

# don't write *that* book!

## Episode 100:

### “How to Structure a Co-Authoring Partnership”

**Mike Michalowicz:** Welcome back to the Don't Write That Book podcast where you can learn how to write your bestseller and own your authorship. Follow along with us as we give you an insider's view of the book industry. Now here are your hosts. Myself, Mike Michalowicz and AJ Harper. I wish I had like sound effects like your studio does, where we can go. Ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, boom. Because it's the hundredth episode.

**AJ Harper:** 100.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Ha. Who knew?

**AJ Harper:** I actually didn't think we would make it to 100. I thought we would get. We would run outta things to talk about or we would get bored of it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** You know what's interesting? A hundred episodes, that means two years of content just shy by a couple weeks.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** That's remarkable.

**AJ Harper:** It's one of my favorite things I do.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It's fun, right?

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. It's really fun.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And the feedback is so supportive and fascinating. I promised last week that we kick off this episode with what I argue is your best writing of all time.

**AJ Harper:** I don't know about that, but it's certainly my favorite.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Perhaps maybe not best, maybe most impactful.

**AJ Harper:** Oh, okay.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Because this returned, uh, in extraordinary endorsements. Ongoing publishing deals with Penguin, um, increasing advances, in, I think what it instilled most was

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the belief that the extraordinary brings about extraordinary opportunities. Doing something that no one else is willing to do. Can, brings about opportunities that no one else has. So I'm gonna read it, what you wrote. Um, should we set the context first?

**AJ Harper:** I guess. Sure.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay, so this is for the book, the Pumpkin Plan. It was our really first collaborative effort. I wrote the toilet paper entrepreneur. Uh, we found each other through Elance.

You helped me clean it up. But it was a cleanup job.

**AJ Harper:** It was a, it was a revamp. It was a revamp. It was not a cleanup.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay. A revamp job.

**AJ Harper:** But I will say you didn't want a lot of my advice,

**Mike Michalowicz:** not, yeah. But then the Pumpkin Plan was, okay, I, I get it now. Yeah. And it was. I, I still think it's, I can't say it's our best work, but it was effing good.

**AJ Harper:** It's really good.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It's really good. Yeah. I'm really proud of that book. It's the number two bestselling book that we've done together. Uh, Profit First is number one.

Um, I wonder number three is Clockwork. I'm just thinking volume of books sold and translations. Well, when the Pumpkin Plan came about, we, I wanted to get endorsements, but you know, I'm not known. No one knows me. I don't, I can't call in a favor or anything like this, and I list off these names of people I'd love to endorse the book, which were the biggest names at the time in the entrepreneurial space. And I don't know how this idea came about. Do you remember how it even came about?

**AJ Harper:** Well, we were just spit balling all the time. (Okay.) I mean, we're just coming up with wacky ideas. It just, we just played off each other and then pretty soon we had this nutty idea.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So the idea was. My mother would do what a mom needs to do and step up and promote her son.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** And my mother is a World War II generation mom, uh, German, and very proud of it. The German flag waves that

**AJ Harper:** German born.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yep. German. German. Born German citizen until she was, uh, I mean a couple decades back. And, uh, the German flag flies at the house under the American flag. And my mom makes it very clear. It's always a smaller, the German flag must be smaller than the American flag. Um, and there's always German tradition and all this stuff. Um, but we really leaned into it. Just gimme a little more context that I'm a awkward. We—

**AJ Harper:** Can, I, I, can I interrupt? You know what it was, it was, we, I'm, I'm remembering now, it's just who, um, what would a mom. A mom would go do something that a, an author would never do to, to, would reach out in a way that an author would never do.

That's, and so that's it gave us permission to reach out to people. And so we created letters that she approved. She approved, but she didn't write them.

**Mike Michalowicz:** No.

**AJ Harper:** And sent requests to the biggest names at the time, your wishlist.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Mm-hmm.

**AJ Harper:** And it was great. And we've talked about this before. I, we have talked about this before.

**Mike Michalowicz:** We have talked about it before. Yes.

**AJ Harper:** And it was, and it yielded the endorsements that you wanted.

**Mike Michalowicz:** 100% of the endorsements, like literally a hundred percent success. And, um, I think part of this came about, 'cause my mother, when it came to the Toilet Paper, Entrepreneur did write on a typewriter, a letter that she hung in her car selling my books from the back of her trunk.

**AJ Harper:** Yes.

**Mike Michalowicz:** She truly did that. And um. This letter was so successful. We're invoking this again, um, for the new book. New Flavor. With a new book.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. But not for endorsements.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** Not for endorsements for a whole different reason. So we'll share that. We'll reveal it once we do it, but here's the original letter.

This was written to Kelly, who, I don't know who Kelly was like there. It was someone we were pursuing. It just says, dear Kelly. Interesting. I don't remember who. It's like a

**AJ Harper:** TV personality maybe.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, probably. Maybe it's Kelly Ripa?

**AJ Harper:** No, she wasn't a, she was on. No, she wasn't on the big show she's on now. It was a long ass time ago.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Here it is from my mom. "Dear Kelly, my name is Mrs. Ursula Michalowicz."

It's genius already. "I grew up in Germany and proudly became a US citizen 25 years ago. I'm 82 years young, but my friend Gerta says, I have the energy of a 21-year-old. I'm writing you because my son, Michael Michalowicz, he goes by, Mike wrote a very important book I think you should read. He's a nice young man.

He visits me and his father, John every Tuesday and Thursday at 7:30 AM and spends the afternoon with us every other Sunday. Parenthetical. This makes Gerta jealous because her own son can't be bothered to pick up the phone."

**AJ Harper:** I can't.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It gets better. "Last week during our breakfast, Michael told me about the importance of your work.

Based on what he told me, I believe you would love Michael's new book, so I've taken upon myself to contact you. Michael's new book is Profit First." I thought this was for a pumpkin plan.

**AJ Harper:** Oh, it is The Pumpkin Plan. You did not send this.

**Mike Michalowicz:** This is may be modified for in some capacity. "He self-published it three years ago and because it was so popular, the nice people at the very famous Penguin book company are now printing a new edition.

It's a book for entrepreneurs and if you want to know about it, you can use the Google. Gerta says the Google is for {beep} and con man, but I find it useful. I remember you writing that,

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AJ and I, I, I think I did literally wet myself. I have always tried to support Michael in promoting his books, albeit this is the first time I'm doing it without his knowing.

