

# don't write *that* book!

## Episode 86:

### How Long Does It Take to Publish 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.

I want to thank our sponsor, and if you're enjoying this episode it's because of Julie Bee. Julie Bee, author of *Burned: How Business Owners can Overcome Burnout and Fuel Success*. AJ, you and I were talking off air about the taboo of being burned out.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, you can't talk about it. You can't tell anybody that you're feeling what you're feeling. Burnout isn't just a physical feeling. It's also an emotion.

**Mike Michalowicz:** If you're saying this about your book, you're, and you can't say you're burned out on this book?

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, but there's an answer.

**Mike Michalowicz:** We've been in this situation, and we'd sit in a cottage and read Julie's book. We did this with All In, the bear incident.

**AJ Harper:** All In.

**Mike Michalowicz:** There's an image of me in blankets, sobbing. It's a picture of burnout.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, but there's a difference in burnout in a weekend and what Julie talks about.

**Mike Michalowicz:** No question about it. But this book will solve it, either way, weekend or bigger. Stop being burned out. Get her book, Julie's book: *Burned: How Business Owners can Overcome Burnout and Fuel Success*. We have the link in show notes.

So you're a retreat center at Madeline Island. Are you, you at the final phases where you to choose like the handles for the cabinets and stuff?

**AJ Harper:** We did that.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, you already did that.

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**AJ Harper:** We chose the handles. We still have lighting. We're kind of at the. We don't like choosing things. Yeah. My wife and I are not good at this. It stresses us out.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** We went to the Ferguson. Yeah, the showroom. It's in your neck of the woods.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It's, yeah. My wife and I just went out there.

**AJ Harper:** Oh yeah. On the highway there?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Mm-hmm.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. Four, six. We've been there many times.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It's gorgeous.

**AJ Harper:** It's beautiful. And about 20 minutes in, I'm having the minor panic attack. It. I, I don't know what happens to me. I just, I finally, I, uh, we found this, the first person we worked with I didn't care for. And then the second person, she just had this great personality. And, uh, I was like, you pick. That's what I said. Here are the specs.

**Mike Michalowicz:** That's actually not a bad idea.

**AJ Harper:** Here's, here's from my architect. (Yeah.) What I need to get. Because they give you a schedule they call it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It's not really a schedule.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, it's a list of stuff. And I said, here you go. And then let me email you the plans. What do you think? She had a big personality. I was like, I bet you picked great stuff.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I bet you she did.

**AJ Harper:** She did pick some good stuff. But then even that was too much for me. Yeah. Which I was, I had to get the heck outta here.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It it's the paradox of choice. That you can, you know, the more choice we're given, the more likely we're to paralyze.

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**AJ Harper:** Okay. You're right. But it's also, I don't know what the heck... I I, this is not my area. I am overwhelmed because I think I'm going to get it wrong.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Mm-hmm.

**AJ Harper:** So I'm putting this in permanently into a home.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Mm-hmm. Well this, this translates to our topic today. So we're writing or talking about how long does it take to publish a book and most people get so wrong.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. Almost all the time.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And they have these unrealistic expectations and then there's disappointment.

**AJ Harper:** Mm-hmm.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And then they give up.

**AJ Harper:** They give up, or they put out a mediocre product.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** And then they give up.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And then they give up. Yeah. Oh yeah. So that's what we're gonna be talking about today. Do you have a realistic timeframe for publishing your book? I'm joining studio with my writing partner and my friend AJ Harper. She is, uh, the authority when it comes to writing a book. So if you've not read her book, Write a Must-Read, please get a copy today and go to [ajharper.com](http://ajharper.com) and check out all the things she's got going on retreats and programs. You're gonna improve your journey by a multiple by working with aj. Um, and that's my compliment to you.

**AJ Harper:** Thank you.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I, I've seen for myself, of course, I see it in others. Um, who was I talking with recently? It wasn't Julie Harres, but that came up. Um. Ah, I can't remember who it was. Oh, you know. Uh, Sean. Sean. Um, did you work with Sean?

**AJ Harper:** No.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Sean Van Dyke.

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**AJ Harper:** I did not.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Then it wasn't Sean then. Who was it? It was a guy. It was a, it was a guy.

