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Episode 102:

Leveraging Author Partnerships

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. That's a <laugh>. It's a funny way to start the episode. I'm seeing the squiggles and wiggles. That means we're recording. And it also means we're at episode 102. I made some promises in episode 101 of a big reveal about that scoreboard behind you. So we'll talk about that in a second. You are gonna listen to, don't write that book, and you're gonna hear about leveraging author partnerships. And I am currently joined in virtual studio with my friend, my colleague, my business partner, AJ Harper. AJ, welcome to the show.

AJ Harper: Welcome to the show. Welcome to the show. Thanks for being here. Never said that.

Mike Michalowicz: I've never, I've never said it before and I've never said it before and I probably never say it again.

AJ Harper: It's just our convos.

Mike Michalowicz: How's it feel to be back, back in your home on the, on the lake.

AJ Harper: On the island?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: We're getting, we're getting used to it. Yeah. It's been a journey trying to figure out how to be in two places, <laugh>. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: Does one become a primary home? Does one feel more home than the other?

AJ Harper: I think this lake house is more us than any place we've ever lived, because we designed it, you know, in New York, we live in a house that's built in 1908. You know, you're always struggling with the limitations of those things. And that's very much a soul place for us. But we do miss New York, so we're happy when we go back. I think I'm just gonna be one of those, those people.

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Mike Michalowicz: I shared it. My friend Greg was visiting me at the beach, the New Jersey Beach. Long Beach Island. And he came, he lives in Colorado, so he and his wife land in New Jersey, and he goes, dude, <laugh>, there's an intensity and an energy here. You feel it the second you get off the plane. Yeah. He's like, it's just more energy, more aggressive. And it's funny, when my wife and I travel outside of New Jersey, particularly southern states or western states, it's like, gosh, it's so slow. Like,

AJ Harper: So slow.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. And, and, and courteous by the way. We, we were in Tennessee, it's like, people are so courteous. Like, what's going on here? What's wrong with everybody

AJ Harper: <Laugh>. Yeah. It's like here too.

Mike Michalowicz: People are lovely.

AJ Harper: I think for me, this place is really a restful place to rest. Yeah. And to be creative in a way, in a deeper way that, that noise. 'cause along with that you call it aggression. It's very, I mean, I live in New York, not New Jersey, but it's the same, it's basically the same.

Mike Michalowicz: Totally. Yeah.

AJ Harper: I think it's noise. It's, it's not even, and I'm not talking literal noise, but you drown all that out, as you know. Yeah. You don't really hear it anymore. You live in the woods.

Mike Michalowicz: Totally. Yeah.

AJ Harper: But you know what I mean by noise? It's this feeling, you know, how many people are around you, even if you don't hear them.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. You can feel it.

AJ Harper: You can feel it.

Mike Michalowicz: Part, for me, it's the airplanes. The first time I didn't hear the noise. So we are about 30 miles west of Newark Airport, and of course there's JFK and LaGuardia that are maybe another five to 10 miles east of that. And you see the planes just constantly going over you. But then COVID hit and there wasn't a single plane. And it was weird. It was like isolating. It's like, there is nothing going on. But I don't call it, that's what Greg called it, aggressive. I, I think I would label it as high energy.

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AJ Harper: It's, it is definitely high energy. I think if you are trying to get something done, you're more apt to get it done there than if you anywhere else. Because there, everyone is working. Everyone is working, everyone is grinding. And even if you're not grinding in the sense of, you know, overdoing it, I think the, there's a love of work and a focus on work and a focus on getting things done that is not present in other areas. And I, I really like that actually.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. For, for sure. In today's episode, we're gonna talk about leveraging author partnerships.

AJ Harper: If the two are at my admire things.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, yes. Right. Because

AJ Harper: We, you know why? Because we get listeners who say, please don't stop doing that. Oh,

Mike Michalowicz: Well,

AJ Harper: Can I say what I, one thing I admire about you?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, yeah. By all means.

AJ Harper: Because you, you usually kick it off. And then I try to come up with Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: I was thinking last week, I, I, what I talked about was admiring that you traveled 19 hours <laugh>.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: And then we didn't get to yours. 'cause I think we were distracted with tech.

AJ Harper: We had cover, we had so much tech.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. You kick us off.

AJ Harper: So you sent me the scoreboard <laugh>,

Mike Michalowicz: Which we're gonna talk about here.