When his very first book, the Toilet Paper Entrepreneur came out, I typed up a sign and put it in the window of my car. The man in the parking lot who was confused and thought I was selling my car for \$24.95 cents was very polite and bought Michael's book. I think that the Google can only go so far direct contact with people like him, and you are far more personal.

I think it's very important you—" This is the longest letter ever. "I think it is very important for you to know, not just about the book, but about my son, the author. So I'm enclosing two pictures of Michael as a young man. He's always, he has always been a good dresser. Just look at my favorite picture of him in his leisure suit.

Doesn't, doesn't he look sharp?"

**AJ Harper:** Doesn't he look sharp? Sharp? What a sharp dressed young man.

**Mike Michalowicz:** The next line is so good. I think this was a pure AJ. It says, I was so surprised he didn't have a girlfriend until I graduated college. Oh my gosh. I, I'm peeing myself. This is so funny.

Oh, oh my God, I got, got tears screwed in. "The other picture is of Michael and the famous actor Ricky Schroeder.

**AJ Harper:** [laughing hysterically] Oh, that's right!

**Mike Michalowicz:** Which is true. That was taken at Disneyland when Ricky went into the bathroom to avoid, and Michael's father asked him for a picture, doesn't Michael look like he could have been on..." [laughs too hard to speak]

"Michael could have, Michael could have played his best friend, or..." This is so ridiculous. Oh my God.

That's a parenthetical. It says, "Gerta says Ricky Schroeder became a cowboy."

**AJ Harper:** Wait, what?

**Mike Michalowicz:** "Gerta says, Ricky Schroeder became a cowboy. I don't think that was a good career. I don't think that was a good career decision, but I'm not..." I can't, I keep, "...but I'm not his mother, so I keep my opinion to myself."

This is so good, AJ.

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**AJ Harper:** Oh, okay. Hold on. Okay. Okay. Get it together. .

**Mike Michalowicz:** It gets better. "Please feel free to add these—"

**AJ Harper:** Wait, what?

**Mike Michalowicz:** It says, "Please feel free to add these pictures to your own photo album, your own photo album. Um, alright, and if you're ever in boot New Jersey, I'd like to extend an open. Invite to join Michael, John, and myself for crackers, for crackers and cheese on a nice Sunday afternoon.

**AJ Harper:** Oh, yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, I didn't think I'd be laughing. This hard is, oh, God. And it gets better. And it gets better. "Oh, Michael doesn't know that I'm sending this letter Right. But his assistant, Ms. Ms. Kelsey Ayers, said she would secretly help me. I know you'll love Michael's book, so I don't have... Since I don't have email, please email Ms. Ays at Kelsey's email [kelsey@mikeows.com](mailto:kelsey@mikeows.com) and tell her to mail you a free copy of Profit First by Mike Michalowicz. Oof course you can mail me at my home address below. Thank you kindly for consideration. And then the best line ever, I'm Mother's job is. And mother's job is never done sincerely. Ursula Michalowicz," it's in a, has her my address, and then there's a ps.

I gotta keep it together. The PS says, "as an aside, Kelsey is very polite, is a very polite, beautiful young woman and currently single,"

**AJ Harper:** Currently single!

**Mike Michalowicz:** "and currently single. I think she'd like to be a nice, handsome young man."

Oh my God. That was the letter. Oh God. Oh, it's so good. I gotta tell you, I hope our listeners are still with us.

**AJ Harper:** I'm sorry guys.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I'm sorry.

**AJ Harper:** That's a miracle that I impeded my pants.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, this is almost one of those episodes. You, you gotta like record again just to get it out. Um. This is your finest work, AJ.

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**AJ Harper:** I forgot. That's just one of the letters. The others were just rid equally ridiculous.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I wonder why this said Profit First. If we,

**AJ Harper:** I wonder, I can't remember, dude, you, were you trying to do a rev revive some of it, because I

**Mike Michalowicz:** don't remember doing that. No. I'm gonna look up Gerber, uh, uh, I wanna do as a, uh, Michael Gerber look up here, uh, just to see if I can find that one Gerber, because one thing that we did—Michael Gerber here. That, um, went even further. Was you then customized the letter to individual recipients received.

**AJ Harper:** Oh, I did, I wrote specific letters to all of the people.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** Based on their name, what they do.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Um. Okay, so I'm just gonna read just a little bit of this other one. Uh,

**AJ Harper:** I mean, why not? It's a hundredth episode. Here's my favorite ghostwriting gig ever.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay, so, oh, I have all the letters here. So here's the one you wrote to, uh, Michael Gerber.

**AJ Harper:** By the way, author of the E-Myth.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. I hope this hap-- I'm just skimming it real quick. Okay. This was to promote the Pumpkin Plant. This one's slightly different.

Dear Mr. Gerber, I'm writing a thank you for endorsing my son's book.

**AJ Harper:** Oh, no, no. This is, this comes after.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, that was the, the, thank you. That's the thank you. Yeah. Uh oh. Yeah. These were the thank yous. Okay.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. So you're not prepared for this podcast episode?

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**Mike Michalowicz:** No. No. Okay. Well, you, you got the, the core context of it,

**AJ Harper:** but basically it was, she confuses... So the, the gag was,

**Mike Michalowicz:** no, no. Listen, listen. I gotta read this anyway. Okay. This, this is the thank you letter. So you, we did one for, for Godin. This is good too. So this is the follow up. So, uh, Seth Godin. So Gerber, when, when he got one, uh, my mother says, uh. Uh, you know, we support my son's book, but she doesn't know who these authors are, so she goes to base her assumption.

So she thought Michael Gerber was the creative of Gerber baby.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. That was what we came up with.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. And we did it for each author, A Guy Kawasaki

**AJ Harper:** Motorcycles.

**Mike Michalowicz:** "I don't endorse motorcycles."

**AJ Harper:** We don't endorse them. They're dangerous. But I acknowledge that you, I would really appreciate you looking at my son's book.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. So, so every single author, including Seth Godin, agrees to endorse the book and then

**AJ Harper:** Now, they did, they did actually. They didn't do it just 'cause Ursula said they agreed to look at the book and then consider an endorsement.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Every single author did that. Yeah. One of the authors, Bob Berg sent. Uh, it became like a pen pal to my mom, almost like it sent her, uh, book.

**AJ Harper:** Did you give her the Bob Berg's letters?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Yeah. She got 'em and she's like, I don't, it just, it's beyond her. Um, guy Ka, um, uh, not Guy Kawasaki. Yeah, Guy Kawasaki sent her a book. Dear Ursula, I have that in my collection of autographed books. It's my favorite one. Dear Ursula, your son, congratulations to your son.