**AJ Harper:** Great.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And was it Brian Harret.

**AJ Harper:** Oh Brian. Harriet.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Harriet, yeah.

**AJ Harper:** Love him so much.

**Mike Michalowicz:** That's who it was. Then Brian, Harriet. Um, who does not look like Sean at all? I'm picturing Sean on my face, but Brian, they're in my mind. But Brian's radically different. Lauding on you

**AJ Harper:** Love him so much.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And the quality of his work is so good.

**AJ Harper:** Oh, talk about a person who played with the timeline. I mean, that's kind of his gig too, is like messing with time. But yeah, I mean, I, I would use him as an example of someone who just went for it all in without waiting, no breaks. Just he's the only person that I've let do this. Listen. He joined Workshop, well, first of all, he joined. I have a program called Get Ready, meaning, it's for people who they think they wanna write a book, but they aren't ready to start. And it's the thinking process you have to go through.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Mm-hmm.

**AJ Harper:** Before you can lay it down. He joined that, then he shifted to Top Three Book Workshop for the fall, but then he wanted to do retreat in the middle of top three book workshop, which I retreat is an editing retreat.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Mm-hmm.

**AJ Harper:** You have to bring chapters. It's like I usually don't let people come to retreat until after they finish class, but he was, I don't know. I thought he could do it. And then, then, then he went to Heroic

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**Mike Michalowicz:** God, he's an animal.

**AJ Harper:** He's just a machine. Yeah. But his work is so good for having been dedicated to it for the last year and a quarter.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Yes. And so he, he's working, he also understands the timeframe and what's necessary. If you wanna speed things up, you have to bring certain results of, of the same quality. Faster.

**AJ Harper:** Mm-hmm.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And he's one of the rare occasions that he's doing it.

**AJ Harper:** He also has a life set up that he can do things like that.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Totally.

**AJ Harper:** So when he has that privilege, him

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. I did a call with him recently. We're helping with some marketing and stuff. And, uh, he's at a lake house. Um, he, he's designed

**AJ Harper:** Oh, is at the lake house.

**Mike Michalowicz:** He's at the lake house. He designed a lifestyle that's congruent with what he's teaching. This kind of how you manage time.

**AJ Harper:** Well, how you, how you manage time to achieve the freedom you think comes from working. Yeah, yeah, yeah. But can I, do you know the name of the lake?

**Mike Michalowicz:** No, actually no. What is it?

**AJ Harper:** It's Lake 17. And it's also in Wisconsin.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Ha! So does he live on the edge of 17?

**AJ Harper:** Like your salad. So cheesy.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It so cheesy. It was so cheesy, but the soft ball is in front of me, um, I didn't understand publishing timelines when it came to, I didn't know anything about writing.

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Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** What did you think would happen?

**Mike Michalowicz:** I thought writing a book. I don't know, a month.

**AJ Harper:** This is 2008

**Mike Michalowicz:** A month. No, this is before. I didn't, I wasn't familiar with these programs. Like write a book in 30 seconds, whatever I,

**AJ Harper:** That would be great. Right.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Or AI, like, oh, just push, write a book for me and it'll spit out a really average AI book.

**AJ Harper:** Mm-hmm.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Um, and when I called you, it's after I'd written. I thought was at least the, I didn't even understand. I thought this was the manuscript. It really was the first pass draft of 500 pages or something. Um, and that's when you started bringing me down to reality. (Yeah.) And uh, it's a, I'm actually proud of the book.

It is a good book, but it's, it's also, sophmoric and I. Um, it, it should have been done from scratch. And maybe one day we'll, we'll do the rewrite. Um,

**AJ Harper:** But you would have to change the title.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh yeah.

**AJ Harper:** Okay.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It's a whole new book. Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** Oh. Finally, so 18, 20 years later, I finally get my wish.

**Mike Michalowicz:** You finally, that title served me though,

**AJ Harper:** you know, whatever it was.

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So I still, I still would, yes. If you said to me, we're gonna redo TPE, toilet paper Entrepreneur and we're gonna change your time. Like what? Sign me up.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Sign me up. 'cause, uh. That title was edgy enough at the time that it drew attention.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, for sure. For sure it worked.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Um, do most people get their timelines wrong?

