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Episode 85:

“Using Graphics and Illustrations in Your Book”

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. All right. We started this episode with, you're clearing your throat a little. Do you ever do that to get someone's attention? The old, uh, throat clear?

AJ Harper: No.

Mike Michalowicz: I'll use it occasionally. So if, like, instead of saying, excuse me or something, and someone's sitting there and like, they're, they're observing you, instead of saying, excuse me, I'll just go, you know, like, oh, and then turn around and go, Oh.

AJ Harper: I will do it if I'm in the bathroom. And I wanna make sure that people know I'm in the bathroom so they don't open the door.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, yeah. That's a good use too.

AJ Harper: That's so, I, I take it back. I, I, that's, that's my sole usage.

Mike Michalowicz: I was thinking about doing this as an icebreaker at this upcoming authors event I have. How many times have you walked into the wrong bathroom? Like if you utilize a men's room, how many times in your life have you accidentally walked into a women's room or vice versa? So I'm, I'm posing it to you.

AJ Harper: Mm.

Mike Michalowicz: Have you ever accidentally walked into--

AJ Harper: Accidentally? No, but intentionally, yes.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, okay.

AJ Harper: I've been to a lot of concerts. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah,

Mike Michalowicz: yeah. Well, women will do that.

AJ Harper: Yeah. Come on.

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Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. I've walked into the women's room unintentionally, I think, in my life two times I can think of, maybe three times. Just not paying attention. Walk in and I see it like, but thank God never made, even made the corner because there's been a woman like either walking in or out. Like, whoa. Whoops. It wakes you up.

AJ Harper: Big energy. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. It wakes you up. You're listening to Don't Write That Book. Today we're gonna talk about using graphics and illustrations in your book. I'm joining studio with my co-writer and partner, AJ Harper. You know what I admire about you is you elevate your friends constantly.

Like you, you were referencing Zoe Bird, the last episode. Um, you elevate other authors constantly. You're always putting people up.

AJ Harper: I love them.

Mike Michalowicz: I know you do. And it comes across and it's so authentic. It's awesome.

AJ Harper: Thanks. You do the same though. I can admire that about you. About you as well.

Mike Michalowicz: Well, it's kind of you.

AJ Harper: You get super jazzed.

Mike Michalowicz: I do.

AJ Harper: Yeah. You, you like what? When other people succeed.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Particularly bootstrapping entrepreneurs. The underdogs. It just gets me so excited.

AJ Harper: Really? Yeah. It's the same, same feeling as for me, for my authors.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. I love it.

AJ Harper: Yeah. If they, if they tell me, oh, I finished my manuscript, or I'm signing my contract, or whatever, oh, I'm just elated. I'm elated all, all day. Or even if it's a simple thing, let, let share this email I got from a reader. Oh, amazing.

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Mike Michalowicz: I was in Denver maybe four days ago, so I went from Denver to Vegas. Vegas, and I met in Denver with a handful of entrepreneurs, seven, eight. And we went around the room and I said, we're gonna start doing what's called RFPs.

And in business that's a request for proposal. But this is really effing proud. And what I told people is, as entrepreneurs we're rarely given that opportunity to say, I'm just really... acknowledge ourselves. So I said, you're gonna, you're gonna be forced here. And you see people going up and they're getting tearful of accomplishments, however they defined it. Hmm. Is Oh, I was really effing proud of these people. It was so cool. It was so cool.

AJ Harper: What did you say?

Mike Michalowicz: Um, I'm really effing proud of the lifestyle that my wife and I live as a result of authorship.

AJ Harper: Hm.

Mike Michalowicz: It's the ultimate in. Expression and flexibility and you really can carve your life as you want. You know, when I had other businesses, you still had a very nine to five, you had to be there all the time. Because the customer dictated that this morning, uh, I think we've already sold 40 books as of this, as of this hour right now, just based upon our stats. Is I think we sell 300 Profit First a day on average, uh, in the us and that's all formats. And, uh, I was cooking breakfast. I was, you know, it's just, it's just really cool. Um, so as I said, I'm really proud of that.

