

don't write *that* book!

Episode 90:

“Help! Someone Already Wrote My 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. We're live.

AJ Harper: We're live.

Mike Michalowicz: In your studio. Hopefully some of the echoes reduced, but we'll, we'll see. Um, I was just outside of, so we're recording this, your home and we're gonna see how many podcasts we can get done. Our day together. We started at one o'clock or noon or something like that. Um, with all this kind of tech set up to see if we can get it right and it's close enough for now.

Oh, actually talking about close enough. I have a little story. So from the money habit, we are now in the copy edit phase.

AJ Harper: We just finished that.

Mike Michalowicz: What? Are substantive edit and copy edit interchangeable?

AJ Harper: No.

Mike Michalowicz: So substantive edit and then just copy edit.

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, I thought there was another iteration. I know we just, we wrote, responded to them, but I thought we get, we'd hear back again from, so

AJ Harper: She might, they might have a couple little, I had a couple queries, so that's where I had a couple questions for the copy editor.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

AJ Harper: And then she may decide that she has questions for us based on the choices we made.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper: But it's almost nothing.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay. So we're, we're at the very conclusion of it. There's, there may be some more iterations

AJ Harper: So when you hit copy edit, you're in production. You're in a new phase. You are not making any,

Mike Michalowicz: But we're not in production yet.

AJ Harper: Yes, we are. When you, when you go to copy edit, you're in production.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, you are in production. Okay. Clear. Clear. Um,

AJ Harper: So when you're, so that's when your manu, so when you go to copy edit, you're in production because your manuscript has been accepted. Sometimes people think acceptance of your manuscript means that's when you turn it in.

It's after you finish the substantive edits, and the publisher is content. We've got a book here, we're done fixing any major issues. This is the book it needs to be, now you're at acceptance. So if you had a traditional publisher, then that's when that next tranche of your royalty kicks in because okay, we've got a book now we move into production and it's just getting the book ready to go to print.

Mike Michalowicz: So it's the kind of the micro refinement?

AJ Harper: Yeah. And then the first step of that is copy edit.

Mike Michalowicz: So in the copy edit, I, uh, we, I've not met, we

AJ Harper: We're going to do a whole episode on it.

Mike Michalowicz: Well, I just wanted to share one part. Okay. About close enough. Okay. Close enough. So we used the word close enough and, uh, she said, I used a line there saying, um, making this certain adjustment in *The Money Habit*, you're close enough, like horseshoes and hand grenades, which is a very common saying

AJ Harper: mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: In the past. And she goes, it may not be appropriate anymore. I thought this an interesting thing. She goes, that's a good point. Yeah. So we shouldn't use hand grenades. I'm like, yeah. That, that actually is a good point. It, there's certain phrases, sayings,

don't write *that* book!

and phrases that were popular, but in, in the current context, it's like, oh, that's not really appropriate anymore.

AJ Harper: It's these crazy times we live in.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. But it is indicative of violence.

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: Um, and so I thought that was, I thought it was just an interesting edit. It was something I would've never considered or caught on my own. It's just,

AJ Harper: Yeah. It's so, it was good to have editors.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. It's very good to have editors. Um, so today we're gonna talk about if someone already has written the book that you plan to write, there's a lot of parameters around that.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: Join the studio with AJ Harper. I'm at her beautiful home. We may be doing back-to-back to back-to-back episodes.

AJ Harper: You might be hearing a lot of episodes live from Madeline Island.

Mike Michalowicz: Exactly. Um, and I just want to acknowledge, which I said now multiple times to you and Polly, is the power of intention.

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: This has been a dream of yours before I even knew you.

AJ Harper: Since 1996.

Mike Michalowicz: you've been vocalizing it to me for a, a, uh, maybe a decade, um mm-hmm. But as it became more recent, you spoke about it more frequently, uh, more vibrantly, more descriptively before you even committed.

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: At least that's why I noticed. And then the day in the moment came

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper: mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: The location you found is idyllic. Right? It's crazy, right? It's effing crazy. I guess a great way to say it's where the paved road becomes, the dirt road is where you are. Um,

AJ Harper: Yes. Literally.

Mike Michalowicz: Literally. But also like figuratively, it, it's, it's this immersion in nature. Um, the views are more than breathtaking. They're, um, soul shifting.

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. What impresses me about you and I like to introduce you, is, um, the power of intent.

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: That there was no way this was not gonna happen.

AJ Harper: That's right. Yeah. Polly and I say, uh, do the next thing.

Mike Michalowicz: What do you mean by that?

AJ Harper: So rather than worry about the whole picture, because let's say we just sat down and said, okay, let's build on Madeline Island. We don't have land yet. We don't know how we'll ever pay for it. Let's not just build, let's build a studio and a house, and then let's, let's make sure that we have a nice garage too. We were not in any position to do that. It sounded bonkers, right? But we just said, let's just do the next thing. What do you need?