So then my mother sends a follow up letter once she got these endorsements. So dear Mr. Godin—

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**AJ Harper:** I know because we didn't we send the bread then?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, but this gets good. Uh, it gets better. But the point here is for the one listener left, um, this is so important that you're writing. It's not just the book, it's, it's how you engage your audience.

It has to be true to who you are personality wise. And you and I like to have fun and just lean into it. These authors, I suspect, have never received anything like this in their life and never will again. And we double down on it in the thank yous. Dear Mr. Godin, I'm writing to thank you for endorsing my son's book.

Uh, his name is Mike Michalowicz. And. His book is The Pumpkin Plan. His name is Michael, but I am the only person who calls him that. He told me you said some very nice things about his book, so I decided to make you a loaf of pumpkin bread. Yeah, but Michael tells me you are gluten-free.

**AJ Harper:** Gluten-free.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So I just, so instead I picked up a tree from Flower Buds in Nyack, New York, a gluten-free bakery.

I hope you like it. Michael says, your offices are in Dobbs Ferry and that's just across the river from you. So if you like it, you can get more. If you've now is where it gets good. I've already sold two copies of Michael's book to my friend, Franzgerta Deespak. That's her real friend. Um, we grew up together in Stratda, Germany, which is true.

Last week she and her husband Hot moot, flew in from Dusseldorf, which isn't true, but Dusledorf is such a good name. I picked them up at Newark Airport holding my German American flag. I bought, I brought two copies of the pumpkin, wanted to give to them and go ask how much, and she gave me. \$40 40. This is the German way.

And how my mother would say, she goes, this is the German way. I told Gerda about your endorsement. But she had no idea. She had no idea who you are. Yeah. She had no idea who you are. I didn't know you who you were either until I asked my neighbor Francine to look you up on the internet. She tells me you are a very big on the Google.

I'm not sure what that means either, but my son says, you are an impressive, as impressive as Cary Grant. So, so Gurda. So Gerda and I are very. Excited. Also, I want to apologize. Michael does use some profanity in his book.

**AJ Harper:** That's right.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** I've told him that it's not appropriate and he didn't follow any of the corrections I gave him for the book. I'm sorry if you've read any of the profanity, he would not remove. I hope you enjoy your gluten-free treat, but my son's book is a lot better. Uh,

**AJ Harper:** Now, this all coming back. See, the thing is when you're a ghost writer, you don't remember.

**Mike Michalowicz:** No so much you don't remember.

**AJ Harper:** But now I distinctly remember going to Flower Buds to get that because I knew that we had a gluten-free bakery and I think I had to bring that to our shipping party that we did at the Cookie Factory. And I remember picking up the gluten-free bread at Flower Buds.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** It's all coming back

**Mike Michalowicz:** to me now. It's all coming back. Um, so, um, alright, well I'm not gonna read any more of these.

**AJ Harper:** Don't read anymore, but it's, we're gonna make, we're gonna, the fact that I get to write some more and not for endorsements for a different purpose.

Oh God, it's joy.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Joy. Alright, we gotta get into this episode that we're, we're, that's,

**AJ Harper:** we're done. Aren't we talking?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, I know. That's the hundredth episode. We're 17 minutes in. You're listening to Don't write that book. I'm joined in studio with AJ Harper, my co-writer, my friend. Uh, and God, one of the wittiest people I know.

**AJ Harper:** Uh, if I could do that all the time, I would just do that. It's so much fun. Just goes right for your mom?

**Mike Michalowicz:** It's so much fun.

**AJ Harper:** Well, but just do ridiculous things, you know?

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**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Well, I, I think this is. This is our big opportunity when something works double down on it. And, um, I think where the money happened, you know, I just sent you the letter with, uh, some updates with the current context.

You know, my father's passed away. Uh, my mother's now in her nineties. And, um, I think it's gonna be a great marketing campaign and I think we just go hard on it

**AJ Harper:** and we'll tell you all about it once we've done it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, and I brought pictures and my sister sent, um, some pictures. I said, I need some dorky pictures.

**AJ Harper:** Your sister was like, got it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. She's like, no, that's all I got.

**AJ Harper:** Saving it here.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Dark pictures. So let me hand 'em to you. Okay.

**AJ Harper:** Oh my God.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Tell me what you're looking at.

**AJ Harper:** Oh, this is your, like your outsider's pick, basically like, you know, like every you and your pals. That's leaning against, uh,

**Mike Michalowicz:** my sister's. My sister bought a car. That's my sister and her best friend, Wendy Ga. And me and my friend Chris Fordy. But look, you know, I'm king dork. In that picture

**AJ Harper:** with your legs spreads very splayed wide in that eighties vehicle like this is looks, this is, yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I'm wearing a Members Only jacket.

**AJ Harper:** This is, this is a very eighties picture. Okay. Then there's you and your mom and you are wearing smiley face birthday hats, but two of them like horns.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It was pure dorkage.

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**AJ Harper:** I love your mom's smiles so much.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, thank you.

**AJ Harper:** Oh my gosh. She has such an infectious smile. You, you? Yeah. You have like a red nose, like you.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. I've been drink. I got on a bender.

**AJ Harper:** Or you've just been like blowing it a lot.

**Mike Michalowicz:** That's more likely it. Well, we should, and the funny thing is those are the things we gotta highlight. Like you may notice.

**AJ Harper:** Listen, listen to me. This is you.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Is that your favorite?

**AJ Harper:** This is you in an on an orange eighties couch. With a chef's hat in inexplicably. You're wearing a chef's hat. Yeah. And you have a Walkman, like you just leave it on? Yeah. Yeah. Just like with the, the, the dorky headphones around your neck, like, yep. Gotta leave that, gotta leave that on. Oh my gosh. And then there's you, is this your sister?

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

**AJ Harper:** You and your sister with a snowman you built.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. So I'm guess some more pictures.

**AJ Harper:** You, you, you need a little more like the Ricky Schroeder one was the best.

**Mike Michalowicz:** The best. Yeah. I like the awkwardness. Um, right.

**AJ Harper:** So you were saying you admire that I'm witty, I'm gonna say admire that you take chances like this, you know? It's, um, you know, you don't have to be like Mike to sell your book, but you do need to think about the ways that you would take chances.

And I admire Mike that you're willing to do that.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. And it's gotta be natural to you. Um, I can't tell you how many people, you've probably heard this too, like say, oh, I, I, you do it for Mike. Just do the same

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for me. Mm-hmm. With my website design, it's a very unique website, um, which we actually updated last night.

