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Episode 96:

“Publishing is a Team Sport”

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. So the demand for this author meetup that I host at Don Miller's place is skyrocketing.

It's next month. I'm sorry, isn't two weeks August 7th and eighth? Yeah. You're gonna be there. So two weeks away, you, you can't believe how many people are ping me, texting, can I come? Is there a way to get in? One person wrote an email that must have been like its own little novelette on why they think they should come, but also they, they don't really qualify and it's, it's fascinating.

I, I, the lesson I've found is, you know, build something. That is extraordinary.

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: And adhere to standards of participation so that everyone in there is in a similar stage or experience where they, they can really be supportive of each other, and they'll attract people just like them. And it's just, there's some like authors I would never, ever, ever had a chance to talk to.

Calling me on my cell. Hey, can I just spend two minutes with you on the phone? I have a, you know, I know there's no seats left and there's literally no seats. Like we physically only have a certain number of seats.

AJ Harper: How many people?

Mike Michalowicz: 50.

AJ Harper: Okay.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. I mean, we have to redo the whole room. So. Don's place could fit maybe 80. But it becomes really intimate, whatever the word is. Because it goes long way if, if we 50 is the last. Seat where it can still be, where everyone's like two to three rows back from the speaker kind of arch room.

AJ Harper: Got it. So by the way, is there are do, is there av?

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Mike Michalowicz: There will be, but I'm discouraging people from using it.

AJ Harper: I just have a picture.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh yeah. A picture, yeah. Yeah, a picture. Totally.

AJ Harper: One picture. Okay.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Yeah. Can you come in, are you coming in on August 6th or when do you arrive?

AJ Harper: I haven't got my ticket yet.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh. All right. Well, now that down.

AJ Harper: When do you want me to, you want me to, you

Mike Michalowicz: choose. Well, you're the event's August 7th and August 8th.

Mm-hmm. You can come in just for the day you present or if it serves you, and I think it will, you can stick around for the entire event. Or you can come in August 6th, Don texted me a week. I was like, Hey, why don't we have a party at my house to kick things off? So he is hosting a pizza, you know.

AJ Harper: What time is that?

Mike Michalowicz: August 6th starting at five 30.

AJ Harper: Okay.

Mike Michalowicz: And so I'm reaching out to all these authors now. People are like, oh, I'm changing my flight. I'm coming in early now. Like, it's just interesting, like, you know,

AJ Harper: Started with just a couple guys.

Mike Michalowicz: Started with seven people. Yeah. Seven people and just raw commitment. To, to keep this thing going and getting it better. And this is gonna be the best year. So I have a little, joke that you'll, by the time this broadcast, I'll have played out. I think we should do like some kind of networking thing, because everyone moves in their little pockets. Now we're of that size.

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So I asked Michael Bunge Stanier, I said, can you coordinate something? He's like, I don't know. I'm like, do make, let's do a murder mystery.

AJ Harper: Oh my God, Mike,

Mike Michalowicz: you just, no. And you show up. It's just a little, it's a little murder mystery games. There's one murderer in the room you have to figure out. So you have to network. You have to figure out who it is. And he says, well, what's the weapon? I said. The person died by boredom of reading Hal Elrod's book, *Miracle Mourning*. It killed him. That's...

AJ Harper: And Hal will be there?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, totally. I love razzing Ha. I think it's hysterical.

AJ Harper: Have you been to a Murder Mystery party?

Mike Michalowicz: Yep. Like when they really acted all out and all that stuff.

AJ Harper: Yes. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. I've, we've, we've had them, we've hosted 'em ourselves.

AJ Harper: Wow, okay.

Mike Michalowicz: We've gone to professional ones.

AJ Harper: Whoa. Yeah. Okay. Yeah. You're serious.

Mike Michalowicz: It was so much fun.

AJ Harper: Really? Yeah. I have so much secondhand embarrassment.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, really?

AJ Harper: I used to write for one. [laughs] Oh my gosh. I did, I used to write scripts before. This is when I was still a playwright. I used to write scripts for one. Oh my, they were a professional company that went around and so they

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, but they would customize it, right?

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AJ Harper: Yeah. For whatever event. And so I was better writing that stuff.

Mike Michalowicz: They're fun as a consumer, maybe not as a producer.

AJ Harper: I just, I get a lot of secondhand embarrassment. You know, like when mascots come up to you?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: At a theme park.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: I just, I'm

Mike Michalowicz: You're embarrassed for them?

AJ Harper: No. Oh, I maybe, okay. Maybe. It all seems so ridiculous to me.

Mike Michalowicz: The only time I feel embarrassed for a mascot is when the head falls off.

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: Like when they're running and they, you know, 'cause they, there's costumes. And they slip and they fall down and the head falls off. There's such a scramble to put that head on because it, it like, it feels like they're revealing to the world unintentionally. There's actually a human inside.

AJ Harper: Everyone knows mascot, but all that, that cosplay and like okay, Renaissance Fair.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, I've been to that.

AJ Harper: The only time I'm not embarrassed by the antics at the Renaissance Fair is when they're insulting you.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: If they're just like, you know, and that's their whole shtick. Yeah. Is that they're just annoyed with everybody or they think you're beneath them. Yeah, I'm fine. Then I don't

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know. I don't know what it is. I just want to just go away. I wanna go hide behind something and I can't, I can't. It's like I can't watch, I have to watch through my fingers.