**AJ Harper:** Correct.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Tell me about it.

**AJ Harper:** Um, it's no one's fault. It's, here's the problem. Publishing is a, like live another planet. I say this all the time, it's like going to Mars. I don't wanna say that anymore. Because of all these efforts to go to Mars. So I'm gonna pick a different planet.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** Um, it. You have so much to learn. It's not your fault if you don't know this stuff. So right off the bat, I wanna explain that you didn't do anything wrong. It's just that you're probably wrong about how long it's gonna take and how many, um, and how many. How do I say this... wrong turns there will be, but then there's just some just basic timelines, even without the wrong turns that most people don't know about.

The other issue is that for a few decades now, a couple decades, at least as long as I've been in the industry, which is two decades, I. We've been sold this bill of goods about you can get a book done in 30 days and then just hit publish. Just ship it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Mm-hmm.

**AJ Harper:** Um, you know, just get it out there. You can change it later. The first one doesn't matter. This constant compromise and,

**Mike Michalowicz:** oh, I like that phrasing. That's what it is.

**AJ Harper:** And so what happened is that then becomes some sort of prevailing wisdom that that's doable and possible and you should just do it that way and it should be easy. The problem is to write a really good book, and publish it the way it needs to be published with quality standards, and get it into the proper distribution channels, and market it appropriately

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takes a long time. And that's just the way it is. So, um, the people are confused because of all this messaging about how fast you can do it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** The foundational principle of propaganda is repeated enough until people believe it.

What, you've been a ghost writer for other people.

**AJ Harper:** Yes, I was for 10 years.

**Mike Michalowicz:** For 10 years. Have you ever had absurd or,

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, so many. I mean, I used to, I, I talk about it in my book that people used to hang up on me, so.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Like literally hang up on you?

**AJ Harper:** Yes. I feel, I feel almost like a, um, ancient now because people would literally call me on the phone to hire me.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** Sounds silly now, right?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, it does.

**AJ Harper:** We don't even call each other without texting first.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Right.

**AJ Harper:** Are you free now

**Mike Michalowicz:** when the phone rings? It's me not, yeah. Yeah. I

**AJ Harper:** call Jen Singer the other day. I just picked, I said, I'm just gonna call her. She's Gen X like I am. She's going,

**Mike Michalowicz:** yeah,

**AJ Harper:** I can call her.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** And she, and that's what I said. I was like, we, we just need to call each other again. What the heck is with this?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** But anyway, people would call me because they got my number from someone and they would gimme this, tell me this story, and then I would say, what's your timeline? And they would say, Super fast. Yeah. Some crazy number. I don't do that.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah,

**AJ Harper:** You can do it. So what they would come back with was, well, so-and-so said, right? Yeah. Well, so-and-so got their book done In this amount of time, AI always the list of what other people paid and what other people got and yeah. And I'd said, that's really good.

I think you should talk to that person.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, yeah. And have them do it for you.

**AJ Harper:** And have them do that. But I don't do that

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**AJ Harper:** Because what I do is write something that delivers on its promise and that takes time. Yeah. These are category defining books.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. So you were integral.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Do people try to wave money in front of you to kind of whip the horse along?

**AJ Harper:** Yes, for sure. Speed. That never works well because I don't move that fast. So then I'm, all I'm doing is disappointing people. Forever. But I started to change my tack because I would also say to try and get them to see this is not transactional, this is an investment of time, I'd say, who do you wanna hang out with for the next three to five years?

**Mike Michalowicz:** as a ghost writer?

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**AJ Harper:** No, I would say the potential client on the phone. Yeah. I can see myself standing in my kitchen. Who do you wanna hang out with for the next three to five years? And they would say, what do you mean?

I'm like, well, you have to develop it, write it, edit it, get a book deal. And the last two can be in a different order. Publish. Wait for that to happen. Marketing. And then you have to support it after it comes out to make sure that it catches fire. And I said that's at least five years. Um, if you're lucky, it's longer.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** And they would say, that's crazy. You know, like, and so I, multiple people out of frustration of not being able to convince me, yeah. Would just hang up the phone. But there was one really tragic story that happened. A, a woman called me and, um, she had joined a program and I, I think at the time, and this would've been 12 years ago, maybe 15 years ago.

She had joined a program that she paid like 20 grand for 12 years ago.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Mm-hmm. Mm.

**AJ Harper:** To publish a book and it, the rules were, I don't remember the name of the program and I wouldn't say it if I did, but to me it was predatory. The rules were you had to finish your book by a certain day. And publish it so that the person who you paid the money to would promote it to their network.