What do we need to do first? Find a piece of land. Okay, we'll do that. What do we need to do to get that land? Okay. Figure out the financing, what's the next thing? And you just keep going like that. Just keep going like that. But all the while having some, you know, like, okay, let me do a strategy. The only reason that we have this place is because, well, we, we saved, you know, we, it's not a joke that we started saving quarters in a jar as a mason jar.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

AJ Harper: That I put a little sticker on that said Mad Island, and we put our quarters in it. Mad Island. And that was in, uh, 1996.

Mike Michalowicz: Mad Island. Yeah.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper: And we've definitely, you know, followed that. But also there was a lot of massive strategy. Like this isn't a vacation home, it's a business.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm.

AJ Harper: It's we're, I mean, we're sitting here doing the podcast.

Mm-hmm. In two days the retreat be first retreaters for the summer come,

Mike Michalowicz: which is the room right outside the door. Yeah. Seats 12,15?

AJ Harper: Yeah. But I only do eight people at a time. Okay. Yeah. But you know, that's what pays the bills. So we've, I just thought, okay, how can I do it? That's how we ended up with that. How, how can I make this happen?

Mike Michalowicz: I love that concept of what assets do you have that you are under utilizing or could utilize in a new way.

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: So we're doing some podcast, uh, work outside of this, this show, your new podcast. My new podcast. And, um, that's all gonna come into play by end of summer. Um, but the sponsor behind it is Relayed, which is an online

AJ Harper: Oh, yeah. Uh huh.

Mike Michalowicz: Banking platform. Yeah. And, um, my vision, my intention was when Jake, our youngest son, moved outta the house. I wanted to repurpose that room into a room where I could do podcasts and so forth. Just for me, the immediacy and access, even though my business is literally 15 minutes down the road, um, I thought that might be cool.

And also to make into a music room. And now I, I'm. I think maybe I can get Polly over there. We could do a jam together. Um, but I'm like, oh, that's gonna be expensive to renovate. Well, relay's like, yeah, we have a budget to renovate a room and maybe we'll do your home. And it hasn't come to fruition yet. But they actually came, toured my house, uh, to, to consider that. So that was, it's pretty cool once you put intentions out there is uh, at least if nothing else on a biological level, you're just activated to notice it more and, and maybe to grab those opportunities more.

AJ Harper: I think you have to keep it top of mind. It's what we say about books, too. Yeah. So you can't let too much time go where you're not writing your book, you know, or thinking about your book or developing your book.

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz: Hmm.

AJ Harper: But I think, I think you're like that too. See your whole money management system, which is detailed, uh, now for everyone in *The Money Habit*, is about setting those intentions.

My favorite stories in the book are about the way you set intentions. So you do the same, you just do it differently than I do.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Yeah.

AJ Harper: You're gonna make it happen through the money management system you have.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Yeah.

AJ Harper: I'm gonna make it, I'm gonna make it happen by like some wild trapeze act not, not the same. We're different in that way, but you're still gonna make it happen.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. I have a friend, her name is Lori Gallagher, and she shared something that goes, blew me away. There's a private island. Um, owned in part by Richard Branson called

AJ Harper: Necker Island.

Mike Michalowicz: No, no. Called, called Mosquito Island. So he also owns Necker Island. Um, but it became, at least this is my interpretation of the story I'm hearing, it became too popular and, um, he wanted to set up something that was back to his original vision that he had for Necker. So he bought another island called Moskito Island, M-O-S-K-I-T-O. It's financially beyond exclusionary.

You, you have to have funds beyond any normal means to access it, to vacation there or to be there. So Lori said, I want to go to. She set this out. I want to go to Moskito Island. Um, I won't pay for it.

AJ Harper: Oh, I, well, okay.

Mike Michalowicz: And, um, I want it to happen within the next year or two. She's been to Moskito Island. She didn't pay for it. She was invited down as a guest for a birthday party that was being celebrated by, uh, someone that we both mutually know is very financially successful and they're friends. Uh, and she didn't ever, she didn't even know his relation to this, but she's like, he said, I got one couple left, like one spot left for a couple. And, and he's like, you just came to my mind. Interesting, right? And she's like, yeah, I want in. So she went and now she is, uh. Is it going back down for a second time? It's just interesting how,

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper: How'd she get the second invite?

Mike Michalowicz: Um, well, because she had such a good time and she fell in love with it. She's like, I like to promote this to other people, and now she's putting together a gathering.

AJ Harper: Mm.

Mike Michalowicz: Kind of like what I'm doing with the authors group. And then by default, because you're the facilitator, guess who's going again? (Hmm.) Amazing how intentions work like you, you don't have to have the traditional means to accomplish an outcome, just the intention to do it and then look for the opportunities to get there that aren't necessarily the traditional way.

AJ Harper: Yeah. You know, it's, I think the, where I live here for the summer, I think maybe the locals misinterpret. I think they think, oh, my wife and I are coming from New York and

Mike Michalowicz: High rollers

AJ Harper: So far from the truth. I brought three pairs of shoes with me. I've worn two of them. That's all I wear all summer. Yeah, they're Crocs. Yeah. It's like there's no high rolling. Almost all the furniture in the house is from, um, Danbury, Connecticut Restore,

Mike Michalowicz: Including this table here?