Mike Michalowicz: Krista and I were traveling and we went. We're going to a college campuses, I don't know if we were evaluating these for our kids, but it was at Yale, so that's in New Haven, Connecticut. So we're at Yale and you hear OO and we're walking with, and there's these two guys dressed in plate-mail armor like, okay, medieval armor. And their swords are sticks and they're fighting. But like prescribed fighting. They're not like, these guys didn't just run into each other in the street and go, what the hell?

They're fighting. And then the one guy does a swing and hits the guy in the leg and the guy falls and he goes, ah. And they guy's like, oh man, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. It was the most anti-climatic,

AJ Harper: Climactic.

Mike Michalowicz: climatic battle of all time with that swing. The hit. And the guy's like, I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you.

AJ Harper: So you, but you just thought that was delightful, anyway?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, you're walking through Yale, right? So you think it's gonna be people pontificating. Something extraordinary. And instead it's two plate mail dudes fighting and then, and by apologizing when he gets the perfect strike.

AJ Harper: So is this murder mystery thing a for sure thing?

Mike Michalowicz: I don't know. Michael will pull it off.

AJ Harper: Is it at the party?

Mike Michalowicz: No. No. It's the, the first day of networking.

AJ Harper: All right. All right, well, I'll know when I need to go to the bathroom.

Mike Michalowicz: Hey guys, tell us if our banter's too long. I love these conversations. This is like, actually gets me so excited for this episode.

AJ Harper: Listen, all I hear from people is that more don't, don't cut the thing at the beginning.

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Mike Michalowicz: Don't cut the be okay. Okay? Yeah. Usually we get about four minutes in. Now we're going about six minutes in of fan.

AJ Harper: That's all right, man.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay. Okay. You're listening to Don't Write that book. Join in studio by my writing partner, my colleague, and an extraordinary friend, AJ Harper.

What I admire about you, you will. It's something I've observed about you. I think it's cute. You, when you ponder, you'll do, you'll twist your face. You'll go, Hmm. You'll do one of those things. And I, my sister's closest friend growing up in high school, her name was Wendy Gau, did the exact same face. So every time I see, like, oh, it reminds me, Wendy, she sadly, Wendy's passed away.

She was such a, she was like almost like a big a second sister to me. So it reminds me every time I see that.

AJ Harper: oh, what a sweet thing.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Something I admire about you is loyalty.

Mike Michalowicz: Thank you.

AJ Harper: You are a loyal person. Thank you. And you give people the benefit of the doubt. So before you know, if you hear some news about something or someone rather you don't, you reserve judgment until you can have a conversation with that person.

Mike Michalowicz: Thank you.

AJ Harper: Yeah, I really like that. You don't just jump on the bandwagon.

Mike Michalowicz: Thank you. Today we're gonna talk about publishing as a team sport. Interestingly. Jesse Finkelstein, the co-founder of Page Two, along with Trena White, Jesse will be presenting at the author meetup.

AJ Harper: I saw she was gonna be there.

Mike Michalowicz: I was talking with her yesterday. And the, the concept is that more now than ever, we need to partner with our publisher. To extract the best of what they have to offer. The publisher has to extract the best of what the author has to offer. But really look at

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that, where a one plus one is equaling a lot more because producing a book, particularly with AI, the basic stuff is just spits out perfunctory.

But the the elevated human stuff has to be much more deliberate. More than ever before.

AJ Harper: I think that's true. Yesterday I spoke at HEROIC in Lambertville and I went through this you know, we, on the pod, we talked about the life of a book. We recorded it on the island, and I've been developing that for a while.

And now I've come up with 16 stages on the life of a book. So since that podcast. I said, you know, let me break this down. What are all the stages?

Mike Michalowicz: That's interesting.

AJ Harper: Yeah. I have 16. Of course. I'm obnoxious like that. I probably could have more. But then I got nervous about having too much. I mean, I don't know. Anyway one of the, the stage that's missing is publish.

Mike Michalowicz: What do you mean?

AJ Harper: So I called it partner instead.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh.

AJ Harper: So that's what making me think of it is you said partner because authors tend to think of the publisher as either their boss, right? Who's in charge of everything and they're lucky to get the job and they just wanna do what they're told and they're waiting for instructions.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm.

AJ Harper: And they're gonna follow the company line. Or they think of their publisher as a fairy godmother. This is gonna wave their magic wand and give them the life of their dreams and then magically end up on the New York Times bestseller list and change their life. And really, the publisher is your partner.

And I think if you have that mindset shift, you are gonna have a better relationship with them, and both publisher and author will make out better.

Mike Michalowicz: I had a call yesterday with Danielle LaPorte. She's an author of *The Desire Map*, *White Hot Truth*, *how to Be Loving Extraordinary Author*, and she's self-

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publishing specifically because with at least my understanding, this is my interpretation with the traditional publishers, that rapport or that opportunity for, it wasn't reciprocal.

It was an expectation on the author. It sounded like, and this, I'm not, this is not Danielle's words, but this is what I, I heard in some of my experiences, there's expectation on you and there's no support where they could provide so much support.