I'm not even gonna say a gender.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay. Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** And if you didn't get it done in that time, they would not promote it to their network.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay.

**AJ Harper:** And she, this, this potential client was bumping up against the deadline when they called me out of desperation. And I, it was something ridiculous like five, six weeks. I can't even remember. It's, it might be in my book where I confirmed it, but it was, I was like, that's never, I'm never, yeah. That is never going to happen.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

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**AJ Harper:** Because a, I have you, talking to a person who's already working on projects. You don't just call me outta the blue and say, stop everything you're doing.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** To do some this for me. Um, and also I can't get it done in that amount of time. And she was, um, absolutely astonished that I couldn't get it done. Well, what do you mean?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, because this other person told me you could.

**AJ Harper:** That's when she showed me this template she got.

**Mike Michalowicz:** yeah.

**AJ Harper:** Which I won't name the product. Yeah. And, um, where you, I will say, where you enter in the, you know, whatever said.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, yeah.

**AJ Harper:** She said, but I have this. I was like, then you should, you go ahead and do that. Yeah. You know, and Oh, I really felt really bad for her because promoting to the network meant nothing.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Meant nothing.

**AJ Harper:** How many books are gonna be sold from that?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Zero. Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** Probably zero. Um, and there's this, this false sense of urgency.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** That, that person who did that, I feel was a scam artist, in my opinion.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** But this false sense of urgency, you know, when I have people who come to top talk to me to join Top Three Book Workshop, I always do an interview to see if they're gonna be right for me and them. And, um, I'll say, and you know, when you, when you're done with Top Three Book Workshop, it's a 14-week program, you can audit it forever.

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For free. And you can be in sprints for free forever. I mean, we have, um, for our authors in the program, uh, three a day, so that's 15 hours of writing sprints every single week mm-hmm. Without fail. And people say, why do you do, what are you doing? Because it's not gonna be done in 14 weeks and I don't wanna leave you hanging.

So these programs tell us, finish in this amount of time, they give you the wrong expectation. Now you think you can go out and get that done, and then inevitably you're gonna be disappointed that you didn't. Some people can crank it out, but a lot of people can't. Um, so, but this is where all this comes from, is this, this, um, predatory, do it fast kind of thing. I have a theory about it. You wanna hear it?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, of course I do. Okay.

**AJ Harper:** I don't know if I'm right, but I've thought about it for a long time. You taught me back in the day, you said you can be fast or you can be the fastest. You can be the best, or you can be the cheapest, but you can't be all three.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Right.

**AJ Harper:** Do you remember, I think we wrote that in one book

**Mike Michalowicz:** we may have, and that's not mine. Restaurants will have that

**AJ Harper:** Pumpkin, pumpkin plan.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It could have been, but you'll go into a restaurant and it'll say, you can have a fast, cheap, or good Choose two. Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** No, it's, it's in, it's the pumpkin plan. You choose your differentiator. I'm remembering it now.

**Mike Michalowicz:** yeah, yeah, yeah.

**AJ Harper:** I remembered that and I thought, okay, well I'm not, certainly not the fastest and I'm definitely not the cheapest I'm, but I'm the best.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** And I thought, okay, so why are they doing this, this book in a weekend, 30-day things, what's going on there? Oh, because. I think that they don't actually believe in those writers.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Yeah. I a hundred percent agree with you.

**AJ Harper:** So what's happening is they know,

**Mike Michalowicz:** yeah,

**AJ Harper:** these are not gonna be good books.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I a hundred percent agree.

**AJ Harper:** And so they are going to make it about speed.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** Because they don't actually think you can do it. And that's the, that's the dirty little truth is that they're telling you that all the benefits you can get from authorship, which you cannot get if you don't have a good book. And then they're telling you, you can do this remarkable thing in 30 days or 60 days or whatever, and it's. They've just, they've decided I'm gonna go with speed.

Because what would happen if you got told people the truth, it's gonna be months of development then, you know, you could write a book in 30 days if you did nothing else and you had spent enough time developing testing and you were really certain, but I, it wouldn't evolve in an interesting way in 30 days.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I'll tell you something that's more insidious based upon your theory that. Yeah, they do in thirty days because they don't believe in that author, but they also realize that author will realize they are doing the wrong thing if it takes any longer.