Uh, you can go to [mike.motorbike.com](http://mike.motorbike.com) to get there, which is already a different approach than most authors would take, you know, a nickname.

**AJ Harper:** You changed your website URL?

**Mike Michalowicz:** No. No, it's Mike Michalowicz, but no one knows how to spell Michalowicz, so it's just, it's an auto forward. But if you go to [mike.motorbike.com](http://mike.motorbike.com).

It goes to the Mike Michalowicz site, but has a picture of me riding a motorcycle, which I've never ridden before. And it's hysterical because it's so dorky and funny.

**AJ Harper:** I don't think I would feel safe, if you were riding a motorcycle and I was on the back of it?

**Mike Michalowicz:** No way.

**AJ Harper:** That would not be a good scenario.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I wouldn't drive it by myself, like, it's too dangerous.

But you can go to [mike.motorbike.com](http://mike.motorbike.com). The point is getting to you is other authors have reached out and said, I want just duplicate Mike site for me. And technically you can do that,

**AJ Harper:** But it won't be authentic to you.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It's not you. And then there's a discord, there's a discordance. So, uh, don't do that. But. Whoever you are, whatever defines your characteristics, amplify that. And what I invite you to do is reach out to friends, and this is exactly what I've done from your past. Like when you knew in school, back in the day, and current friends and say, how would you describe me back in the day? Just gimme two or three paragraphs about it, or two or three sentences and ask current people.

And then you match up what is the same. And you'll see there'll be common threads and that's, that's your character, the unchanging. And you know, Mike, Mike always joking around, uh, third-grade humor and stuff. I'm like, okay, that, that is who I am, so I'm gonna double down on it. I dunno why I alluded to that.

So.

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**AJ Harper:** I feel exhausted now.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I'm exhausted, but that was so funny. I hope. I hope someone is still listening. Let's get into the content for today. Did we get all the pre-matter done? I mean, we're 20 minutes in.

**AJ Harper:** I don't, I don't, it doesn't matter if we did or not. We're gonna keep going. Let's go.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Let's go. Today we're talking about, uh, how to structure a co-authoring partnership.

This came from Stacy Seguin, a. She asked this question, she says, Hey, Mike and AJ, I would like to collaborate with a colleague to write a book that serves our ideal readers. I'd like to hear from you both on how to work together, how to structure and share the intellectual property and costs and sales.

How do we share the work and have a balanced voice? Now, why don't we first clarify our working relationship?

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, because we we're not co-authors.

**Mike Michalowicz:** What does co-author mean and what are we?

**AJ Harper:** Oh man. I don't know why I found that so funny. Um, so co-authoring, it sounds like what Stacey wants to do is with her colleague be co-authors in the sense that they are going to have their names on the cover. And, and they're gonna be marketing it together and it's gonna be their joint intellectual property.

And that's a different situation. We started our relationship as a ghostwriting relationship, which eventually evolved into more of a creative partnership. And I would, you are calling me co-writer all the time.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Mm-hmm.

**AJ Harper:** But. Uh, it's not, it's not, it's not like I'm right working in your business with you, and we're writing a bit, you know, we came up with an idea together.

It doesn't quite work the same as if, if as a traditional co-author relationship, and it's also not a traditional ghostwriting relationship anymore. So. We, I don't know. We're weird. We, we have our own thing that works for us, but we can talk to both. We should clarify how ours works and we're always transparent about it.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, yeah. What we've chosen to do is it's a singular voice. It's my voice, it's my brand. Uh, it's my intellectual property.

**AJ Harper:** Your name on the cover,

**Mike Michalowicz:** name on the cover. Um, there's some authors that do. Auth. What real co-authoring is, is where there's multiple people in the title, but multiple people writing the book.

So a couple examples are Freakonomics, um, I was just pulling it up, which is written by Steven Levitt and Steven Dubner. Co-author stylistically I, this is going back, I haven't read that book in a while, but I think either each chapter. No, I don't know if that was that case, but they reference who's writing that section.

And they'll reference the other, Steven, so it's two voices that intertwine throughout. I think it's extreme ownership, which is Jocko Willink and, um, Leif, um, I'm say Leaf Garrett, but that's a singer. Leaf Babbitt. I think his name is.

**AJ Harper:** Leaf Garrett from the Ricky Schroeder Days. Yeah, right, exactly.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Leif Babbitt, I think they, I think did chapter one. One chapter's an author and then another chapter's another author. Um, is there, and I think Blue Ocean Strategy is another one comes to my mind that's a co-author.

**AJ Harper:** I mean, that's the easiest way is to go back and forth on chapters. But there's a, there are authors who also write in one a, we, a general we voice.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay.

**AJ Harper:** Um, so there's all different ways to do it. It's just you have to decide what's gonna work best for you. It's hard to come to an agreement on voice.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Do you do that prior?

**AJ Harper:** Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** To anything else, like how, even prior to the deal,

**AJ Harper:** I don't know if it's prior to the deal, but you might have to try some things out to see what feels natural to you.

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But you gotta know. You gotta know. 'cause if you're gonna be writing a book that's, you know, n the, the overall we, who's doing what, who's making sure the consistency of voice

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** It's obviously easier to trade off.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Okay. There's some, another book comes to mind is the Go-Giver Go-Giver series by Bob Berg, and I can't remember the other author's name, but Bob Berg has a dominant position and the other author has a subordinate position.

What I mean is like the, there's literally a bigger name on the cover. And the Go-Giver series is most commonly attributed, I would almost say exclusively to Bob Berg.

**AJ Harper:** Mm-hmm. He's the brand.

**Mike Michalowicz:** But he gives credit to the other author who's also. There on the book, but, but Bob's the one who's the spokesperson traveling. And interestingly, uh, he didn't want to come to the author meetup. He's like, you know, I'm just retired. I'm done.

**AJ Harper:** I mean, fair.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I get it. I get it. He's such a nice guy.

**AJ Harper:** So, you know, this sounds like Stacey and her colleague are gonna co-author a book and need to make a decision about if it's gonna be we or if it's gonna be, um, trading off.

And I, you know, trading off is the easiest.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** But where but where we're concerned, I mean, we can talk about how we do it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** The, the deal parameters I think we're gonna talk about, right?

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. So you own the copyright, you own the intellectual property. I get a percentage of royalties in perpetuity.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Right.