AJ Harper: No, that's Auction Ninja. I got it. Auction Ninja. Oh my gosh. Holy cow. It is a Pottery Barn dining room table that I got on Auction Ninja for \$21.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, this is a Pottery Barn table.

AJ Harper: This is a French country Pottery Barn table. It's a, you know, it's had better days, but it still looks pretty good.

Mike Michalowicz: I love it. Well, when better days is, is very, whatever,

AJ Harper: Whatever. \$21, and that was one of my highest, um, you know, the desk that you. You put our beautiful map up.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Mike's been hanging pictures for me. He's here. Yeah. Yeah. And he's very, we

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz: We got to go do that during the next break. And we have five more.

AJ Harper: Okay. Okay. Okay.

Mike Michalowicz: I'm in.

AJ Harper: But there's a, you know, the desk and it has the green lamp on it.

Mike Michalowicz: Yep. And the stereo.

AJ Harper: Yes. How much a desk was.

Mike Michalowicz: So, uh, that desk, well, I can only think from new standards. This, it's a 500 to a thousand dollars desk. Just, just guess how much you paid, but what you paid. Yeah. I don't wanna under a hundred dollars

AJ Harper: One.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, you paid \$1.

AJ Harper: One and there was a chair and a lamp that came with it for the same one.

Mike Michalowicz: Why? Why would someone want a do like that's such a low dollar?

AJ Harper: Because I go on auction Ninja.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, I see. So there has to be some kind of transaction.

AJ Harper: So I bid a dollar and no one else wanted it, which meant I freaking got it.

Mike Michalowicz: And when with auction,

AJ Harper: I've done almost the whole house this way.

Mike Michalowicz: Do you have to ship it then? How do you get it?

AJ Harper: My poor wife, like we have to go pick up this weekend. So we're driving all over Westchester to the different auction ninja things that I got for the week. Oh, that's funny. You have to go during the appointed time. So just rent the U-Haul van.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, So you're racing.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper: Drive over there. It's like, do you have any friends who can help load things?

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, that's amazing.

AJ Harper: Yeah. Thankfully my wife rallied for me.

Mike Michalowicz: I just, just wanna say, better days is subjective. I'm looking at this table. It's great. And I love that it's a used table. There's a little, there's life to it. There's a, oh, uh, maybe one of our guests can tell us, uh, one of our listeners, there's a Japanese word for when something becomes damaged and you restore it, that it actually

AJ Harper: kinsuji.

Mike Michalowicz: Sujiji?

AJ Harper: I might not be saying it right, but that's what it is.

Mike Michalowicz: K. K or kin.

AJ Harper: K-I-N-T-S-U-G-I

Mike Michalowicz: Japanese.

AJ Harper: Oh gosh. I can't spell without looking at, okay. What I'm spelling It's kinsugi.

Mike Michalowicz: It's fascinating. It's fascinating. Yeah.

AJ Harper: You make it better after you put it back together. It's a greater piece of art. After you restore it.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

Yeah. And that's what I, I feel about your desk here.

AJ Harper: Thank you so much. \$21.

Mike Michalowicz: Amazing. We got an email that came in from a listener. I thought maybe you could read it. 'cause this has been the impetus for this show.

AJ Harper: You didn't wanna keep talking about how much I paid for everything mass, because I could do a whole episode of that.

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz: You got some chairs out there that are remarkable and you told me about that. Listen,

AJ Harper: I, I think something is better when it costs less.

Mike Michalowicz: I love it. The blue chair in the um, free. In the guest cottage free. Our

AJ Harper: neighbor's, Pete and Mary, back in New York, gave it to us.

Mike Michalowicz: I sat in it, I sat in your free chair.

AJ Harper: I mean, it's got like some, some stuff I need to do to it.

Mike Michalowicz: It's midcentury modern. It's very cool,

AJ Harper: whoever free. Okay. Our listeners are actually, this came in from Ashley. Um, she says, avid listener, a newly published author here. I've been thinking about my second book and had an incredible idea. After doing my due diligence though, I realized someone else beat me to the punch.

Two authors, in fact, wrote bestsellers about the topic I thought was so revolutionary. Any advice? Should I scrap my idea entirely and come up with something else?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. So...

AJ Harper: No.

Mike Michalowicz: Episode done, right? Yeah, no. So is, first question is, is any idea truly, truly revolutionary?

AJ Harper: No.

Mike Michalowicz: Isn't there saying something like every idea that's been

AJ Harper: Every idea has been done before.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Nothing, uh, nothing in the war. Everything in the new is, what is this phrase? Oh gosh.

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz: Everything old is new again.