AJ Harper: Yeah. Part of what I said in my talk yesterday was you cannot expect a publisher to be transparent or have good communication. And it is not,

Mike Michalowicz: isn't that the definition of partner?

AJ Harper: I know, but see, here's the thing. You have to keep in mind. Your main point of contact at your publisher is your editor.

Mike Michalowicz: Right.

AJ Harper: So this is some person who got an MFA and they just love books. And they're surrounded by manuscripts and they're under a lot of pressure, but nobody trained them about how to communicate with people and nobody trained them about how to train an author.

'cause if you've got a new author coming in, they don't know anything about this land of Mars that is publishing. And nobody trained them about, I mean, they don't even know a lot about how books get sold.

Mike Michalowicz: That's true.

AJ Harper: They don't, they don't really understand. I have one author who got a major, major, major deal with a pub publishing house. One of my alums, they told her absolutely zero. Absolutely zero about how to sell it. And then asked her what she was gonna do to sell it.

Mike Michalowicz: Isn't that crazy?

AJ Harper: So I, but here's the thing that I don't think her editor knew. Do you know what I'm saying? Yeah. Like the editors ha are this main point of contact. But they're just like, I just wanna, I just love books, you know? Yeah, yeah, yeah. I just wanna edit these books. I just care about books, not necessarily the entire business of publishing.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

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AJ Harper: So they're, I don't think they're actually very well equipped for all the roles that publishing expects them to have.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: As this sort of liaison that's going to. This whole author's career.

Mike Michalowicz: You said a term MFA. What's that mean?

AJ Harper: Masters of Fine Arts.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, okay. And then you said she got a, a huge deal. How do you, what constitutes a huge deal?

AJ Harper: Well, technically the, the term was significant deal, which is the actual term. It's hundreds of thousands.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, okay. So it's it you base that upon advance, not like there's movie components or something. No, it's just the amount of of advance. Advance is significant. Yeah. Hundreds of thousands. Okay. Yeah.

AJ Harper: So, but that's the actual term for that range. So there's different—

Mike Michalowicz: Oh really?

AJ Harper: Yeah. There's nice deal, significant deal. I remember all the deals. Good.

Mike Michalowicz: Seriously? Who came up with these terms?

AJ Harper: I don't know who came up with them, I just know what they are.

Mike Michalowicz: That's so funny.

AJ Harper: It tells you the range so you know, if, so, if you get a book announcement. Right? In the trades, so and so sold such and such book to this publishing house in a nice deal.

Mike Michalowicz: No way.

AJ Harper: Yeah. And then you then, you know, kind of the range.

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Mike Michalowicz: That's so funny. So I wonder if there's overs significant, is outrageous in

AJ Harper: No, I have to look, I have to look it up.

Mike Michalowicz: What are all the deals, but the highest levels? Who does this?

AJ Harper: I I used to have them all memorized, but

Mike Michalowicz: that's, oh, I had no idea. That's so funny.

AJ Harper: Yeah, so when you read the trades, then you can, that's what that means. It's not just an adjective.

Mike Michalowicz: I gotcha.

AJ Harper: It's actually the official term.

Mike Michalowicz: You said that this episode about publishing is a team sport. Was inspired by someone?

AJ Harper: Oh, yeah. Natalie Banks. Natalie Banks is in my writing community. She's about to come into my annual workshop and she, I, you know, the cool thing is people don't realize I have a writing sprint community and you could see me there every week.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. And you can ask questions to you.

AJ Harper: Yes. And so we just had retreat, and I always give Sadé and Laura two days off after retreat.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Because they work really, really hard and there's just no down... You know, I try to factor in, please take a break now. But it's just not... And also Laura. Laura Stone. Oh my gosh. Laura Stone, she just gets into this zone and you can't really move her away from work, you know?

Mike Michalowicz: Right, right.

AJ Harper: And. She's, she's so lovely. And just exactly what the retreat needs. And so, you know, and then Sade's everybody, they're just, they're tuned in. They're tuned in. Maybe at the end of the day we can play like a game and just decompress. Or sometimes I hear the two

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of them giggling. Like looking at social media and doing silly things because we have to blow off some steam, but they're really not getting a break.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm.

AJ Harper: Even though I'm trying really hard to give them one, so I give them two days off.

Mike Michalowicz: Nice.

AJ Harper: So I'm in the sprints, I'm just covering and what people don't realize is you could go to my Sprint community, you could, it's \$97 a month, but there's a second. There's a button right next to it that says pay what you can. Yeah. And so you couldn't come and get, talk to me. You can see me every week if you want.

Mike Michalowicz: Amazing.

AJ Harper: Anyway, I'm that. When I'm in that spring community, I'll often say, Hey am I'm gonna do a podcast on Wednesday with Mike. What do y'all wanna want us to talk about? So it's great. I got this little Petri dish and then they say this, this, this. And I write 'em down. And sometimes we do them and sometimes we don't.

Mike Michalowicz: That's so great.

AJ Harper: So Natalie Banks said on Monday, Hey, I wanna talk about. Collaboration and it got me thinking about. How maybe people don't really understand all the collaborators

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: That are involved in publishing. Like that poor editor with the MFA.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Yeah, totally. Yeah.