AJ Harper: Yeah,

Mike Michalowicz: We came home and, uh, we had our. I have a landscaper that put down like new mulch and just the house looks pristine. So you come home and when you have a, your property remulched just looks good. And, uh, it just, it it's, there's a pride there too. It, it's, the house has become a, a, almost like a safe haven or a vacation destination type thing. And there's another thing I mentioned at the RFP. Do you have an RFP?

AJ Harper: Um, yeah, I mean, I'm, I'm really proud of that something I created, which is the methodology I teach works for people.

Mike Michalowicz: It's so good.

AJ Harper: Yeah. It makes me so happy.

Mike Michalowicz: It's so good.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

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Mike Michalowicz: Um, yeah, and if anyone listening has not purchased Write a Must-Read. Please get it. Your copy now at your favorite bookstore bookshop. I just bought Chris Guillebeau, just released Time Anxiety. Just came out. I got my 50 copies today. I bought 50 copies of it to share with people. It's one of the most difficult elements for all humanity.

AJ Harper: Time

Mike Michalowicz: Is time.

AJ Harper: The construct?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. So, uh, I'm gonna be handing those out. In fact, why don't we giveaway, I think we're doing a couple giveaways. Why don't we do a giveaway from this show. So the first person to email us saying, I don't want time, anxiety in the subject line to what's our, our email.

Hello. At dwb podcast.com. First person to say that, um. You'll get a free copy. We'll mail it to you. Nice. Yeah,

AJ Harper: That's good.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay, so let's dig into the topic today. You know what, what triggered this thought for me? Lisa Story is a guy named Peter Cocking. He works with Page Two and he is their graphic designer for covers, I thought alone, and he calls me up. First of all, he asked, I may have said this on a prior episode, one of the most profound cover design questions I've ever been asked. He interviews me for 40 minutes on cover design.

AJ Harper: Yeah. It's a long cut. It's a long call,

Mike Michalowicz: and one of his questions is, if you vision your book on the shelf with other books, what are those books? I'm like, how come no one's ever asked me that? I never even thought about that. I'm like, of course, because. Your colors need to work with it or distinguish from it. And, you know, there's all this co this thought that's coming about. Um, at the end of it, he sends me a video of the initial design, always the file design and how it's transposed and changed over time.

So that was really cool. And then I get an email saying, okay, now you gotta work on your. Uh, graphics and illustrations inside the book, and I'm like, what are you talking about? I'm already like 90% of the way through that and like, what do you mean? I said, don't have to make my own graphics. That's why I've been told that's how the industry works.

AJ Harper: I mean, that is true actually. This isn't, this isn't normal at Page Two.

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Mike Michalowicz: Page two's not normal. Because they said, no, we do it for you. I'm like, what? You do that, you're like, yeah, and we need to make sure it's all congruent with the cover. It all works together. So I hired Liz De Brisker who is amazing, and I've worked with him on every other book to do the, the graphic design work for the interior.

And what she asked for is the cover design so she can have this congruency. They do it for you. I was like, what Peter? So I still use Liz's work. It's phenomenal. And I will tell you this one last little anecdote. Liz calls me and this, Liz is not this type of person. She just gets her stuff done.

There's no cordial personal calls. She's wonderful. She's just a great human, but it's not like she calls up and says, Hey, what are you doing? How you doing? Checking in. She calls up, she's like, I tell you something. I'm like, what is it? She goes, as I was doing this graphic design of all your books, it's the first time she's like, I understood exactly everything in how this book works, just from the graphics.

I didn't have to read. 'cause sometimes she'll read the manuscript so she can come up with graphics and understand where I'm coming from. She's like, just from the graphics, I understand exactly how this system works.

