey, can you give advice on tax management and stuff like that.

AJ Harper: Yeah. So, you know, I think a whole new world is open to you, whereas I felt like before you were kind of. Like, well, I already wrote that. I already wrote that.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: You know, so

Mike Michalowicz: Interesting.

AJ Harper: I'm excited to, I, I feel like you're moving into a new era.

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Mike Michalowicz: Alright, a couple action items for our listeners. First, go to [aj harper.com](http://ajharper.com) right now go to VIP Day. Hey, maybe I'll be out there too. All three of us have spend some time together. There's two ways to get goosebumps. One is you nail your book with AJ or jump into that crazy cold lake. She's got. Sec. Second, uh, action item is make sure you bookmark next week's episode to listen to, so meaning put it on your calendar. I'm really, really pumped about. We're gonna talk about the new book update and, uh, what we're doing to make the book more accessible. Tons of stuff going on behind the scenes that we're gonna divulge to you.

I wanna invite you to go to dw.tb.podcast.com. Don't skip this part. You're like, oh my God, the show's up. We're gonna fast out here. Don't first go to that website, get our free materials. Secondly, email us hello@dw.tb.podcast.com. Ask us questions, topics you want to hear about. We've had a lot of interest from, from guests on show topics.

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It's just a fit of what we're looking to do with our, uh, organization, but we got to start the conversation minimally. Thanks again for joining us for today's episode. We're looking forward to seeing you next week. You know the reminder, don't write that book. Write the greatest book you can.