AJ Harper: But see you have a different experience now, Jesse Finkelstein is at co-founded Page Two with Trena White, and they are collaborative. They, you do have your whole team

Mike Michalowicz: Radically different,

AJ Harper: Radically different,

Mike Michalowicz: and I guess this is the nature of collaboration too. We still throw them curve balls or like what.

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Who does that, and it confuses even them. And they're the best publisher in regards to breaking from the four or five protocols.

AJ Harper: It's okay to confuse if they're willing to play

Mike Michalowicz: And they are. Yeah. I mean this, this is funny. Like we throw such curve balls, but that's, this is what collaboration is. Yeah. It's like, what if we did this like. No one's ever done that. You sh mm. And some of these ideas are not good ideas. It's just idea stew.

AJ Harper: I could tell some when I've been in some of the page two meetings for the money habit, I can, I just sit there quietly, just watch, and I watch, I know this drill.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And I can see you say, what if we go do this?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And in my head I'm just like, here we go. Here we go.

Mike Michalowicz: Here we go.

AJ Harper: And I see their faces like they're Canadian, so they're trying to be polite.

Mike Michalowicz: So polite. Yeah.

AJ Harper: And I know I can almost see inside their brains what the F is he talking about?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And in the nicest way. But you know, sometimes you say you do a thing that's WTF and it's turns out to be amazing. Sometimes what they don't know about you is that you're not actually married to any one idea.

Mike Michalowicz: I know, I know. And it's hard for me to tell people these are, I'm not married to these ideas, I'm just. Same by, same with I guess a certain degree of confidence or you do that people are like, oh, we have to do this now.

AJ Harper: Now you totally do. It'd be like, I think we should, I

Mike Michalowicz: I think we should, yeah.

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AJ Harper: Make cardboard cutouts of, of me. Of me. And put 'em out and deliver them. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: Throughout Simon Schuster? No. McMillan is earlier with... Yeah. I, and I think we should do that,

AJ Harper: but I just enjoy watching it because they are not wanting to offend you.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, I know, I know, I know, I know.

AJ Harper: It's okay. It's gonna be fine. I promise.

Mike Michalowicz: At first I was like, oh, they dedicated, so Leslie Boodle's dedicated to working with me. She's their marketing. Yeah. And I'm like,

AJ Harper: She's great.

Mike Michalowicz: Like, oh, they quarantined me is what they're doing. It took, it took me a while to figure that one out.

AJ Harper: Well, you have access to her.

Mike Michalowicz: I do. She's tell,

AJ Harper: how many times have you just tried to get through at Penguin Random House?

Mike Michalowicz: Oh no. Never.

AJ Harper: Like it's like impenetrable.

Mike Michalowicz: Never. Yeah. Yeah. They were kind like Nikki actually that one time Did you go with me? I went down and just gave him a whole download of ideas at Penguin.

AJ Harper: I think I was in the room. Was that the one where we got chastised because they run outta books?

Mike Michalowicz: I, I don't remember. I just remember the team comes together. I'm like, oh, you can get email address, or you can get mailing people's mailing addresses through Amazon. Like, no, you can't. And I show them like, oh. And then they go, yeah. It's not for us. It was just interesting, like Yeah. Just that quick.

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AJ Harper: It's a quick dismissal.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And I think it's because it's a bureaucracy.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Well, if something works so well for so long, you cannot abandon that. They're, they're massive machines. And it's interesting, I, I just, when it comes to businesses outside of publishing, if you want, if your business is successful but needs to change and it's starting to have a decline, it's nearly impossible to change 'cause you're so ingrained. Mm-hmm. The best way to start. A new consideration is to start a new business. that competes with your existing

AJ Harper: Yeah, like page two. Yeah. Because Trena and Jesse are, are from Big Five. And are challenging the norms.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. So who are the folks that we collaborate with, like you and I?

AJ Harper: Well, we have the big collaboration.

Mike Michalowicz: Yep. And the benefit of our collaboration is on multiple fronts, but first it's ideation on a book.

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: Strategy

AJ Harper: strategy.

Mike Michalowicz: You and I challenge each other sometimes vigorously on concepts and ideas to elevate ideas. You're, one of the super strengths you have is you push for simplification constantly. Like, how do we make this easier? I think one of the strengths I bring is I, can, I find. Stories that don't seem to connect. And then...

AJ Harper: Well, it's also your idea.

Mike Michalowicz: I know it's my ideas, but

AJ Harper: Let's just be real. Yeah. It's your book. Your name's on the cover, but I, we collaborated every stage.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

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AJ Harper: We, there's no. You, every single decision, you, you text me about it or talk to me about it.

Mike Michalowicz: We now have our teams in sync on collaboration.

AJ Harper: Correct.

Mike Michalowicz: We lead the marketing, but you support it. We actually, one thing that came up from Page Two is they want a summary of the book. And you said I'll write the summary.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: And so, and that's a marketing piece to go out to different kind of publishers, podcasters, journalists and so forth so they can read the book CliffNotes version that we've created.

AJ Harper: We used to collaborate more, so on Pumpkin Plan,

Mike Michalowicz: quite a few articles.