AJ Harper: That's amazing. I'm sure that feels good. That's an RFP.

Mike Michalowicz: That's an RFP for Liz and for me,

AJ Harper: For you.

Mike Michalowicz: But that points to, I think the significance of graphics. It what it allows the reader to do. It is something that the reader wants to do, I think, is sometimes they just wanna skim. They just want to get to the juice. And the graphics, at least for me, are a stopping point. When I'm rifling through a book, I'll hit a graphic, I'll read the little subtext to it and maybe it's because I'm a visual learner, I'll absorb it and make a decision on, oh, maybe I should read this section and go back.

AJ Harper: I mean, I think you hit on it right there. We need graphics and illustrations, charts, et cetera, for the visual learners, people who learn differently or for people who just need a little extra because maybe the concepts are complicated. We did a whole episode on making your book more accessible to readers, and we talked a little bit about it.

But I was inspired. This, this episode is actually inspired by a new student of mine. I have a person who signed up for Top Three Book Workshop in the fall, and she's coming to, um, Q and As and so forth all over the summer. And her question last night was about visuals that she wants to put a lot of graphics and, and illustrations in her books, and she's worried that there's maybe too many. And so I thought, oh, let's do, let's do a whole episode on that. It's just understanding graphics, illustrations, et cetera.

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Mike Michalowicz: And can you share her name and what her book is?

AJ Harper: Susie.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

AJ Harper: Um, I don't know exactly. She's trying to decide between two books, so,

Mike Michalowicz: oh, go Susie. Go.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: That's a good problem to have.

AJ Harper: It is a good problem to have.

Mike Michalowicz: Um, can there be too many illustrations?

AJ Harper: Yeah, I think there can be.

Mike Michalowicz: It's called a comic strip. Yeah.

AJ Harper: That is a graphic novel.

Mike Michalowicz: Right.

AJ Harper: Or a graphic depiction of what you're doing, which you could do, which would be super cool. Yeah. Which you would have to make that choice.

Yeah. Yeah. I think so. We can get a little, you know, overly happy. Excited about our graphics, especially also, I've had people who wanted to use cartoons and other things just for flavor.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And I don't always think that it, it's working in the way it, you need to, it's, we still have to think about immersing the reader. We still have to think about an immersive experience, which is when you say a page turner. A page turner is a book in which the reader is immersed and continues to turn the page

Mike Michalowicz: Exactly.

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AJ Harper: To see what happens next.

Mike Michalowicz: There is a fellow, and I was just looking up his website, John Bates, he's been my speaking coach. For 20 years. His website is johnbates.com. Um. The dude is insanely good. And if you want to do keynotes, you get John Bates, in my opinion. Um, or Michael Port. Michael Port. Or you go to Heroic. Yeah, that is true. Heroic Public speaking is amazing and it's stage performance. John Bates is stage performance, but it's it, he helps you articulate your message so well, and you rehearse it in front of him.

He actually comes to my live events. We'll take notes. Uh,

AJ Harper: yeah, if you wanna work privately. Privately, yeah. Yeah. So

Mike Michalowicz: John Bates, my guy. One thing he did with me when I started the, this is 15 years ago, he says, before we get started, he goes, tell me what you think are five or 10 of the most important or impactful speeches of all time in the us.

So I'm like, you know, Martin Luther King, um, uh, Abraham Lincoln, you know, like, whatever.

AJ Harper: I've heard you say this before. And you mentioned JFK.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, I did. And then, so then the, the quote unquote punchline is, he goes, well, tell me about the PowerPoints they use. They didn't use any, and he's like.

Do not use a PowerPoint. This is not a presentation as a performance. This is how you're gonna do it. The,

AJ Harper: Hey, wait a minute. I thought you said Michael. Michael Port said that to you about the slides?