# don't write *that* book!

**AJ Harper:** Which was actually, that was the thing that you were surprised about when we first went into our partnership.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I was surprised what that,

**AJ Harper:** that I wanted it forever.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay. Yeah, I don't....

**AJ Harper:** Do you remember that?

**Mike Michalowicz:** No, not, no. Maybe it's starting to come back a little bit. Um, I mean, it totally makes sense.

**AJ Harper:** Yep.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And, uh, we, we have a building back list. I in general, meaning the books are performing year in year out better than they did the prior year in general. Profit First, the last six months has kind of actually plateaued and starting to dip, but it could be a short term thing and in particularly with the launch of the money habit, it may go back up again.

**AJ Harper:** I'm counting on it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Yeah. Madeline Island needs it.

**AJ Harper:** We all need it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** We all need it. Um, so we agreed to, you're right, a fee plus percentage. Percentage for life. We have, we self-published the, we self-published three books. Um, and in those cases where there was no advance, you were willing to take, if I recall correctly, a, a greater risk by not taking a prepayment.

But we had a catchup fee. So just say for easy number sake. Say it was \$10,000. It was not \$10,000.

**AJ Harper:** No.

**Mike Michalowicz:** but let's say we agree upon that. It was more than that. But say we agree to \$10,000, the first monies earned on the royalties, 40 or 50% of that money was, would go immediately to you to repay back that \$10,000.

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Then once we hit that threshold, then there was an ongoing into perpetuity.

**AJ Harper:** Smaller percentage.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Smaller percentage forever. But on the books where we got advances, like I think

**AJ Harper:** it's the same deal. It was the same deal.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Similar, but yeah, like it was the same deal, but get different. That was our biggest advance at three 50, I think you got that upfront fee immediately.

**AJ Harper:** almost, almost like

**Mike Michalowicz:** in two payments. Okay. Um, but that book hasn't earned out.

**AJ Harper:** Mm-hmm.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And I don't know if it's going to, to be honest.

**AJ Harper:** And then if you self-publish, Royalties, my percentage comes after the cost.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Right.

**AJ Harper:** But doesn't include mar I don't, doesn't include marketing costs. Just getting the book to market,

**Mike Michalowicz:** correct. Correct. Um, what's your opinions about the deal? I, I think over time we've renegotiated your fee upfront. Which is still substantially less.

**AJ Harper:** I don't, I don't have a fee upfront really. 'cause I'm just taking a chance. So I'm actually not gonna get that if the book doesn't make any money. Yeah. For example, er, I haven't made any money on Surge.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, yeah. It's just true

**AJ Harper:** that that's a book I wrote for free.

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

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**AJ Harper:** Mm-hmm. Or like the Clockwork Revised and Revisited that, that, yeah. Any of the, yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I wonder, but, uh, Profit First has, prophet Verse has been the biggest win. Has that paid off? Has it been worth it, I should say? If you charge a fee... Like a ghost like yourself can charge, charge \$150?

**AJ Harper:** I would charge \$200 right now. \$200.

**Mike Michalowicz:** All right. \$200. Okay. Well, then if you could have chosen... 200 times 10 books, that's \$2 million.

**AJ Harper:** Mm-hmm.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I don't think you've earned \$2 million.

**AJ Harper:** No.

**Mike Michalowicz:** But Profit First has been the biggest winner.

**AJ Harper:** Yes.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I wonder if it's earned more than 200 for you. It probably has.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. For sure. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay. So the, so if that has then what the. Key here is, and we're both motivated to have a book that is the biggest seller. This goes on forever. The nice thing about the new structure we have with, um,

**AJ Harper:** Page Two.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Page Two, uh, that one, the royalties are two and a half times traditional publishing, so the earn back could be much quicker

**AJ Harper:** except we have to pay for books.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So they have to pay for books. Yeah. Yeah. Which I'm, this is outside this, this conversation,

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**AJ Harper:** But so when, so when, so when I think about, when am I gonna see money for the money habit, I'm planning on 2027. And the reason I think that is because I'm assuming that that money is coming after that, the cost of printing.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** So it's a different, it's trickier.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It's a little trickier. It's a little trickier. Uh, anything you would change?

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, probably. I mean, I would never be doing it, you know, for, to have zero for a book is rough.

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

**AJ Harper:** And I think also the expanded and revised editions, they are completely different books.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** And, and I, I'm definitely not making. Like Clockwork. It's,

**Mike Michalowicz:** yeah, Clockwork didn't work in that regard. It's gone on to sell a hundred collectively a hundred something thousand copies. The, Profit First was revised and expanded.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And that one, the thing is we already knew we had a hit with the self-published. It was selling very well. (Yeah.) Then, and now it extremes extremely well. Um, okay. So,

**AJ Harper:** So for, for Stacy, yeah. The thing you wanna negotiate is, you know. How are you gonna split royalties? Um, if you go with a traditional publisher or a hybrid and who's gonna get the check and who and how? That's, you know, I would split it in a co-authoring situation that's different than what you and I have. A co-authoring, you should split those royalties down the middle. And just decide who's in charge. Yeah. And then split the, the direct cost down the middle. You just gotta do it. It's gonna be too. Unless, unless one of you is contributing less in terms of intellectual property.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

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**AJ Harper:** But then you're gonna have, you have to get a lawyer involved because what if you crib, come up with a framework together or title something together, or what if you bring a framework into it that's yours that you had before, and then that has nothing to do with your, your colleague has nothing to do with that. You really need an attorney to help you work out an agreement.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, I agree. I also just question the value of having two equal authors on the title. I realize it's worked very successfully. I'm not saying it can't, but to me it's like a business partnership. At a certain point, one partner will feel, gosh, I carry way more weight than the other person. It doesn't, it's not gonna feel equal all the time.

**AJ Harper:** I don't think it's actually gonna be that healthy. It's no offense, Stacy, but you'd have to have a, you know, one of the only reasons that Mike and I still work well, we just work well together. We just have good. We can negotiate, we can have hard conversations. We adapt, we grow.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** We have good working chemistry.

**Mike Michalowicz:** This is the best partnership I've ever been in.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. So it's not like, you know, but that's rare.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It's rare and it's hard because I've, I've been in business partnerships, they're tough to navigate.

**AJ Harper:** Me too. Ugh.

**Mike Michalowicz:** But in the beginning it feels great because everyone's got locked arms and we're doing this together and we're gonna fight together. But very quickly, it dissolves or it, it, it, it, um, evaporates down to what are you doing? And then we sort of compare ourselves to the other person and it just,

**AJ Harper:** And also with writing, it's really different. So the, one of the biggest points of contention in our partnership was our different styles and the way we do things, in terms of how fast I work versus how fast you work and how I think things through versus how you think things through. And we've worked that out now. But can you imagine Stacy and anyone else who's wanting to co-author, maybe you bang stuff out.