AJ Harper: That's one phrase. Yeah. Yeah. But everything has been done in some fashion.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Profit First. Uh, this is a good example. It's not a revolutionary idea but would argue it's a revolutionary concept. Let me differentiate those ideas. Ideas as I see is the core function in this case, pay yourself first. The concept is really more of the application of an idea. Um, to me it's the story and the angle behind it. Uh, it's the also the intent. Um, so I don't think there's any revolutionary ideas, but I think there's revolutionary concepts. At least that's how I'm framing it.

AJ Harper: Well, first of all, I think I, I probably hear this at least once a month from an author. Oh no, I found another book that's just like mine. And then when I probe deeper, well, tell me more. They're not the same at all.

Mike Michalowicz: Why do they think it's the same? What, what do the Indi indicators

AJ Harper: Similar, similar topic, and you just kind of get. Um, you think, oh gosh, that's exactly the same. Or we're, you know, often it's just addressing a similar problem.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

AJ Harper: Right. But, uh, on further, on a closer look, it's, it's absolutely not the same book at all.

Mike Michalowicz: Interesting. So we've been working on The Money Habit now for a year and a half, two years. The, it ain't the first personal finance book. It ain't gonna be the last. There's countless. Alternatives, if that's the right choice of words. Um, but, and, and the concept is it's Profit First, which is the envelope system at the core of it. So it's, it's nothing new in that capacity. But it has a potential, I really feel, to be one of the category defining books.

AJ Harper: But it has your take on it, so you. Yes, it's the envelope system. Yes, it's pay yourself first, but there's all this behavioral psychology component that you've incorporated into it. Um, it's your take on those things and that's, that's really all that matters.

Mike Michalowicz: I remember, and I'm probably gonna bastardize this, but there, there's basically a research or stories about the human makeup. And you and I as humans are 99 point, I think it was like 99% identical. It's this 0.1% that brings about all of the perceived differences, different sexes, different height, different skin color, different makeups. Uh, our faces look different. We're so noticeably, noticeably distinguishable, but if we look at the technical, we're indistinguishable because we're 99.9% the same.

don't write *that* book!

I wonder if books are similar. Maybe it's not that ratio. If we look at the essence of a concept, maybe there's a lot of similarities, but it's that 0.1% difference that makes all the difference.

AJ Harper: I think the 0.1% difference is your perspective and your voice.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And voice is huge.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

AJ Harper: Because I might not, I might be a Mike Michalowicz guy, but I'm, but, or I might be like a Susie Orman guy, or I might be a, um, Ramit Sethi guy. You might like all of them.

Mike Michalowicz: David Bach. Familiar. Yes.

AJ Harper: So we're talking about finance right now. You might like all of them, they might all be on your shelf actually.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: But you might lean more toward one voice over the other because it just speaks to you.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. I've said this on prior episodes. I, I talk about it regularly, is the only industry that I have experienced with where the success of a competitor. Is your advantage is in the authorship industry.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: I think if someone falls in love with Ramit Sethi and they say, I love your stuff, they don't say, I'm only gonna read books that he comes out with and I gotta wait for other personal finance books from him to expand my knowledge.

I think someone falls in love with personal finance. They say, what else can I do? And they discover David Bach work or Susie Orman, um, or Tiffany Alici. (Yeah.) They, they discover these other authors. Therefore, I also believe we as authors, if we elevate our contemporaries, our comparative authors, it actually elevates our self.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper: Yeah. That's the way to go. Usually when an author tells me, oh my gosh, my book is coming out, and I, someone else just published it. Now my, it won't matter. I. I always say get in touch with 'em. Get in touch with 'em. Make friends.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: See how you can support them.

Mike Michalowicz: And they may not get it. I've had other authors I've reached out to, they're like, no way.

AJ Harper: Um, most of the time when I tell my authors to do that, it, it, it, uh, it gets great results.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. I would say most of the time too. Maybe it's 99% of the time. Yeah. I've had one instance I can particularly remember during the Clockwork writing, there was a author who's like, no. Um,

AJ Harper: I mean, that's, that's okay. Yeah. This is a minority.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. It's the minority. I think most authors establish or otherwise when they see multiple books already on the topic, perhaps you even said the same title you were thinking about, they see the downside, but But you're also saying there's upside to that.

AJ Harper: Yeah. Because that means people wanna read books like yours. It establishes market demand.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And that's a good thing, especially if you're trying to get a deal. You got good comps. Your pub public, you can show publishers. Look, people wanna read this right now because publishers know that people read multiple books on the same topic, or they read multiple books in the same genre.

If you're talking fiction, what's the most, um, uh, successful genre? Romance, right? But, uh, publishers know people who read romance. Read it all.

Mike Michalowicz: That's right.

AJ Harper: Read it all. They read something like somewhere between six and 11 books a week. So it both business is the same with self-help.

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz: It's the same any biographies.

AJ Harper: We have the one book on trauma and now you're fixed and you don't wanna read anything else. Look, looks over here. I'm pointing to a shelf on my massive bookshelf.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah,

AJ Harper: this entire one shelf is just about writing.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, I can see the one I'm looking at seven drafts I can see. Yeah. Without my glasses, Which Lie... Yeah, it is fascinating. Uh, so you have a shelf, I would say there's 30 books on that shelf. That's

AJ Harper: just the ones I brought with me. The rest are in New York.