Mike Michalowicz: Michael Port says, uh, presentation versus performance. No, that was John Bates who told me that. Oh, maybe they both say that, but John Bates said it's not, do not have slides. And what his argument was, he goes, there's a cognitive shift. People need to make the, the, the people in the audience, they're listening to you. They're drawing pictures in their head. That's how our communications work. I say elephant, a picture of an elephant pops up temporarily, momentarily. He goes, that's how they're consuming.

If you make 'em look at the PowerPoint, now your main mind has to shift to a different form of consumption, which is reading, visualizing for graphics. Up there he goes, there's this, this constant break. So he goes, you have to be really careful. So in general, don't use it unless it adds substantial value.

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And um, I think it's the same with books that. When I'm reading, and then when a graphic comes about, there is a shift in how I read. It's no longer this linear progression. Now there's a shift and there's, there's a pause and contemplation, and if an illustration brings about a new perspective or something that's confusing it for me, it breaks the flow.

So I think the graphic's gotta be in the right place at the right time, and it's gotta compliment what the text is in that moment for me to continue the flow.

AJ Harper: Yeah, the answer to the question, by the way, for Susie and I answered it last night, can you have too many? Yes. You can have too many. And how do you figure it out? You figure it out by just deciding really simply is it gonna help you deliver on the promise to readers?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah,

AJ Harper: That's always the golden question. Do I need this in order for them to understand this? Do I need this in order for them to move forward?

Mike Michalowicz: Do you look first, consider what you've written and say is it written well enough for them not to need a graphic?

AJ Harper: Yeah, that's definitely a factor. But I also think, you know, we don't use enough of them. And I don't, I didn't use any in my book.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. So how do you,

AJ Harper: but I, I will, you know, I've, I think I should have, but I don't think like that. And then also, the book was long, so it would've been. Hard to do a lot of illustrations in there.

Mike Michalowicz: Well, here's the question. If your book was long and you put graphics in, would've been a shorter book, would there have been content that could have been explained? Is a picture worth a thousand words type thing?

AJ Harper: Not in that book. Yeah, but I, I think I would've liked to have explained a few things and as I move forward with new things I'm working on, I definitely think we need to challenge ourselves to think about how we can show visual representation of concepts or systems or processes.

Mike Michalowicz: When I read

AJ Harper: Ideas,

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Mike Michalowicz: yeah. When I read my audio books, when you get to the graphic, if there's a graphic in the book, you have to explain the graphic. So it's, it's interesting. To me, that's what the consumer's going through. When you're reading a book, you're, it's a straight read. You hit a graphic. On the audio book, there's a pause and then you gotta explain the graphic. And I think that's kinda what goes on people's minds. When do, how do you know, like this is the spot for a graphic?

AJ Harper: is it, it's related to if you, you're introducing a new concept.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And you wanna use the graphic to help people understand then it would go with the introduction of the concept.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Same with a step or process system. Or maybe that's the graphic. It goes right where you introduce the information.

Mike Michalowicz: I think what, when we're working on a book, what I'm trying to do is when I, when we write something and then I read it, I'm reading it like the consumer and I ask myself, could they have multiple interpretations of this? Even though it's this succinct and hopefully expressive of the concept as possible, could they see it a different way?

And if they can see it multiple ways, I think a graphic is definitely justified if that will bring clarity.

AJ Harper: I mean, I think anytime a concept is new.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: ...Confronting, hard to grasp, a paradigm shift, um, complicated. You really have to think about, am I gonna use a chart? Am I gonna use a contextual model? Am I gonna use an illustration? What do I need here?

Mike Michalowicz: One model we have in the money habit, which Liz commented on. She said was super helpful, was frequency versus size. So in regards to money, if you save more money per tranche more frequently, you'll save more money logically, but behaviorally, small amounts at a high frequency are better because you don't feel as much pain.

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

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Mike Michalowicz: And she's like, oh, and so is graphic. She goes, I always got it, but she goes, now I get it.