And you get stuff done before the deadline, but the other person, it's really, it's really struggling with resistance or just needs more time to think. Now you're waiting, waiting, waiting for that person to do their part. And now you're frustrated. I hear this all the time with

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people who were, are waiting on some person you can, and that might not even be that person's fault. Life gets in the way.

So you gotta, um, if you're gonna do it, plan for as many contingencies as possible. Pad the schedule. Don't, you know, don't let whatever working relationship or friendship you have, go down the tubes because, uh, you didn't plan for, uh, something to go awry. Because it will, this other thing about publishing is it's really hard.

It's just a, it's just an incredibly difficult industry and the fact that, you know, you might be new to it or new-ish, means that there's gonna be all sorts of stuff coming up that you're not aware of. And then, yeah, navigating all those bombs can be really challenging

**Mike Michalowicz:** when we go through some of the technical stuff that we do to assemble a book.

Sure. So The Money Habit, um, first there's an initial concept and. We dialogue about different book topics. What does the reader need? Now is the most common question mm-hmm. That you ask and that we ask. And so I'll go through my list of here's 25 ideas. Some that are just literally just a title idea, to ideas that are more thought out.

But then we determine what do readers need?

**AJ Harper:** Which book?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, which book? And sometimes there's like two or three that we're kind of working on. Two or three we've worked on recently that we've moved along, we have outlines for, and they're like, nah, not yet,

**AJ Harper:** not ready.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So the money habit came about because the entrepreneur reader, if, if they're nailing it in their business but not nailing it at home, the home leaches off the business or vice versa.

So. Then there was a, this catalyzing moment where I got a call from a guy named Tommy Meow who said, my employees need this. And so I came to you and said, okay, it's time for the money habit. Um, then we did, we go, on the money habit, did we go on a retreat?

**AJ Harper:** No. This is all documented on the podcast y'all, by the way.

You can. Because we went through a a point of what are we gonna do? It was the, the only time in the history of us

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**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** That we didn't just plow forward with the book we developed at Retreat. We actually shelved that book while you continue to work on how that's gonna work. Uh, viability testing things.

That was the book on selling your business.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yep.

**AJ Harper:** And we shelved it. And then you just didn't know what you wanted to write and it was months of trying to figure that out. And then finally we agreed to do the money habit. So instead of going on retreat, we did a full day thing in Nyack, I think, where we went through all of it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Did we?

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, we did a full day in Nyack.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I don't, where did we do in Nyack? I can't remember.

**AJ Harper:** And then we also did a, a half day here at the other office.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, the author office? Where were we? Where did we do at Nyack? I can't even remember.

**AJ Harper:** I don't remember. But we didn't do another retreat

**Mike Michalowicz:** That we did not this time.

**AJ Harper:** No, but that's okay. We, we had been kicking this around for a really long time.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yep. Uh, which is atypical. So normally we, and I would encourage Stacy for you, if you're gonna co-author this. I think you should go solo by the way, but um, if you're gonna partner with someone, go away and just focus exclusively on the book.

It it, you need those distractions pulled away.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** Um, we then write a pitch, and this was in parallel, I think I was negotiating with page two. Um. Mm.

**AJ Harper:** Which this you, you had, Penguin had right of first refusal, so

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, that's right. They did. Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** And we knew they weren't gonna want it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** So we just went into the pitch with just knowing that they probably, but we had to submit it to them.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Right. That was the mutual breakup. That's where I called them to breakup with them, but they broke up with me first and I was all upset.

**AJ Harper:** Dang it. God. I was like, I'm break up. One of you. I know. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** They're like, no you weren't. I'm like, yes I was.

**AJ Harper:** And you were considering other options. But we still had to submit it.

And then that went on to Page Two. And our pitches, fortunately, were lucky that we don't have to do full proposals.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. We had a, a pretty sizable or recognized agent who says, your, your journey with Penguin may be done, but I can get you maybe a seven-figure deal for this.

**AJ Harper:** Mm-hmm. Oh yeah. And then we did try to shop it. And I think there was some interest in it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay. So we didn't hire an agent. Um, I simply shopped because I don't

**AJ Harper:** yourself. You did it yourself

**Mike Michalowicz:** and there was interest, um, but

**AJ Harper:** You decided to get outta traditional.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. And I'm like, what are we doing? Um, and that's where Page Two has been so patient throughout this journey and they were just waiting, waiting.

I said, okay, now it's time. And we all did like a happy dance.

**AJ Harper:** And you're so happy.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I'm so happy

**AJ Harper:** you finally found your home.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. It's just the allure or the feeling of safety when you have an advance coming and so forth, it feels safe. It's not necessarily safe.

**AJ Harper:** It's not safe for you because you're, you have been so, um, just. Hampered by the bureaucracy.

**Mike Michalowicz:** For sure. For sure. Yeah. Um, we wrote a pitch, we gave it to Page Two.

Uh, what was interesting is, is there was already a collaborative with them. They're like, well, we have some ideas too to help you with the book. Um, then what do we do next? We the outline.

**AJ Harper:** Yep. We do an outline. Um, we keep it in a Google Doc so that we can both add to it. But once we start writing, I start and I usually give you stuff that I also need. So I'll make you a list. You answer a bunch of questions, you write some things, some things you record on audio. Simultaneously, We're interviewing people.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yep.

**AJ Harper:** So it's a process of gathering and I think

**Mike Michalowicz:** interviews at least 30 people up to 50.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. We always do. I think we did about 30 this time. Mm-hmm. We always do at least 25. Yeah. And we don't use them all.

**Mike Michalowicz:** We generally do 'em all together. There was a couple that you did independently of me. In the past, there's couple.

**AJ Harper:** You were busy this time.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** I know. I know.

**AJ Harper:** You were busy. This writing season was very different. Because normally we are texting each other every day, if not every other day.

**Mike Michalowicz:** That's right. It wasn't, yeah.

**AJ Harper:** And meeting every single week and that was just not happening.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah,

**AJ Harper:** That was hard. So I'm gonna say, don't do that, Stacey.

**Mike Michalowicz:** No. It's better when, but, but I also feel this is our best book.

**AJ Harper:** It is, but it was, it was hard. It was hard. ,

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. It was hard. It was hard you know, for me and,

**AJ Harper:** And especially because we've moved into a new type of reader and so it was not the best time

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** For us to not be more closely connected.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Right. And that triggered a lot of rewrites.