Mike Michalowicz: So it sounds like, and I've experienced this too, when someone has interest in a subject and they find a book that satisfies that, it just furthers that hunger.

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: Um, what about the same title though?

AJ Harper: I mean, just let it go.

Mike Michalowicz: Meaning publish it with the same title or

AJ Harper: no? I mean, no. I mean, unless, okay. Okay. Okay. This is what I tell my students. Go see, uh, check Amazon, because that's the depository, even if you don't buy from them. And if you see a title that is the same or similar to yours, if it has almost no reviews and a really terrible BSR bestseller ranking, which would be say anything over 500,000.

Mike Michalowicz: Hmm.

AJ Harper: Who cares. We just use the title. But if it's a significant title, like if somebody wanted, I'm gonna write a book called Profit First, and then you would go, oh dang, there's this book Profit First. Your book is not one to compete with because it's got lots of reviews and sells really well, so you just don't wanna compete with a successful title. But don't freak out if you saw three Rando books that someone published nine years ago and forgot about.

Mike Michalowicz: If I did do the same title, say Atomic Habits, and I, I come out with Atomic Habits.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: What's the risk? Is it, does it, my book get buried every time someone's like, oh, there's a book called Atomic Habits. I wanna discover, maybe they even hear it's by this guy Mike, as opposed to James. Is it harder to find because of the popularity of the other book title?

AJ Harper: I mean, a little bit, but it's still gonna be, who's gonna have the guts to do Atomic Habits by Mike.

Mike Michalowicz: Atomic Habits

AJ Harper: By Money Mike,

Mike Michalowicz: There is another Profit First book out there.

AJ Harper: Yeah, there's, it's just, it's gonna keep happening now 'cause it's easier with AI,

Mike Michalowicz: I would say people have the, the guts. Um, and if I really felt compelled that my book is Atomic Habits and it, it needs to be that for some reason, I think ethically I could be compelled to do something. Um, but. I also feel when it comes to the marketing, atomic habits are so established. Yeah.

AJ Harper: You, you're just gonna be, you're, you will be buried, but also be, I think you look like a chum

Mike Michalowicz: and, and I, yeah. I, I think if my intention is to rip it off, if it's a genuine, like this is what it needs to be.

AJ Harper: Yeah. But just listen, we're too married to titles.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: You, you get a good, get as good as you can get for your pitch and then let your publisher.

Mike Michalowicz: Guide you through that

AJ Harper: to guide you, they're probably gonna talk you out of it.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. And I think we did an episode around titles. I, I do think some authors get so addicted to title.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper: It's good to have a title to write to.

Mike Michalowicz: Yes.

AJ Harper: I think that's really important. Yeah. Especially in fiction. But it's good to have a title to write to.

I'm never married to a title.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay. So let's talk about, um, I, I wanna write this book you

AJ Harper: like, and by the way, you really loved your title until we changed it. And then I,

Mike Michalowicz: for which one? For, oh, for the new book?

AJ Harper: Yeah. You loved your title.

Mike Michalowicz: It was Made For Money.

AJ Harper: Made for Money, and then we brainstormed and I'm proud, I'm proud of coming up with this one. The Money Habit.

Mike Michalowicz: You, and created the title. We, um, we tested it.

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: Um, and I think if I recall correctly, the final test was a 50-50 split, but we also got commentary and the people that were resonating for the money habit saw it in a different light, I mean the, the books

AJ Harper: the way you wanted it.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, yeah, exactly. Mm-hmm. Then we ran another test, and this was fascinating. The initial subtitle was, uh, the Money Habit, the, the Worry-Free Method to Financial Independence. And, uh, someone, and maybe it was Adayla, suggested, uh, the Worry-Free Way.

AJ Harper: Mm. I like way.

Mike Michalowicz: . So we tested both and way Crushed method.

don't write *that* book!

Yeah. Crushed it.

AJ Harper: It sounds less, less like a work.

Mike Michalowicz: That's what, and people are saying it's less like work and it seems more accessible when it's way, as opposed to method which is rigid. I thought that was fascinating. I thought that was fascinating. So, um, yeah. All right, so let's continue on here.

So you've written a, you're writing a book or you want to, and someone else has written the same book, at least you perceive it. Um, give me the bullet points of why, and you already alluded to it, but what's the bullet points of why it's not the same book?

AJ Harper: Number one, your perspective. So even if you're talking about the same concept or idea, you didn't come at it in the same way.

You didn't come to it in the same way. You don't have the same origin story about the idea. You don't look at it the same, even though it might seem like you do, you don't because you're a different person. So your perspective on your take on things that's unique to you. Then there's your story base. So your memory bank. These are my stories. That's yours. That's only yours.

And then I, I cannot emphasize this enough. Voice, voice, voice. The way, the way you come across. So you're gonna appeal to different readers because of the way you communicate and, and that makes it a different book. So it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter.