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm. That's, that's what she's a visual person.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. I, I wonder what percentage of readers are visual people?

AJ Harper: Uh, I don't know. There's probably a good statistic we could look up about that, but, um, we need to, we need to account for that.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And even people who aren't visual, people sometimes don't need it. Like I said, if you're really, if you're really giving them something they've never considered before or it's complicated set of reasoning, then you know you might need to do it anyway.

Mike Michalowicz: Have you seen, uh, people have too few graphics? What I mean is, is the graphics were necessary and helpful, but they're so sparse, it actually becomes a distraction in itself?

AJ Harper: Hmm. Probably nothing comes to mind off the top of my head, but

Mike Michalowicz: I'm wonder if there's a Goldilocks here.

AJ Harper: No, I just think it's, I really do think it comes down to the question, what do I need to do?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: To help my reader understand and move forward. And if, if, do I need this chart, this model, this illustration, this graphic depiction? What do I need? I need this little drawing, um, to help them better understand and move forward. That's it. That's the question.

Mike Michalowicz: You shared, well, I talked about Peter Cocking and he's like, yeah, Page Two. Of course we'll do this for you. And you said that's not typical.

AJ Harper: No.

Mike Michalowicz: Penguin didn't do it.

AJ Harper: No.

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Mike Michalowicz: Um,

AJ Harper: Authors are responsible for their...

Mike Michalowicz: graphics.

AJ Harper: Graphics.

Mike Michalowicz: And should I ask my publisher, are you gonna do the graphics? Because I guess there's at least one situation out there with page two that they do it for you.

AJ Harper: I mean, you can ask, but, but assume they won't. Assume they won't.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

AJ Harper: Put it in your budget.

Mike Michalowicz: What's the process you go about? I'll give you my own story, but how do you go about making a graphic or help one of your authors?

AJ Harper: Well, so it depends on what they're trying to do. If they're trying to do a contextual model where they're trying to convey a concept or system in, uh, using a... Using a graphic that demonstrates, it's often without words. You know, that's a process of trying to come up with that. That's one thing. Um, but if it's a chart or something else that, that's easy enough. Um. Mostly I just direct authors to, again, think about what's needed, how, what would be helpful, what would make this easier on readers.

That's the first question. And then you need to work with a graphic designer. You can, you can create it first yourself. But you need to work with someone who isn't just a graphic designer. There's somebody who has worked on books because the requirements for books are gonna be different.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: And when your graphic is printed in your book, it's whatever the size of your book is. I'll give you my hack. I use an eight and a half by 11 pad. I use a Sharpie pen, but not the fine sharpie and a standard Sharpie that you'd use to autograph books. And I never use, uh, I always do everything in handwriting because it's a larger than font. You can't do these like little micro things, which enforces simplicity in the design. And I will draw it over and over until I have it refined to where I want it to be. Uh, the electronic version is I'll use an

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iPad, which is also kind of an eight and a half by 11 side. I'll use one of their pens, you know that, that... But then I'll set the marker setting for that pen to be kind of the middle setting. So it's a thick line.

AJ Harper: Sure.

Mike Michalowicz And it forces you to simplify it because you can't write in tons of stuff. I never use the keyboard. I never put in text. 'cause then you can just pack stuff in. And so it forces this very simple design.

And for me, it, it brings you to the essence of it. That's what I hand over to Liz and then we start iterating.

AJ Harper: Yeah. And a graphic designer has to know what are the specs that the publisher will need and has to understand how it's gonna look in a book versus just... How it looks in the design.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Okay. A little pro tip here too is convert it to a PDF. A downloadable PDF, um, with all your graphics so that when people buy your audio book, they can do it. But interestingly, when people buy my print book, a percentage, still get the PDF downloads so they can print it out so they can write it up on the PDF because they don't wanna write inside their book. Interesting.

AJ Harper: You're full of tips.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Have you had a case where publishers say, no, don't illustrate, you're not allowed to, or...