**AJ Harper:** That's what I mean.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** So they they can't--

**Mike Michalowicz:** It's a rush before the author realizes the truth.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, exactly. So they know they can never, and and also how could they, you know, they don't really know how to teach them how to do it. They don't really know how to teach them how to do it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

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**AJ Harper:** I know how to teach them how to do it, but that's why it's a long process with me. But most people don't wanna do that. They didn't wanna do that with me when I was a ghost. And they, very few people really wanna sign up to work with me on that level. 'cause people wanna get things done quickly.

**Mike Michalowicz:** There's a couple other things that play into this. One is with AI now you can produce quantity. And actually a new standard of quality output, um, that's better than the past, but. The great authors are elevating higher and beyond AI, and it'll always be that way is new. Technology will make things. As a standard, cheaper, faster, better, to a new level. But that's now, that's just the new table stakes. That's the new starting spot. Extraordinary authors are gonna take it to another level above that.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So they, they start selling that, right. You can do a book in 30 days. Now it's, it's 30 hours. The 30-hour book is surely coming out. Buy a book in 30 hours and it's gonna be AI based and it's gonna be a good book compared to standards of five years ago, but not in today's standards. There's a new level of book coming.

This, this is my opinion. The second thing is there is a few fabled stories of authors who did write a book over a weekend. And they did hit lightning in a bottle. One of 'em is, is, uh, Jen Sincero, who I spoke with.

**AJ Harper:** You're a badass.

**Mike Michalowicz:** You're a badass. I, I talked with her right after she published that book.

She was looking at doing some speaking gigs, and I asked her about that. Well. Uh, kind of paraphrasing it, she was going through mental health struggles. She had committed to a deadline. She had a full year to do it. And this was putting it off, putting it off, putting off, and now she's two weeks away and she's like, I just worked morning and night through it.

But the story that isn't put out there is she'd been working on this concept for years mm-hmm. In her own self-help process and. Been kind of codifying, these are all things she did for herself.

**AJ Harper:** Mm-hmm.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So the idea she'd been working on, she just put it to paper truly within this short, ridiculously short timeframe, and had an extraordinary title.

You're A Badass was, no one used a title like that back then, and it hit.

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**AJ Harper:** mm-hmm.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And the right markets picked it up and the right markets started talking about it. So these 30 day books, like, well look, Jen did it. Of course you can.

**AJ Harper:** Right. 'cause you wanna, you wanna be the exception.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Exactly. But it is it, that is literally one in probably 3 million or 4 million books that came out during that timeframe or since, um, that have been written in 30 days.

**AJ Harper:** It's like the movie, uh. He's just not that into you. In the movie, He's just not that into you. Uh, one of the character, I think his name is Justin Long, explains to this girl, I can't remember who the actress is, and he says, um, the thing is that you wanna be the exception, but you're the rule. I. You want all these guys going after all these guys who are not, are commitment phobic and you wanna be the exception, the one that they choose after all these others. But you're the rule.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** And it's the same with publishing. It's like, I want that thing, I want that shiny thing that was on the news.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** That person who got discovered here, or this, this thing happened, TikTok viral or whatever. And the reality is you're the rule.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** You can't, you can't make a decision based on everything's gonna happen perfectly like that person on the news.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So what, let's get into the timeframe. How long should it take to publish a book? What, what are the major roadblocks?

**AJ Harper:** It just, so it depends on your publishing timeline, but I wanna set the stage for this that you, most people do not devote enough time to book development, which is the, the idea testing to make sure it works for readers.

And we're talking prescriptive nonfiction here. The, your fundamentals, core message reader statement, promise, your transformational outline, doing all of that work leading up to

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writing. So that could take you, um, a couple months. It might, for me, it's gonna take me about a year. Just kind of depends.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And for me, perhaps longer because there's a, there's a living it phase.

**AJ Harper:** You're living it, you're testing it. You're testing again, deploying, living, and deploy. Yeah. You've got stuff going on for years.

**Mike Michalowicz:** For years. So The Money Habit, I've been living that. For 17, 18 years, when Prop first came out, I deployed at my personal finances almost immediately because I could see that I had to get both of these figured out, but then actively deploying it, you know, kind of here and there over the years as a Profit First alternative, when people said, well, how do I do this at home?