Mike Michalowicz: In the edits for *The Money Habit*, the copy edits, the editor made some. Suggestions and how we did it was, and we usually do this, you get the first response, then it goes to me and I chuckle sometimes. You're like the, the editor suggested a change and basically your response. I'm paraphrasing. Yes, you're technically accurate, editor. But that's not Mike's voice.

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: And it's gotta stay, like Mike just doesn't talk that way.

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: He's a simpleton. I think you

AJ Harper: I did not put simpleton. I did not.

Mike Michalowicz: I, I added to that part. That's, that's a little flourish. But, um, the voice, you're a voice Nazi. And I think that's a, that's a horrible, that's a horrible choice of words.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper: No. Let's try, give, gimme something else. Start, start it.

Mike Michalowicz: You, you are so committed. Stick.

AJ Harper: I'm a stickler. Stickler.

Mike Michalowicz: You're a voice stickler. Um. I think that's wildly important because people build, the reader, builds a rapport with a voice. I think there's a picture being painted, at least in my mind when I'm reading a book of who I'm talking with and when there's an inconsistent with it, an inconsistency with it, there's a disingenuousness.

AJ Harper: Yeah. No, you, no, I can't. I don't, I maybe, well, I'll maybe, I'm gonna think about if I'm gonna say what that was like for me, that copy edit. Oh say, well, we're gonna do a book update. I'll just, okay. I was gonna say you'll save it for that. Yeah. I will say that I did actually during, while I was doing the copy edit, I did take text, Zoë Bird, who is the best copy editor on the planet. Yeah. Some examples of some of the comments, because I was like.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Oh, interesting. Yeah. Interesting. Yeah, we got, I had,

AJ Harper: there's so few opportunities to geek out about a copy edit.

Mike Michalowicz: So we got, we gotta talk about that. We, we

AJ Harper: can talk about it, but, but my point is, voice alone differentiates you.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Even if you actually came to the idea in exactly the same way, by some freak of nature, your voice is still gonna be your differentiator.

Mike Michalowicz: And if it's prescriptive, your prescription may be different too.

AJ Harper: Could be. Again, I really don't think these are the same books, Ashley. I'm gonna say it's not the same book. Maybe it seems like it is, but it probably isn't. And even if it's similar, your take on it is what matters.

Mike Michalowicz: Ashley didn't know these other books existed until she did the research. Mm-hmm. My assumption is she hasn't read those books.

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz: I want your advice. Do you read those books before you write your book or not?

AJ Harper: So I come down on No, because I think it's good to not be influenced by it. And also then you're, I don't know, you just go through this, it's like you're reading it with like a haze of like, ah, you're so mad. You know that it, that they wrote it, that you might not see that actually what you're gonna write.

It's going to fill a need in a different way. So in when you're writing the first draft, get that all the way out. Don't do that. Don't read it. But then I think it's worth at least looking at the table of contents, looking on Amazon to see those three star reviews, the people who liked it, but maybe there was an issue. And then see where you can fill in some of the gaps. And if you really wanna read it at that point, you can. But you don't have to read the whole thing in order to kind of get the gist.

Mike Michalowicz: I'm with you in the No category. I don't like to read a book in the space I'm writing. So what, what I have done is I read, I would say voraciously. I, I finished two books this past week. I'm just finishing one probably tonight. Um, what I do like is, it builds this, um, collection of ideas and thoughts and it it allows you to create something new. But once we commit to writing a book, I've noticed I, I don't read any more books in that space. I may reference some stuff and do the research, like you said, but I don't wanna read it.

I'm so afraid of unintentionally now copying what someone else had. Um, I'm afraid of excluding something because they included something in their book. Um, I'm just so afraid of that my writing will be influenced.

AJ Harper: It's fair. And I think that's a good policy.

Mike Michalowicz: Um, interesting. So, okay. Go and write it anyway.

AJ Harper: Or look, there's, there's other reasons why you might not wanna write it.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay. Give it to me.

AJ Harper: But we've, we've been over it. You know, maybe it's not the right time for you. Maybe it doesn't fit with your business model. Maybe it's not calling to you. Maybe whatever for what, maybe you need to build up more of an audience in that area before you can actually do it. There are lots of other reasons, but don't let it, don't let someone else wrote it be the reason.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, a hundred percent.

AJ Harper: Because someone else didn't write it. They actually didn't.

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz: That's right. Because it's not your book, because it's not you. The only one that can write it is you.

AJ Harper: A hundred percent.

Mike Michalowicz: So don't let that dissuade you.

AJ Harper: Also, Mike, you know, in publishing what matters most front list. Front list meaning books that are coming out or have been out in the last year or so. By the time your book comes out, those books are back list. You are the front list author. You are the one who's gonna get attention on it.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. From the, from the publisher's perspective. Yeah. I'll tell you, once you're an author, your backlist is just as important. You better be marketing the,

AJ Harper: Well, yes. But from a publishing standpoint. Correct.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Correct. Um. You do share a read the three-star review technique. What, what's that all about?