AJ Harper: And a couple other books. I, well, toilet Paper Entrepreneur, I don't know if you remember how many blogs I wrote for you.

Mike Michalowicz: A lot I do know 'cause we still have some of those.

AJ Harper: And the WSJ. Some, a bunch of those WSJ articles and just a ton of marketing copy. It was too much collaboration and that actually led to part of our creative breakup.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: It was just being me subsumed by it.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

AJ Harper: So I think there can be a danger with collaboration if it becomes everything. You know? So we're smart now. Like, you'll ask me to do the occasional marketing thing if it's really high stakes.

Like I did the roommates blog, what was it called before?

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Mike Michalowicz: Oh yeah. What was it called?

AJ Harper: What was it called?

Mike Michalowicz: But that was, was that for profit

AJ Harper: first? No, no, no, no.

Mike Michalowicz: Fix this next, maybe,

AJ Harper: maybe fix this next, or maybe get different, I don't know. One of the later books.

Mike Michalowicz: So one of the things I'm doing, I'm, this is a killer idea. I dunno if I shared it yet in our podcast. I reached out to some authors and I said, you know, I want to market my new book in new ways. Anyone have any ideas? Michael Bunge Stanier, who I mentioned earlier, brought it up. He goes, oh. He goes, why don't you feature these contemporaries you have in the personal finance space in your book?

I'm like, what do you mean? He's like, well interview them. On the audio book, and then just pick the best, you know, five-minute clips of them and insert it in the book for each chapter. That's genius. So Tiffany Aliche, of course 'cause she's in the book already, but. Ramit sat

AJ Harper: what do you mean insert? Where do, where, what do you mean?

Mike Michalowicz: So I'm, I'm interviewing Ramit—

AJ Harper: Oh, for the audio.

Mike Michalowicz: Yep.

AJ Harper: Oh, this is for the audio. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: So I'm gonna interview him. So we're gonna talk about season. This is great, isn't it?

AJ Harper: Oh, I love that. That's a fantastic idea.

Mike Michalowicz: So I'm gonna talk in the book about seasons, for example, and I'm gonna say, Hey, I have my friend Ramit sat here, who's author of I Will Teach You To Be Rich.

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And also I think it's called Money Couples or something like that. I'll obviously say it correctly. He has some insights on this and actually doesn't even agree with me. Ee, what do you think about This has some suggestions.

AJ Harper: Can I make a suggestion about where it goes?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Try to put it at the end of the chapter.

Mike Michalowicz: That's what we're gonna do.

AJ Harper: Okay, good. Because then you, otherwise you interrupt the reader.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Exactly. Yeah, exactly.

AJ Harper: No, I love that idea.

Mike Michalowicz: Isn't that really cool?

AJ Harper: I love it. Yeah. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: I just connect with a guy named Jack Rains. He's an author of an upcoming book called Young Money, and he. One of the things he talks about was really interesting.

I, I did a pre-interview. He says, most young, this is for people in their twenties. He goes, most people in their twenties are trying to find what they can do to maximize their finances. And he goes, they surely be optimizing for the moment, not for finances at age 20. It's, it's about exploration and stuff.

So he goes, if you want to be wealthy, it's actually about exploring and doing as many things. Currently to find yourself over trying to maximize your income. 'cause you'll channel yourself like, oh, that's a really interesting perspective. So he's gonna come on.

AJ Harper: You know who I just thought of. You need to, I know you're trying to connect with all these money people.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: I need to introduce you to Anne Lester. She wrote Your Best Financial Life. She used to be at JP Morgan.

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Mike Michalowicz: Oh, I'd love an introduction.

AJ Harper: And and she is one of my students, one of my alums. Oh, I can't believe I didn't think of that.

Mike Michalowicz: I would love it. I would love it.

AJ Harper: Yeah. Let me, let me, I'm gonna do that.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

AJ Harper: But at any rate, the collaboration, can I just say it? I've said this on the podcast before, if you're trying to get a collaboration like the one Mike and I have just. It's once in a lifetime.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. But it

AJ Harper: You, you can try. You can try. Yeah. But don't, it's, this is a... I think it's unusual. And I think sometimes people get frustrated. Yeah. That they wanna have the exact thing.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: It's a little bit of luck and a lot of willingness to grow.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Oh yeah. Yeah. And change

AJ Harper: And change and learn.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: I think it's like any relationship, it's like a really deep partnership.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: That's the long-term collaboration. Those are harder. You can collaborate on a project and that's a lot easier.

Mike Michalowicz: I a hundred percent agree. Yeah. But for the nature of the work we do it. Necessitates a long-term relationship.

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AJ Harper: Yeah, for sure. But it's a con, it's always a renegotiation. Like we just, we're about to be on, we are almost on our hiatus.

Mike Michalowicz: I know. Isn't that crazy?

AJ Harper: I'm really excited about it. I mean, I'm still gonna see you all the time. Yeah. 'cause we do this podcast, which is great. But to have a little creative break is gonna, you are gonna be shocked what that does for you.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. I'm sure I will be. 'cause I have no clue. At the same time we are. Rampant for marketing. We are RAMP. ING.

AJ Harper: and and that's what you need to be doing during this.