AJ Harper: I mean, publishers are, they wanna save money, so that's number one. So the more illustrations you have, the more the, the higher the page count. And higher page count means more money. It costs more money. So you might get some pushback there. And, um, usually I think authors are more in love with it than the publishers are. So you, that's why I say you've got to be able to say, I need this because

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm.

AJ Harper: X, Y, Z for them to understand this piece, right? You have to be able, anytime you want something that they don't want to give you, you have to be able to say, Y you can't just say it because I like it, or you know, I think, no publisher's gonna say, oh, I love that you did 50 cartoons. In here as an aside, just to bring some humor to your book.

They're not gonna say that. So you have to be able to defend what you're doing. And if you can't defend it yourself, then you know, I gotta yank that thing. But I did have, I have an

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author, Cathy. And she had a, uh, she showed me, she had her assistant, um, spent a lot of time doing this emotion tree, and it had a lot of words on it, and it was, it was beautiful.

And I looked at it and I thought. Her publisher's gonna tell her she can't have that. And I told her that. Yeah. I said, Kathy, your publisher's gonna tell you ,you can't have that.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And she's like, well, no, but I, I'm, I have to have it. So a little while later she came back and said, my publisher said I can't have the emotion tree.

And I said, okay, well, you could still have it, but I think you need to. And what you need is an illustrator who is familiar with doing work for publishing.

Mike Michalowicz: Right.

AJ Harper: To do a... Because it was very big. And it says, yeah. I said, it's not gonna fit on the page.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And she said, well, I'll shrink it down. I said, if you shrink it down, we won't be able to see what it says.

Mike Michalowicz: It's the worst thing to do.

AJ Harper: She was really championing. This person who did a, a good job on it, but that person was not a book illustrator.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: So this is where you end up with a lot of frustration. So I referred her to someone who I love Choi Messer, who's freaking brilliant, and she did a pencil drawing of it.

At first, you know? Yeah. So she knows what needs to happen for it to work. And then they approved it. So you, that's what I'm saying is you have to work with someone who can, okay, I can work with this and get this thing approved. Because the publisher's not gonna say, oh, if you did X, Y, Z, we could make this work. Or let our department make this work for you. They're just gonna veto. So it's better if you just try and solve the problem on your own with a professional. But she got her tree.

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Mike Michalowicz: Pro tip that you packed in there is never shrink it down. That's the biggest mistake that authors make. They draw a graphic and then they pack it into the book and you cannot read it.

AJ Harper: You cannot read it.

Mike Michalowicz: It actually becomes a distraction then. That's the biggest, most costly mistake. And I see it with some professional book know, I don't wanna call names. Yeah. Um, when people go to ajharbor.com, they can sign for the top three workshop. Do you

AJ Harper: Top Three Book Workshop.

Mike Michalowicz: Top Three Book Workshop. Can they, do you spend time on illustrations? With authors?

AJ Harper: For those who need it. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

AJ Harper: Yeah, absolutely.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay, so go to ajharper.com right now. Sign up. Darn it. Um, how, how about pictures, photographs? Do you see people put those in?

AJ Harper: They want to, but you know, you've gotta have a very high-quality image.

Mike Michalowicz: It is tough to do.

AJ Harper: It's tough. And then I, I have a lot of authors who want these full color spreads in their books. Listen, you add one color. It doesn't matter if there's just the one you say, I just want blue.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: You've just up jacked up the price to the high heavens. You know, it's either black and white or color and, uh, you know, set this stuff aside. Is it really necessary?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. We have in uh, Clockwork two pictures. Two photographs. One is, I don't remember his name. Justin. I wanna say? Do you remember this? He sends a letter he's on...

AJ Harper: Yeah, it's your friend, your, your, um, the person with his friends.