AJ Harper: Look at the three-star reviews because the, you know, don't wanna look. The fives are great.

Mike Michalowicz: The three-star reviews of what?

AJ Harper: On Amazon.

Mike Michalowicz: Of, of your competitors. Of the competitors books. Okay. Okay.

AJ Harper: Yeah. Because that means the person liked it well enough, right? It's not, they didn't trash it, but something wasn't quite right. They, it was missing something or it had too much of something. So that's helpful. To go see. Oh, they, oh look, there's a pattern here. All these people wish that it had more doable exercises or all these people felt like there were not enough stories or whatever.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. So it gives you an opportunity to improve on what already exists. Or, and, and introduce your own insights in that category. Um, when do you start building, and this is a little bit ask, but do you start building a network of. Other authors in that space? Like is it this my first personal finance book, I'm deliberately building some connections. I'm actually reaching out.

don't write *that* book!

Indirectly to David Bach now, but, uh, Ramit Sahti and I, Tiffany Aliche, who I've known of but didn't really know well, we're building, uh, more rapport. I'm just trying to sup, what am I'm doing, is just trying to support those folks.

AJ Harper: Garrett.

Mike Michalowicz: Um, I did I tell you, I, I suckered Ramit into, uh, sharing a hotel space. So...

AJ Harper: I, I knew that you were sharing a hotel, but I didn't know that there was some sort of, you know?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. So it's

AJ Harper: Scheme here.

Mike Michalowicz: I'm like, I invited Ramee to the event. He's like, yeah, whoever, yes, I can come. I'm like, oh, I already secured your room.

AJ Harper: Oh my God. He's like, oh, that's amazing. Come on.

Mike Michalowicz: I'm like, it's with me, bro. And we're not sharing an actual room. It's a, it's a,

AJ Harper: I was gonna say,

Mike Michalowicz: yeah, he's got his own private room, own private bathroom, but we're in the exact same space.

AJ Harper: Sounds like a suite.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, I'll give you,

AJ Harper: Is this an... Aren't these like Holiday Inn type things?

Mike Michalowicz: That's what I would usually stay at, but, uh, this, its the

AJ Harper: Fancy pants.

Mike Michalowicz: No. Here, I'll give you the full, the full deets.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper: Okay.

Mike Michalowicz: Don Miller calls and, uh, he goes, Hey, looking forward to, uh, to the event stuff. He's like, I know I didn't give you the guest house last year. So he is got a guest house on his property that has four bedrooms and four bathrooms. And he goes, last year he said, do you want to use it?

And I said, you know, since I'm hosting the event, being on site actually does help. But I was like, oh, I'll give it to Erin, my assistant, and she'll come down with her husband and I'm like, you can just help us get set up and then you two can vacation and have this amazing house available. It's that cool, Don? He said yes.

Don calls, um, a month before the event last year and says, oh, there's another person coming. Her name's Jenna, and uh, she's coming with her family. Um, they can't get a hotel. Would you mind acquiescing the space. Yeah. So I went to Aaron and said, Aaron, um, this is an awkward situation, but do you mind?

And she said, no, we, it wasn't a big deal for us to come. Well, Don feels guilt, so Don's like, Hey, you want the carriage house this year? And I said, yeah. So what I'm gonna do is I'm gonna fill all those bedrooms with people I wanna spend time with after hours. So, uh, so.

AJ Harper: So you were making a sleepover.

Mike Michalowicz: Making a sleepover with Michael Bunge Stander, who I know very well already.

AJ Harper: you keep trying to be friends with him.

Mike Michalowicz: I know. I love him. I don't think he loves me, but I love him. So he's the first one I snookered into it. Chris Guillebeau. Every year I have a greater affinity toward this guy. I think the, not the challenge, but I didn't really get to know him 'cause he's highly, highly introverted.

AJ Harper: Hmm. Um.

Mike Michalowicz: He feels even uncomfortable in this event. It's gotten—

AJ Harper: So you're putting him in a forced social situation?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. With me. That, with me. Oh no. Um, I really admire that guy. He's out to do extraordinary things on this planet and to be of such great service, and so I just want time with him to learn from him.

don't write *that* book!

He's so knowledgeable and intelligent, and I'm like, in this greater community, he, he's intimidated or not just introversion kicks in. You can't get one-on-one time with him. At a quality level.

AJ Harper: So you're just gonna, you can brush your teeth next to each other.

Mike Michalowicz: Exactly. So like, Chris, I'm sleeping in the bed right next to you, and then I'm like, I'm saving this one room.

It's gonna be Ramit sat I want. So once he said, uh, he, he, he can make it. I said, dude, Guys needed the space roommate. So, uh, it's Ramit, Chris, Mike, Michael, and myself.

AJ Harper: You realize that you sound sort of like a stalker.

Mike Michalowicz: I sound gross, don't I? But it's not, there's no creepy intent.