**AJ Harper:** It, it did it. But I mean, they probably would've happened anyway, but I felt a little bit like an island. And normally I remember thinking, um, God, I, what I love about this is just hanging with Mike and working this out together. Yeah. But I don't get to do that.

**Mike Michalowicz:** The start of this episode was the start of many of our meetings where we just start laughing. Uncontrollably. Like last night when I said more goo and like. I think for about five minutes there's uncontrollable laughter it,

**AJ Harper:** but also like we solve the way we solve problems so efficiently and we don't even, we can finish each other's thoughts. Like that's, that's such a rare relationship. So I felt the loss of that last fall.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Yeah.

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**AJ Harper:** Which we won't do again. No, but so Stacey, I think. You know, just be really careful about when are you gonna meet. You need to have regular meetings. You can't have a lot of months go by where you're not working on it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Mm-hmm.

**AJ Harper:** Um, ideally meet at least every two weeks, even if it's just a check-in.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Mm-hmm.

**AJ Harper:** While you're actively writing.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Then, um, the writing process itself. You, well, the outline, you start asking me, Mike, give me these stories. But you start the writing of the core.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, I start writing the chapters.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** And then we, we play tag.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And I, I write usually the stories. I think most of the stories I write, they're rough and I send 'em your way.

**AJ Harper:** Not most of the stories.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Not most.

**AJ Harper:** Some, some,

**Mike Michalowicz:** yeah. You know, it's probably a bias 'cause I. I can only think of the stories that I wrote. First.

**AJ Harper:** That's right. That's right. But like if there's a story that has to go around an interview or um, an article you send me or something, you might not write that.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah,

**AJ Harper:** yeah. But your your personal stories for sure.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh yeah. Write on my personal stories. You're right. Um, I'll also start, I call it rabbit holing, where. Like, I'll see these like weird connections, like we talked about it and ultimately got cut. It'll be in the lost content, the story of the dust bowl. Um, for example, in the money habit where this dust storm in particular wiped out a town overnight.

Yeah. And how people responded when Yeah. When there's instant abject poverty, effectively, how do you navigate it? And ultimately it just, it didn't serve the book. So we cut it. Yeah. Last night. Listen, last night we're in proofs. Last night you had two points. You're like, we gotta cut this. And we cut. We actually like 200 words, 300 words.

**AJ Harper:** at least. Yeah. It's a lot , a big swath.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Big swath of content.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. It just had to go.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** Sometimes you don't realize it till you see it right there and type set. So we play tag, we go back and forth.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It makes me think of the audio book and when you're collaborating with another author, you gotta figure out who's gonna read the audio.

Are you gonna do it together?

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** When I did the audio reading, um, for this book, this is the first time ever I read it before the proof. So the audio book is done now. Um, but there's gonna be parts. In the audio book that are not, that are not, which I think is cool. It's juicy.

**AJ Harper:** I think it's cool too. Because that was one of our questions last night is, oh shoot, we're gonna cut this whole thing. But you already recorded it and I think that's neat that if you listen to the audio book, you get a slightly different version.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. This audio book's gonna be unbelievable. So there's riffing, there's new stories that were never in the book. There's now content that got deleted subsequently that's in the book. There's interviews with other authors in the personal finance space and there may be even, even some musical components. Do you know. Um, we have a song in profit first in the audio book at the end. It's the Profit First song. Yeah. It has over like 300,000 downloads.

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**AJ Harper:** It does?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. So I did with Bill Litster. He's our

**AJ Harper:** I remember you telling me?

**Mike Michalowicz:** I didn't realize that he orchestrated it. So it's, it's the Bill Lester's song and I'm like, dude, you have more downloads than some like of coming pop stars.

**AJ Harper:** Ah, that's pretty geeky.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Um, then it goes on to, we're writing the book. We go through revisions. We do. All of the substantive work together. The copy work together. The proofreading stuff together. Cover design, like we're still iterating. Did you see the arc covers, by the way? Yeah. Yeah. I got confused. I just skimmed you. I, yeah, it's just,

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, it's just the arc. It's just the arc.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Which we have a marketing technique. We sell that as a collector's edition, I think you know that. Um, then will we, even the dust cover will come out. You'll be helping or writing the copy on that, um, for the flaps and so forth.

**AJ Harper:** But when you say we do it together, just so we're clear, we're playing tag. We're not sitting in a room editing together. Right?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. It's all playing tag. There's this, there's these specific moments though, where we do work collaboratively. Like the proof.

Yeah. But it's, it's tagged and actually in the emails back and forth, it's usually says tag you're it.

**AJ Harper:** Yes. It literally says that

**Mike Michalowicz:** It does. The marketing support. Um, you will, in the past you wrote tons for us. Now, um, you write specifics. Uh, kind of Marques pieces for us.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. If you, if you, you have to, if you really need me, you'll pass, if you really need.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Yeah. We have an in-house copywriter, Jenna. And, um, we actually have one article that's hitting right now for the Money Habit. Um, an article she wrote.

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**AJ Harper:** Nice. So you gotta make that point too. Anybody who's partnering, who's writing all the copy.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yep.

**AJ Harper:** Uh, that's a, that's actually a huge job.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It's a huge job. The marketing promotion. All that type of stuff sits on my, in my team's shoulders. I would say 90, 98%. There's a couple things that you'll do.

**AJ Harper:** this very, very rare. Yeah. It has to be something like one year for one book you had me do a big important or, um, blog or a big important guest post for Ramit Seethi's blog.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** Stuff like that. Or, yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Actually Ramit offered to do that again. So if you're interested,

**AJ Harper:** I'm happy to. Because what I, you know, I went and studied how they like to have those. So,

**Mike Michalowicz:** But you do some direct marketing too. You'll reach out to your community and say, Hey book.

**AJ Harper:** Oh, I always support the book. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So that's, that's a big deal.

**AJ Harper:** You don't even have to ask me.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I don't even have to ask you, but I say, but I

**AJ Harper:** I would do my own thing and my community likes to hear my perspective on you know, that sort of thing. I'm also marketing all the time and my own community, because I talk about the book. Yeah, like yesterday I had class, uh, we just started workshop. Uh, we're in the first week of top three book workshop and I had to happen to have the past pages on my desk, so I showed it to everybody.

Also told it to my entire HEROIC class because I'm very honest about what I'm working on.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** That's great.