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Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: So this guy, he went to Oregon State. Uh, he graduated from there with some, I think it was Oregon or Oklahoma. That's irrelevant. He and his friends get together for a college reunion every year, except for him. He wasn't going because he was working in his business all the time, which was a detailing shop. He reads *Clockwork*, the first version, and now he's in the new revised, expanded *Clockwork*, his business, and he was able to go on this trip, he's holding a sign on a plane that says, thank you, and he goes, This is not about what you think. He goes, I went on this event with my friends and after we had this great weekend, my one friend actually passed away as we were saying goodbye to each other. Um, and he goes, I would've missed that because I didn't, I. I was working my business all the time, right. He said, I'm so grateful the last days of my friend's, best friend's life, I was with him.

Um, and he goes, that's why I'm thanking.

AJ Harper: That's a, that's an important photo.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. And that's a real photo.

AJ Harper: It's not incidental

Mike Michalowicz: from the plane. And you can see the emotion in his face. Like it is like a good photo, but it wasn't made for it. So it's not back lit correctly. There's the light coming in through the plane window.

Um, but it worked. Then, to counter that. We have another photo myself with my college buddies at the very end, uh, where I'm back at Virginia Tech with four of my hallmates from freshman year at a game to point that the impact he's had on me and the commitment to me.

AJ Harper: That's... yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, that's a good use of photos.

AJ Harper: So let me just, lemme just dissect that for a moment. The first photo, photo demonstrates, um. The promise, but also the pain.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm.

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AJ Harper: The second photo demonstrates the promise. These are two intentional photos that are very much needed. The book could have been fine without them. But it's enhanced by that and they're book ended. So it creates emotion. And continuity. Good choices. I have seen books where people have random pictures of themselves. No, no reason. Yeah, like full on like head shotty, like pro photo, just in the book.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Please don't ever do that. I, I can't think of anything. Why would you do that? I did.... right in the middle of the book.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Makes no sense.

AJ Harper: Don't do things like that. Full color. Makes you happy. Right. And yes, people are going to say, oh, it's so pretty. Your book's so pretty. That's, it's just a little compliment. It doesn't mean it's enhancing the reader experience.

Mike Michalowicz: We put the photographs on the standard paper. I don't know what poundage it is or what kind of paper it is that you put text on. You'll see in a lot of books, autobi uh, biographies are common. The pictures are in the middle because it requires actually different paper to do the high resolution. But it also for me, breaks the continuity. I'm, I just finished George Washington's book, um, I'm halfway now, or more than halfway through Thomas Essence biography.

And you get to the middle and it's like, oh, this picture's in the story back on page 10, and I just don't like the continuity break, you know?

AJ Harper: They should move them to the end. Why do they always put him in the middle? And the biographies, it's just put 'em at the end. It's probably something with the printing process of that paper.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, right. Because it needs to be binding right in the middle.

AJ Harper: Yes. The binding. Yeah. Yeah. And you know, they're in like an eight count, right?

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, is it always an eight count?

AJ Harper: Well, it's sometimes four or six or eight, but

Mike Michalowicz: it's gotta be, it's gotta be an even number. Yeah.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper: So that's why there's a certain number of photos. Exactly.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Right. Um, you know, I should, I should do an asterisk though. I do think a full color book looks great. When you say have a workbook or it's your vibe. Let's say you're an artist. You know, and you've got this beautiful journaling book, or you have this. Um, what, whatever. There's a reason. You have to have a reason for your reader. That makes sense. But yeah, lay off the photos unless you have a dang good reason.

Mike Michalowicz: What about using other people's graphics?

AJ Harper: Get permission.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Just don't do it.

AJ Harper: Don't do it.

Mike Michalowicz: I've seen people use like cartoons, like, oh, I love this little, uh, Snoopy cartoon or whatever. It, it exemplifies, they insert it without permission. That's a problem.

AJ Harper: Um, Snoopy? Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Come on, you're asking for it. You better hope you only sold three of those books.