AJ Harper: I know, just a little bit.

Mike Michalowicz: It's a little stalkerish, but it's like, oh, I'm just, I want to have a group that I wanna hang out with, um, and build better relationships with, and this is a much better setting than a big event.

AJ Harper: Yeah, you just, I'm like movie night and I popcorn, but also matching jammies. Exactly.

Mike Michalowicz: Is that awkward? I'm bringing matching jammies. Everyone's wearing onesies like unicorns. I told you, Don reached out to me and said, uh, Hey, do you wanna come down for the top podcaster event?

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: And I'm like, uh, yeah. Why? What? What's going on? He said, well, you can speak on Profit First, how these podcasters can make their podcasts more profitable. Like, oh yeah, absolutely. And I said, who's coming? He's like, well, the number one podcast are in all these different categories. And I'm like. I didn't even ask him why he said, and why I'm doing this is the author Meetup has been so successful for Don in Making Connections and me, too.

He said, I'm just replicating that model. So I'm like, oh my gosh. Top podcasters. Yeah. I want to be there. 'cause that selfishly the exposure for me is to know people intimately that have top podcast, maybe I can get some exposure by supporting them. This is a really cool method. Build the group you want to be part of.

don't write *that* book!

Mm-hmm. And now I'm like, oh, well if we have top podcasters, why not have top Publishers and have a meetup at Don's place every time it's at Don's place. Why not all these different groups you want access to just keep assembling the groups at Don's, at Don's house. I'm thinking every, every week we have 52 a year. Go bankrupt Don, and I'll have the time of my life.

AJ Harper: You're gonna have to start paying rent over there.

Mike Michalowicz: I know, I know. Um, but I think as a author. When you are writing a book, even if you've discovered other people have written that space, I should say, especially since other people have written that space, it's an opportunity that aren't building a network too.

AJ Harper: Yeah. Make friends.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. So, uh, I think the title for this is Help. Someone else already wrote my book. It should be, wow. I'm so happy. Someone else already wrote my book

AJ Harper: is a big mindset shift, but yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Any other thoughts on this before we wrap it up?

AJ Harper: If you're called to write it, write it, man.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. That's the juice. Thank you for joining, for joining us for today's episode of Don't Write That Book podcast. Please go to our websites, dw.tbpodcast.com. AJ has tons of free materials there. Actually, aj, I should have said during the episode, um, before we wrap it up, you have a retreat. It's here at Madeline Island where I'm with you right now.

Um, how do people sign up or at least we'll find out more information about it?

AJ Harper: ajharper.com. And you at this point maybe need to get on a wait list for 2026.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay. It's a de Is that, is there stuff people can do with you now in the meantime if you can't? Yeah.

AJ Harper: I have a membership program for people who want to work on their books and, uh, do writing sprints in our community. Learn from me and my little small classes that I do frequently. Um, you can also go to ajharper.com to learn about that,

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz: and it's the real deal. Yesterday in the afternoon you had to hop on a call. Uh, I was doing some stuff. I peeked in and you turned the screen and there was half a dozen, maybe a dozen people on there. I was waving at 'em.

AJ Harper: So sometimes there's 30 people. This morning there was 30 people in there.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, this morning was a sprint. Last night, it was an edit.

AJ Harper: Edit, yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. And then this morning there was a sprint. I was just overheard people talking before they got to writing. Um, there's a lot of ways to get started right now with you.

AJ Harper: Yeah, right now.

Mike Michalowicz: So aj harper.com. Uh, also we have an imprint. We've got people reaching out to us. If you are a business author or aspiring business author, you have a community, um, and you want to get published, um, in a hybrid model. I've teamed up with page two. It's been the best experience in the writing space I've ever had as an authorship space bar none.

Um, we have an imprint called Simplified. You can learn by that about that by emailing us at hello@dwbpodcast.com. Ala who produces a show, uh, is listening in for your communications there. I think we're wrapped up for today. What are we talking about next week? Uh, do you know?

AJ Harper: Oh, I do now. Hang on. I didn't, I didn't put a little teaser in.

Mike Michalowicz: No.

AJ Harper: Oh, we're gonna talk about the new book. We're gonna talk about where we are with. The new book and also kind of some challenges that you've had, some surprising marketing challenges you've had. Oh, yeah. In trying to get, you know, the book to market. So we're gonna give a book update in terms of marketing primarily, but a little bit about the book itself.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. I'm pumped to talk about that. And I wanna share some numbers too, that I, I think people have this unrealistic, um, expect or just they, so they're misinformed on some expectations. So I wanna share a little bit of pre-orders that's happening right now and stuff like. Um, so you'll discover all that on next week's episode.

don't write *that* book!

Make sure you join us. If you have comments, questions, things you want us to talk about, just like Ashley did for this episode. We'd love to hear what they are. So email us at hello@ewtbpodcast.com. Here's the great brand reminder. Come to Madeline Island next year, next year, and, uh, in the meantime, don't write that book.

Write the greatest book you can.