Mike Michalowicz: When it comes to collaboration with your publishing team, can our authors listening in. Assert themselves in certain ways. Can they, I don't know if you can change the machine, but maybe you can do certain things to facilitate a better collaboration.

AJ Harper: Yeah, I mean, I just think like you've got to, if you think of your publisher as a partner, how would you talk to your partner? Hey, what if we tried this? Help me understand that. What's gonna be a win for you? How can, how can I, this is what I wanna do. Do you have any ideas? In big five, you might bump up against a lot of friction, but you should still ask.

Smaller presses are more nimble. I used to, I used to own one of those, co-own one of those. If an author came to us with an idea, we could, you know, we could, Hmm. How could we do that? And we just had, we didn't have as much red tape to go through. We didn't have as many, you know, policies and systems and things that had to be shoved aside in order to do certain things. So we could be, you know, if you choose a small, if in fact if you want more collaboration and you want a traditional press, try for a smaller press.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, I think that's a good tip. One thing I did with Penguin was I asked them, what do you do for other authors that you don't typically do because it's not asked?

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: You know, and they said, oh. I don't remember who the, I mean, it was Kashiuk at the time. He says, oh, we, you know, books basically cost us nothing to print, so it's like handing out cheap candy.

AJ Harper: Okay. But see, he's, he's an anomaly.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

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AJ Harper: I remember speaking to another editor that we worked with who was under Kashiuk.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Or wait, maybe under Noah. Anyway. Yeah. That person I think is was at, I don't remember which Big five, where they are now. At any rate, I was having a, just a conversation with her on Zoom and I mentioned something about missing going since the pandemic, how I missed going up to Penguin before they moved over to the Random House office and our long sessions with Kaushiuk with the whiteboard. And he would always say, what do you want for lunch?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, right.

AJ Harper: Yeah. She said, what do you mean? I said, well, you know, that's who we go up and kind of work on the outline a little bit. And he would challenge us, basically.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And it was fun. And we got, we actually made it better. Never, she had never heard of doing such a thing.

Mike Michalowicz: Wow.

AJ Harper: So that's a collaboration with your editor. Yeah. You can ask for it.

Mike Michalowicz: Noah was willing to do that too. I told him that's our process.

AJ Harper: Like, but you know, but he didn't, when I, when we would talk to him, he would just tell us he didn't have anything. We were doing great.

Mike Michalowicz: Well, right, right, right.

AJ Harper: So it wasn't actually, he wasn't actually challenging us.

Mike Michalowicz: No, he wasn't challenging Kaushiuk. But we, we also didn't bring him in at that stage. He was willing to, when we were ideating about a book, come to that he had an accident. And when the, we were, I think it was when we had the bear incident, I think that was the trip he was willing to come, but nonetheless.

AJ Harper: Okay. You have to ask him.

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Mike Michalowicz: Have to assert, you have to, you have, you have to assert yourself.

AJ Harper: Yeah. Don't you know, another reason not to think of them, publisher as your boss is, you know. Yeah. If you think it's your boss, then you're afraid to ask for anything.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. You know, and the funny thing is with marketing, it's, it's constantly, it's constant reframe among authors, like publishers do no marketing for you. And while it's true, they do have outlets that are your best marketing, but you have to access it. The biggest thing is the network of other authors. And with the traditional publishers, a little more difficult.

They're very protective effectively of their authors. But even yesterday, I was in contact with Noah. I said, Hey, I want, there's an author in personal finance I wanna talk to. Can you make an introduction? And they're working it for me. It's going through their protocol. But they're doing it. And it's a massive resource that's overlooked.

It's fellow authors with your imprint, with your publisher. They can give you access to them.

AJ Harper: Will, I just wanna correct you on one thing. They actually do marketing support, but it's behind the scenes and it's industry based.

Mike Michalowicz: That's right. That's right.

AJ Harper: So you're not going to see it, so you think they're doing nothing. And because they're terrible communicators, as I said in my speech at Heroic yesterday, terrible, terrible, terrible communicators. Not likely to change anytime soon. You don't know the things they're doing. So you assume because it's not front facing marketing that they're doing zero. And they haven't explained to you what they're doing or how you can help in any way.

So you feel

Mike Michalowicz: abandoned.

AJ Harper: Abandoned. They're doing, they did, they did nothing for me. How many times do I hear that right? They did, but it wasn't. What you wanted and you didn't see it and they didn't tell you about it. 'cause they're terrible communicators.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, that is.

AJ Harper: They're not good collaborators.

Mike Michalowicz: No.

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AJ Harper: They can collaborate on the stuff they know to do. But I think it's important to note for Natalie and anybody who's wondering about this. Every, the, you are collaborating the whole way in publishing. We said publishing is a team sport. You, if you have an agent, you're collaborating with your agent to try and get, improve the proposal so she can pitch it.

When you get your editor, you're collaborating with them to make sure that they can actually secure the deal. Then you're collaborating with them on the editorial collaborating. It's sorta with traditional on cover title, book description, but mostly they're just looking for you to sign off, versus say Page Two, where it definitely is a collaboration for all the design things and all of that.