And then deliberately for about a year and a half, and it was that engagement with that Garage door. And Soul Company that really kicked it off. And they have 900 employees that were exposed to The Money Habit. I worked with directly 40, 30, something like that, and then I did with John Brigg's company and he, we did with 250 employees there that I taught as a group and then did one-on-ones with another handful. That was a year and a half timeframe. And my gosh, the clarity that comes out of it. Because even though you master it for yourself, you, there's nuanced components that just work for you, but doesn't work for the mass. And you gotta figure that out.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. So that's an a, a giant X question mark, right? How long is it gonna take? I don't know. Are you ready to rock? Um, on a previous episode, the last one on, on visuals and graphics and illustrations, I mentioned my student, Cathy, who has a book coming out. Well, she's. Taught the things she's writing about for a long time and she's in the trenches with it every day, so it's easier for her to write it than someone who's just starting to figure this stuff out.

So that's the X factor. I don't know how long your development is gonna take. That depends on all those things. As for writing, I think you, it's, I think you can knock out a book in 90 days. I really think you can. If you're focused, you have your transformational outline ready to go. And you get yourself into a really good rhythm, you can get a first draft done.

But then you, well, people don't know what to do after the first draft because then after that you have your own editing process you have to go through before it can actually go to an editor. Mm-hmm. So that's a big piece that people leave out. They just ship it off. But you need to be doing all your own edits.

And that is another X factor. Are you gonna have to make major revisions? Are you, what are you, you know, that could, could take you realistically, I would plan at least three months for that, but it could be longer. Depending on what you discover. So in this process, so then let's say, let's just say you're self-publishing, okay. Then you might need a developmental editor.

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That's another part of the process. And then you've got to go through all the rest of the production, which is copy, edit, type, set, two rounds of proofread. And then if you're self-publishing, you've got to make sure you've got your final files to submit. Now we, we need them at least eight weeks before you go, actually publish.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Mm-hmm.

**AJ Harper:** Whereas people would sometimes try and do it the same day. So like with Ingram Spark, which is the main, and, and Amazon KDP, if you wanna do a pre-order, you have to use Ingram Spark. You can't use Amazon KDP for the print book anyway. And Ingram Spark is taking a long time for all that metadata to filter through the system and covers to show up on listings and all of that. So I think you need about eight weeks. So now add this up. That's just self-publishing.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** and as you know, if you're traditionally publishing, so you have two options. You can find a traditional publisher that takes open submissions, but you still have to write a book proposal, go through the submission process.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Right.

**AJ Harper:** If it's a traditional publisher that does not accept unsolicited submissions, then you need an agent and you have to go through that process before you go through the other submission process. That's months and months and months for a lot of people, sometimes it goes faster. Again, that's not the rule.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Right.

**AJ Harper:** Right. I mean, that's the exception. But the thing people really don't get about timeline, setting aside the fact that the creative process is not linear and this all is all specific to what you have going on, there's also the fact that there's trade distribution, and this is the thing that people don't understand that timeline, that people are always bemoaning and saying, well, self-publishing is better because, traditional publicly just takes too long. They're just slow. No, they're not actually slow. Things are happening the whole time. It's just that. They are reverse engineering from when the sales team that's part of trade distribution mm-hmm. Needs the stuff. Okay. Because they're, if you're seeing, the sales team is pitching to all the retailers, book clubs, library consortiums, et cetera, and then you reverse engineer back from that and they realistically need your manuscript a year out to do all the things they're doing.

So if you want your book to be wildly distributed on shelves, actually stocked for people to find it and stumble upon it, that's a, that's real.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** And the sales team is representing how many books during that year, potentially. Hundreds? And that's, that's what you have to fit in with all these other books. You're not just the only book to the author. You think you're the only book in the world.

**AJ Harper:** No, it's not a democracy.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It surely isn't.

**AJ Harper:** No, you have to work your soft, sorry for saying the A word, but you have to work your tushy off.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Don't we already have the a SS word that you threw out there? Okay.

**AJ Harper:** You gotta bust it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** You gotta bust it.

**AJ Harper:** Otherwise they are gonna, they're gonna do what they can for your book, but you're, you know,

**Mike Michalowicz:** and if you self-pub, you skip the sales team, which, which compromises your distribution.

**AJ Harper:** Mm.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Right.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. I do know one person. This is so cool. Our name is Leanna Weller Smith. We've become friends and we're we're colleagues.