Mike Michalowicz: You had a, a story here about a friend, uh, in, in our show notes, Olivia. Oh, it's, can you tell us about that?

AJ Harper: She's one of my students and she's in my Author Collective. Her book is forthcoming. It's front list, *Tiny Acts of Courage*. And, uh, I, yeah, I wanted to share when we talked about this topic, she's a genius at this stuff. When we're in live edit. She, she's at live edit. Bless her. She's a. She comes a live, edit it every Thursday, and she's only up for a live edit once in a while. By her choice. She's just there to support to author community, but she has this unique gift for translating things into pictures and contextual models and diagrams, concepts. Oh, what if you did it like this? And she can just draw it, and then she holds it up on the zoom screen in her book. She has so many drawings and they're absolutely perfect. They're absolutely per, she worked so hard on it and I wanted to comment about it because what I noticed with Olivia is that her pursuit to simplify, because that's really what we're doing here with the graphics, charts, illustrations and models. We are simplifying.

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Her pursuit to continue to simplify and make it, make it as easy for her reader to understand as possible, caused her to create a bunch of illustrations and really think it through. And then I now watched her. It shaped the content. (Oh.) So here's my, what I'm saying is we're thinking about it as this thing we're gonna add when we're done with the book, which is kind of how you and I approached it, but she's still working on it and it's shaping the book. And what if you said, okay, let me challenge myself. Let me simplify the concept in a picture, even if I don't use it.

Mike Michalowicz: Go, Olivia.

AJ Harper: What if you did that and it changed the way you wrote about it?

Mike Michalowicz: Mmm.

AJ Harper: Which is what happened to her and her book is, I thought her book was great. Before she did all that, I thought her book was amazing. Now her book is level, but infinity because she took that time to do it. So I, I argue that I'm learning that. I don't argue. I'm learning that when we take the time to figure out what if I had to show this in a picture or a series of pictures, because she has some where it evolves, right?

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

AJ Harper: What would that look like? And then to be open to the fact that that might actually change the way you talk about it.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm.

AJ Harper: And how cool is that?

Mike Michalowicz: We have one graphic that we did do that way it's the business priority pyramid in Fix This Next. And it did help simplify that book radically once the graphic was done.

AJ Harper: Yeah, that informed the text. That's it. Really did. Yeah, that absolutely did. Well she's got like, okay, so first this, and then now you get that and then this.

Mike Michalowicz: go Olivia.

AJ Harper: It's just, yeah, it's amazing. I can't wait for her book to come out. Um, there, there's, she doesn't have a, a release date yet, but um, tiny Acts of Courage is the title.

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And, um, she's explaining in the book how courage works, how we develop it, and she's explaining in the book what, uh, why it's, we were blocked from it. (Oh!) And, and she uses so many pictures that you get it. You totally, completely get it. So why not just as an exercise challenge yourself? Let me see. What if I had to do it?

And see if maybe that makes your work better.

Mike Michalowicz: Mmm. That's brilliant. Uh, next week we're gonna talk about how long does it take to publish a book

AJ Harper: Publishing timelines,

Mike Michalowicz: The publishing timeline. You owned a publishing house, so we're gonna talk to the master herself. Wanna remind you, go to ajharper.com for the top three book workshop.

Also, you can go to retreats at AJ's vacation home with her unbelievable. We would love to hear from you too. You know how to email us. hello@dwtbpodcast.com. If you're interested in our imprint, meaning if you're an author in the entrepreneur space, when I say our imprint, I started this with page two.

It's called Simplified. This whole journey we talked about today, um, will be delivered to you at Simplified if we're a fit. So just email us at hello@dwbpodcast.com and Naela, who's our show producer, uh, we'll be in contact with you and we can, uh, talk shop plus we free resource at our website. Also, so visit the website.

All right. Thanks for joining us. You know the rule. Don't write that book. Write the greatest book you can.