You're also collaborating with peop, your own marketing people you're collaborating with. If you've hired a publicist, if you've hired a marketing coordinator I, I co I'm collaborating with my own team. You're collaborating with your team. And doing it in different ways. You and I have our teams collaborating with each other.

It's just that's what I'm saying. It's a team sport.

Mike Michalowicz: I think someone has to run point, and I think it's the author I, I got a call from a major household name. Last week they got an advance for a book, seven figures. And the book came out and it's been a dud.

AJ Harper: Oh, no

Mike Michalowicz: Dud. So they called and said, is there anything you can do, suggestions, help? And I said, first thing is talk to your agent. And they said, well. We haven't heard from the agent. I'm like, I mean, if you think from the agent's perspective, the agent probably got this, they're 15 or 20% of that, or 15% I guess would be of the seven-figure advance. It's like, ah, they're at the, they could be at the beach counting it.

So I asked this person, I said, is there any threat of a clawback? I mean, that's a rarity.

AJ Harper: That's pretty rare.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, but I says I, because it's, it's bad. It's bad. Like, is there any threat? They said, no threat. I'm like, okay, I didn't think so, but I'm like, talk to your agent and I, there's some ideas to reinvigorate it, but this is someone as your ally and they're like, oh. I didn't even know we could approach them. I'm like, yeah, your agent isn't like they got you the deal and they're done. They're interested in your book being successful.

AJ Harper: Yes. I mean, that's one of your main collaborators.

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Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, and I think the agent's reputation is on this too. If they sell a deal and make a million, that's great for that deal. But now the agent has a reputation that they brought in. Someone doesn't sell books. So they're hurting potentially.

AJ Harper: I mean, there's, there's some leeway because. In essence publishing is gambling. Yeah. So people know not everything works. Yeah. But you know, they still want things, they still want things to work so that they can get a good reputation.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Right. Yeah, exactly.

AJ Harper: That they know how to pick 'em.

Mike Michalowicz: Exactly. So, think about your agent. Some people use publicists.

AJ Harper: That should be a collaboration. It should not be a person who,

Mike Michalowicz: here's a script here. Do this. Yeah.

AJ Harper: Yeah. It needs to be somebody who has a vision that's not cookie cutter.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Never, ever, ever work with a publicist who doesn't have people they can get on the phone that can help you.

Mike Michalowicz: Yep.

AJ Harper: And they should be able to tell you that when they, when they talk to you,

Mike Michalowicz: we have licensees for my books. Danielle Mulvey is a great example. So that's all in. She is, she'll do anything to promote the brands.

Not just all in but profit first. So one thing we're doing is just. This happened this week too. I did a podcast interview and the end of the interview they said, this is great. Is there anyone else that you would suggest we have in? I'm like, yeah, have Danielle Mulvey in mm-hmm. Because we just touched on some top-level theory of leadership and employee engagement and like she knows it all.

AJ Harper: Can you just say the name of her company?

Mike Michalowicz: It's called the All In Company.

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AJ Harper: Okay. So the thing. The thing I think is important to note is she also collaborated, collaborated with us on the book. So we interviewed her, I think twice. Two really long interviews. And then we also had her read a couple of very significant chapters to make sure that it was an alignment with the work she's doing as an all in license, as the all in licensee.

And so that collaboration was pretty early on in development and then also in editorial,

Mike Michalowicz: I dunno if I told you this, I started investing in businesses again about two and a half years ago.

AJ Harper: You did?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Okay. So it's called Prosper Group, and what we are doing is we're bringing Danielle into companies that have teams that are not working out and need to be restructured or need to make hires or something like that.

Holy sh... Cannoli. It's unbelievably how effective that has been using her. So it's interesting how a collaboration on a book expanded to business opportunities and all these other things.

AJ Harper: I think also your, your advanced readers are collaborators.

Mike Michalowicz: Yep.

AJ Harper: They're giving you street teams. They're giving you your feed, their feedback on the book, and you're gonna make some changes based on their feedback.

And then, yeah, street teams who are out there doing the advanced work on marketing, all of these folks are collaborators.

Mike Michalowicz: I called you. A lot went down this week. I call you. I'm like, I God. Oh my God. We gotta find Rick Berry in the book. And you're like, oh, I'm going through it. So you looked at the old manuscript and there's a story about Rick Berry.

And then you looked through the man current manuscript and there is no story. Rick Barry and I looked through it too. I didn't see it, but I didn't know if my eyes were receiving me a pre-read, reached out and said You made a numerical. Error.

AJ Harper: And the statistics.

Mike Michalowicz: And the stats.

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AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: And I went through it, I'm like, I don't think so. Holy cow. They were right.

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: And I was like, it's not a glaring error. It doesn't even impact the story that much, but what he pointed out was a hundred percent accurate and I was wrong. So I'm like, we gotta fix this in the book. Well, hours before Ronnie. From Page Two, sending a message saying, we're ready to go to design or, or layout or whatever. Proof. So I'm like, oh gosh, there's a, there's an error. But it ended up not being there. It's interesting, just supporting your point. The pre-readers are your collaborators. And we gotta encourage that. Like, if you see something wrong, I think there's a hesitancy. I don't wanna be critical of the author.