And she's, um, her company is Weller Smith and she actually does have a way for self-published authors to get traditional distribution through a partnership she has through Greenleaf.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, okay.

**AJ Harper:** And so you should check her out. Weller Smith. Um, amazing. But there's very few people like her that can facilitate those things and then, you know, there's a price for that.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Now, the counterargument I already mentioned with ai. I suspect many authors I see it saying, well, AI can help me with the writing. AI can do the proofreading, AI

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can do this and that. Do you see that those technologies speeding up the timeline or having no effect at what? What's your impressions around the technology advancements?

**AJ Harper:** It speeds up the timeline for people who wanna do that.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, I, I think the industry overall may speed up, but now more books can enter the market faster. So I don't know if it messes with the timeline.

**AJ Harper:** I mean, you'd have to change the infrastructure in publishing regarding trade distribution. There's time. There's other timelines that are affected. For example, do you want trade reviews? We did an episode on trade reviews. That help your book get in front of bookstores, librarians, people who make purchasing decisions, agents, other people in the industry. Would you like one of those before the book comes out when it's front listed?

You need your galleys about five, six months out. That's a timeline.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yep.

**AJ Harper:** Would you like your book to be listed in Christmas, like, you know, um, gift guides? Um, they're five months out in advance.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** What about big deal podcasts? If you could get on one, they're months and months out.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** So you're trying to rush through all this stuff. It's not just the publisher that's got the long timelines. It's the other adjacent, um, opportunities. It's you absolutely blowing because you're trying to rush. You're blowing it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** A hundred percent agree. There's this parallel processing you're, you're writing. But you're also marketing at the same time, and they move in parallel for a period.

Um, and that is the one of the most overlooked things I see: people coming out with books that haven't prepared for marketing at all, and then there's no splash and there's, I told you this before, this one author said to me, don't worry. When I launched Toilet Paper Entrepreneur, because I sold zero on the first day, he said, don't worry, that's the quiet before.

The quiet.

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**AJ Harper:** I know you've said that right?

**Mike Michalowicz:** I said it a million times and it was a gut punch, but it was also this awakening is I gotta figure out the marketing now. And it took a herculean effort after the fact to, and commitment to get that straightened out. Now I know like the marketing is happening for the money habit right now, like massive stuff is happening right now.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, so these are the timelines and here's the deal. If you just wanna publish and you want it for, say you need something for your clients or you, you know, you're, you don't have those expectations, you do not want. The things that other authors have, you don't care about it. Successful authors. Then you can speed up the timelines all you want.

But you need to know what you're giving up.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Mm-hmm.

Mm-hmm.

**AJ Harper:** That's a trade off. You have to know what you're giving up.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. That's. Amazing.

**AJ Harper:** And I can I just say, this is the thing that burns me, okay. When you choose an arbitrary time. So arbitrary timelines are also, I hate, I can't stand this. I need my book. 'cause I'm speaking at a conference.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Right. Yep.

**AJ Harper:** I need my book because it's National Women's Day. Yeah. In five months, who cares? Who cares. You're gonna give up everything you need to do a quality book and market it properly and distribute it properly so that you can release it on National Women's Day.

This makes no sense to me. You can still do something on National Women's Day, do a pre-order, do something else. You're going to the conference, get people excited in other ways. This is you're being shortsighted, uh oh, and the number one, oh my God. The number one. I wanted to be ready so I can give it for Christmas gifts.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh...

**AJ Harper:** Like we're not in this, this, you can't, don't even think like that. That's not a, that's not a thing. And by the way, if you really want people to purchase it, for them to give us Christmas gifts, it better be out in September.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, well, I'll give you something else. It better be a good Christmas gift.

**AJ Harper:** Well, I mean, yeah. The

**Mike Michalowicz:** Who gives a crappy book?

**AJ Harper:** Here's the thing, you, if you decide that you need to rush it, you are going to compromise everything. Everything. You are going to decide that you don't have, that you can settle for a book that's less than what you knew it could be. And you're not gonna take the time to make sure it actually works for readers, because that's a whole other phase.

We have a whole episode on this. I talk about it in my book. You have to go through that feedback process and almost everybody skips it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Yeah. You know what's interesting is we, it's kind of related, moved from the advance model with traditional publishing to the hybrid model where you actually pay for the services, but you get a higher return.