**AJ Harper:** And that's another way that you can be marketing all the time, but I don't act like I'm in a secret cave. Thankfully, you're so honest about our relationship, it frees me to be able to say what I'm working on, which actually only benefits you because I know for a fact there are people who buy these books that wouldn't, they have no need for them.

But they're just curious. Because they've been part of listening to the creative process.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And they work with you personally. They wanna, they wanna learn from you deeper. Yes. Yeah. That's significant.

**AJ Harper:** So you have to make those, you know, how are you all gonna do it? Who is you can't have one person, Stacey, being quiet. And the, you know, like you have to agree, we're both gonna talk about it. This is what we're gonna do.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I think you also have to have some discussions, like if things go sour or go wrong, how are we gonna approach it during the tough times. Um, we had a difficult period before Surge. Um. And I can't think of anything.

DI didn't wanna say difficult. We navigated all of it. Um,

**AJ Harper:** It wasn't just a difficult period. We have a whole episode about how we had a creative breakup.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, yeah.

**AJ Harper:** We were done.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. For that period.

**AJ Harper:** You're so funny. Well, we're not just, did you honestly think it was just temporary? 'cause I didn't think it was,

**Mike Michalowicz:** no, not, not consciously, but subconsciously.

**AJ Harper:** Oh, interesting.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Because subconsciously, I, I recognize it ain't better. So it's better to discuss our differences and leverage them than to try to navigate another path.

**AJ Harper:** Interesting. Okay.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** I think subconsciously. .

**AJ Harper:** Okay. Yeah But you, you have, you know,

**Mike Michalowicz:** Not like I'm like a horrible boyfriend, like, I quit you. No, I don't.

No, no. I don't.

**AJ Harper:** Nothing's, nothing's, nothing can be resolved if you aren't willing to talk it out, but. Like any relation, not everything's gonna work. I mean, I've had business partners where there was no hope. There was literally no hope of coming to any sort of agreement. I just wanted the heck out.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** And don't ever speak like never again. So you have to be prepared for, and it always comes down to two things. Who's doing most of the work and who's paying for stuff? And getting the money.

**Mike Michalowicz:** That's right

**AJ Harper:** And so you have to have that sorted. Uh, most of the bad partnerships I've had has been people who felt either I was doing too much or they were doing too much, which.

Yeah. You know, with perception. Um, and usually it's because there was a complete misunderstanding from the beginning, which is rooted in not knowing how something's going to work. So if you can educate yourself above that process, that's key. Here are all the stages of getting a book to market.

What are we gonna do at this stage? What are we gonna do at this stage? And if you don't have, if you don't actually even know all the stages, you're gonna be at a disadvantage.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Agreed. I think the belief of 50 50. Or at least going in under that context is the worst thing you can do. 'cause it'll never be 50 50, it'll never be even if, even if you all put all of your efforts in, it's still not 50 50.

I think there needs to be a leader in each category. If you're gonna co-work together, who's gonna lead this? And who is the authority here? Who's gonna lead that and who's the authority there?

**AJ Harper:** But you also, I feel like you have to match, your person has to, you have to match your willingness. So for example. I had to do, I, I will pretty much do anything. And

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you know that. But we're not getting, and you will too, but we don't abuse it. But think about, think about some of the times, like remember that one time Penguin out of the freaking blue said you have 24 hours to turn in pass pages. The last round.

Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. Literally 24 hours. Yeah. The only person who could have done it at that time was me and I, I think I had to stay up almost all night. I don't remember. It was some sort of edit that needed to happen in 24 hours and be like, are you, uh, like what in the world? And I did it. So you have to have, now that's not the norm.

Like, if that was the norm, that wouldn't be okay. It was a freak situation. That we were really blindsided by. Yeah. Actually we shouldn't be using that term. We were really surprised by, and, um, you need a person who, you know they're gonna be willing, you can't be in a situation where something like that happens and you don't know if your co-author or your partner is gonna rise to the occasion. You have to know.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** They're gonna do what needs to be done.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Yeah,

**AJ Harper:** That would real, that would be a really bad situation if someone couldn't do that.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. With the money. Ha. Yeah, it is, there is this kind of shifting of responsibility at times that's outside the normal setup. I think it was with the money habit. There was a, there was a period you, I can't remember you had some, oh, there was an illness or someone was not.

**AJ Harper:** Oh my God. My wife was near death in the hospital. And then because I had been in the hospital, I got Norovirus from the hospital because I was with her all the time and I remember like, I mean that was the worst I've sickness I've ever had in my life.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, so

**Mike Michalowicz:** and so

**AJ Harper:** I'm texting you wa I have like a bowl, like a throw up bowl.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh.

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**AJ Harper:** Texting you. I barely even remember because I was like, like loopy from being so sick and I was worried about the book the whole time.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Which you shouldn't be. And we were approaching a deadline and I. I took a ball for the bowl. Not the bowl, but the ball for a period and just, I wrote. Mm-hmm. I remember because your comment was funny. I wrote from say Friday morning until Sunday.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** A nonstop, oh my God. And some of my best, some of my best work. And in the end I'm like, this was exhausting. You're like, that's like every day for me.

**AJ Harper:** It's like you were like, I never wrote so much consecutively. I know.

**Mike Michalowicz:** My hands were like bleeding tears coming down.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. So anyway, Stacy, own your stuff. Get. Contingency plans in order, educate yourself about every stage, figure out how, who's gonna handle what. It would also be really terrible to discover that you've, that you've decided to co-author a book with someone who doesn't wanna market it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** That would be terrible.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. And, and my ask for Stacy, and also this is for other authors consider doing your own books. Yeah. Just do your own books. I, I think. I think you'll actually be better off in the long run and, and have more confidence in yourself than, than otherwise. Alright. Uh, next episode is gonna be about navigating disagreements with your editor. Or editors. Um, I, I should have said this earlier on, I wanna invite people to go to [ajharper.com](http://ajharper.com). Listen, if you love the Gerta letters when we started out, imagine what you can do when you work with AJ personally. That's [ajharper.com](http://ajharper.com). We have an imprint called Simplified. When I say we, I started this with Page Two.

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do you want more of or what do you want less of? You can tell us. We want to hear it. Email us at [hello@dwbpodcast.com](mailto:hello@dwbpodcast.com) and uh, we're gonna be working on a date for a live show.

Shoot. Maybe there's five people in the audience. Maybe there's 500, but gosh, I think it's time. We're gonna do it. This is our hundredth episode. Thank you for joining us today. You know the reminder, let's all say it together. Don't write that book. Write the greatest book you can.