You're allowing me to you, you gotta tell people, and we do, tear into this. What do you love? What do you not like? It's based a little bit on that book. Read, use, write useful books, I think it's called.

AJ Harper: No, it's based on my own feedback protocol, the questions that I ask.

Mike Michalowicz: But who's that guy that you highlight? Reid?

AJ Harper: Well, that's Rob Fitzpatrick. But we didn't... We do the questions.

Mike Michalowicz: It was, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay. You're right. It's the questions. But we do have people, we did have people highlighting in the past, because I have those records still.

AJ Harper: I know. I gotta be frank with you

Mike Michalowicz: Too much?

AJ Harper: I, yeah, I can't, I don't look at that stuff.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

AJ Harper: It is way, it's way.

Mike Michalowicz: It's too heady. Not even heady. Is this too overwhelming?

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AJ Harper: Okay. There's, you can be a person who looks at, if a person likes this line or doesn't like this line, I don't get that micro with it, you know? I'm not gonna cut a line if two people don't like it.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: I just, I'm not gonna do that. I, I want to know the things I want to know, and then I follow my own system of making sure the book works.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Yeah.

AJ Harper: And, you know, I'm not going to, but you know, if it's, if that's your jam, do it. I find it completely overwhelming. Gotcha. To look at the highlights on every single page.

Mike Michalowicz: Right.

AJ Harper: That said, it's Rob Fitzpatrick. He wrote Write Useful Books. Yeah. And I think

Mike Michalowicz: he wrote software that assimilates it.

AJ Harper: well, that's actually the thing, the thing you want is if this is something you're interested in, he has an app.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Yeah.

AJ Harper: And that makes it sim simpler. And I've had authors in my community use it. Me personally, I just, I am... Listen man, I'm just, I'm, I'm a writer.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: I don't want, is yellow, red, green,

Mike Michalowicz: purple?

AJ Harper: Just I knew I, you know, I know you are not, you, you are barely looking at the whole

Mike Michalowicz: That's right.

AJ Harper: Yeah. All like you're counting on me to look at

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Mike Michalowicz: That's right.

AJ Harper: The whole feedback and make decisions.

Mike Michalowicz: Right.

AJ Harper: And then I tell you, right, this is what I think, this is what I'm seeing. These are the patterns. Oh my God. You, I'm gonna, next time if you do that, see if you can even look through even like 20 pages of it.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. My eyes will fall out of my head.

AJ Harper: But again, no, but, but again, no noticing that. I think that's a helpful tool for those who want it. For sure. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: So that reader wrote back about this Rick Barry story, and we already ex, removed the story. I think you said Kendra. I don't remember when it came out.

AJ Harper: We had a chapter that we had a chapter that maybe had two or three endings.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: It's something that happens a lot where you are working on a first draft and you think you're gonna include all these things. And then it turns out. You've really written three different endings to a chapter.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And so we just, she's just like, chop it.

Mike Michalowicz: So it's interesting as I use it though now in the speech, so it's chopped from the book, but it's used in the speech

AJ Harper: Well, and it's in Profit First.

Mike Michalowicz: It's in, yeah, it was an expansion of it, but basically what the goal was, was to show that when you reduce variability it makes things simpler and more accurate.

So it's just interesting that that's another form of collaboration is your preview readers. You gotta invite them to,

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AJ Harper: You know what I just thought of?

Mike Michalowicz: What?

AJ Harper: if you're gonna, if we're gonna pull that for deleted content, we have to change. We have, we still have to fix the error.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. I may give a shout out to this gentleman who,

AJ Harper: yeah. To this dude.

Mike Michalowicz: dude. Anything else you, you wanted to mention? Some work?

AJ Harper: Oh, I just wanted to mention, I think a really good resource is a book by Amanda Crowell called Great Work and she just reissued the book with an a bonus chapter on collaboration and how you use collaboration to do your great work.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, that's amazing.

AJ Harper: Yeah. And it's just, I, I heard that book is amazing and, I can't tell enough people about it. The reissue had that chapter and that's what made me think. I should tell you all about it.

Mike Michalowicz: Next week, we're week, we're gonna talk about the back cover copy, often neglected. I think it's,

AJ Harper: Well, the back cover,

Mike Michalowicz: oh, not just the copy, not just the copy. Okay.

AJ Harper the whole shebang.

Mike Michalowicz: The whole shebang. But I also think it's so neglected. You know, the most neglected part of a cover, I think is eaten the spine because Yes, which is the most important. Because that's usually the most displayed in a retail store. Exactly. Yeah. It's ironic. Thanks for listening in.

I didn't say it during the show, but gosh, if you have not read, write a Must Read. You must read Write a Must Read. That's the one book you have to buy.

AJ Harper: By the time this in will be out in paperback.

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Mike Michalowicz: Oh, cool. Mm-hmm. Okay. Also, go to [aj harper.com](http://ajharper.com). You can see what AJ's got going on. She's got so many ways to support you in your author journey.

If you have any questions for us, email us at hello@dwtbpodcast.com. I also have a imprint for entrepreneurial author. It's called Simplified. You can email us at Hello. At [dwtb podcast.com](http://dwtbpodcast.com) to learn more about it. All right, let's all say it together. Don't write that book. Write the greatest book you can.