Part of... It is funny. We we're having, we started off this past quarters has been a big down quarter for us. And Kelsey said on a cashflow basis, one of the things that shifted was no more advances. So we were spinning out a book a year, um, and I think some people are motivated, if I can get more out there, it's more immediate money, but what's the long-term cost of that?

Um, and we weren't putting out books at that frequency. Because we were rushing. There was still a five-year period of doing the research while writing another book, testing, deploying, and so forth, and then making into a book. But if you're doing the traditional model, there could be a cash consequence too, as you slow the roll to get it right.

**AJ Harper:** Just, yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah,

**AJ Harper:** Absolutely.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Anything else you wanted to share on this topic?

**AJ Harper:** I think, um, just take all your plans and toss 'em out the window. Seriously. I just, but you gotta be open.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah,

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**AJ Harper:** Just be open. You don't know yet. You know that you might discover something cool. That's the other thing. This, in these tight timeframes, where's the, where is the wonderful moments where you realize, oh, I wanna write about that in the book, or I'm missing this chapter. Or you, you're forcing yourself into this. I mean, it's, it's really just a, um, sign of capitalism, honestly. Like go, go, go. Produce, produce, produce. It's not the thing that actually gives you what you really want as an author.

Which is readership that loves and cherishes and uses your book and tells other people that they have to get it, and you just don't get that from speeding up the process. I don't know. I'm gonna, I'm gonna die on this hill.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Next week we're gonna talk about publishing scams, how to avoid them. We kind of started slamming some of them on this episode already.

**AJ Harper:** Wait, I didn't even mean to do

**Mike Michalowicz:** that. I loved it. I love it when we talk about the 30 day. You know, books and stuff because you get so fired up.

**AJ Harper:** Oh man, I have seen it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** You get so fired up and, uh, yeah, and you've, you've seen how damaging it can be. Um, and, and that's the essence of this show is don't write that book.

Write the greatest book you can. Um, your retreat, I know we're, we're recording this in April. You still have October slots?

**AJ Harper:** I might, you should go check it out because I only do it for eight people at a time.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So aj harper.com is the site to go to.

**AJ Harper:** It's the only way to work with me in person and you

**Mike Michalowicz:** free resources there.

Um, you, you as a listener, just check out the site. There's so much to learn, and even if you're just kind of voyeuristically looking, you'll learn how to design a good website that communicates messaging. So go to aj harbor.com. Actually,

**AJ Harper:** I think that your website's better, but I will tell you that I have a YouTube channel and there's a lot of, oh, there's a lot of education on there.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** What, how do you get to the YouTube channel? Go to AJ harper.com. Is there a link or?

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, there's a link, but you can also just search me and YouTube at, come right up.

**Mike Michalowicz:** AJ Harper.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah,

**Mike Michalowicz:** I was talking to someone who says, I don't like to call AJ's only Angenette.

**AJ Harper:** Who said that?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Um,

**AJ Harper:** who said that?

**Mike Michalowicz:** It may have been John Bates. Is that possible?

**AJ Harper:** I don't know. I've only ever talked to him one time. Who's

**Mike Michalowicz:** job based then? Shoot, I, they'll come back to me. Maybe next episode. You're not

**AJ Harper:** doing so well. Remembering the names today. Your name

**Mike Michalowicz:** comes up so much, sweetheart. You need some

**AJ Harper:** Ginkgo baloba?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, I do. I do need some ginkgo baloba. Um, and I said, well, you know, she has a third name.

And they said, I know it's Annie. I'm like, oh, damn. Okay, you're good. So they're,

**AJ Harper:** I actually also have two middle names. Oh, on my birth certificate. You know what? I think it's the only child thing, you know? It's like, let's scare her. All the names Ms.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, I put it all into her. Yeah. Um, okay, so go to [aj harper.com](http://ajharper.com), check out what she's got going on, read her book, write a must read.

It is the essence of the show is, is taught in that book or vice versa. This show is derived from that book. Also, we have an imprint called Simplified for Entrepreneurial Authors. You can check out, you can email us at [hello@dwtbpodcast.com](mailto:hello@dwtbpodcast.com). Tell us your stories. Tell us what you're interested in 'cause we wanna talk about it.

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