AJ Harper: It's a blowout. And we're gonna talk about it this time. It's basically a yellow sheet of paper. Mike's keeping his score of who found the most corrections on past pages, which is the

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type set version of the manuscript. And this is our, this is our last couple rounds here, and it's our tradition to do this. But what I admire about you is that when I send it to me, because I want evidence that it was a blowout,

Mike Michalowicz: It was a blowout this year,

AJ Harper: Blowout. You would not, you were not, not only did you send it to me without question, not only were you not offended, but it came in a frame, <laugh>, so I can display it properly. And all week I've had it right by my head because I want people on Zoom to ask me what it is so I can tell them, yeah. It was a blowout. And I, you could see kinda like, sometimes their face is like, it's gonna be a problem. It's not, it's not gonna be a problem. That's what I admire about you. Like, you're so willing to take the outta yourself, <laugh>, and you don't care you like you are happy to admit this defeat and have fun with this. And I love that. I love that. When I was getting ready to do that talk that you asked me to do for authors, for authors, I knew that if I just did something to start where I just threw you under the bus completely <laugh> that we would be off to a good start. Yeah. And that you would be, feel like that was great. <Laugh>.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Yeah. I,

AJ Harper: So I admire that, that I can feel, I can, that we can have this kind of fun relationship because you aren't bringing your ego to the table.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, thank you. Thank you. Yeah. So that, I'll go over the scoreboard in a second. The thing I admire about you is the advocate for the underrepresented and I, I think it comes to authors in particular. There's authors I think aren't getting a fair shot for whatever reason and never would. And you take 'em under your wing. I I've been on the call. As you're encouraging them to keep going, you are expecting them to give their best performance in their work. And you've taken authors who didn't have a shot and put them in the big ball field. So I admire that.

AJ Harper: Thanks.

Mike Michalowicz: The so the scoreboard real quick. What we do is proof pages is where we go through line-by-line, word-for-word, comma-by-comma and identify where are there errors. In the book, there's a concept called the Nuclear Half Life. And the idea is that when there's a nuclear contamination, radiation of some sort, that over a period of time it'll be half of that radiation intensity and that same period of time going forward, it'll be another half and then it'll be another half. So if the radiation depletes by half in one year, the next year it'll deplete by half and deplete by half. But what the concept is, there'll always be some radiation. And I'm like, this is what proofreading is. You think you get it,

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AJ Harper: But did you know the editor's joke? No. The editor's joke is exactly that editor's joke is with every pass we get rid of half of the

Mike Michalowicz: <Laugh>. Oh, I had no idea. But that's why I observed. And we think we get it all. I'm convinced of it. And there's also this bounce back effect. We get it. Corrections are made to the errors that we identified, and then more errors are created in the process. Oh my God. It can be, it can be mad.

AJ Harper: That was just this week. But see, this is why you should, you should your next admire me thing should be, I'm so glad you have OCD <laugh> because Yeah, because I have OCDI couldn't just like, the email came in with the second proof. So that's after we've already submitted our corrections and the message says, you know, just look at this one thing. Right? Just look at this one chapter where there might be a gap. We don't, you don't typically have to look at this. Well, what happened? I found a whole bunch of stuff that didn't, the corrections on from the first proof that didn't get made and new issues that happened. But because I legit can't help myself because of OCD and I have to check every single thing I went through correction by correction and checked every single dang thing. What if I hadn't done it?

Mike Michalowicz: Amazing. I would've been lost.

AJ Harper: Always check your second proofs people.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. I, I'll give you accolades. Then our next next episode.

AJ Harper: Good. Now you have your, you have your admirer for me next time.

Mike Michalowicz: I love your mental health issue that's making it. I love your, I love your OCD mental health issue. <Laugh>. I so, so I did is the last few times I kind of quasi tracked, like who would find a mistake and then give that person credit for that. And at the end of those calls we'd say, oh, you know, you got 20 mistakes corrected. I got 12 or whatever that you uniquely identified. And 12 that I uniquely identified. And then we'd also have ties, ones that we both identified. That's where we're actually kind of like high fiving each other. Like, oh my gosh, we both saw that there was an ampersand here where it should have been like a dollar sign. This is the first time I didn't do a paper proof. What I did was I was traveling. And just for convenience sake, I'm gonna do this on my laptop. You actually printed out and did it on paper, which I've done historically. You decimated me in the count <laugh>. So that board is the tracking of errors you caught versus the ones I caught uniquely. And I think the ratio is like 35 for you and maybe maybe 10 for me. <Laugh>, like, it, it is like a 300 to 400% crushing. There was a few ties.

AJ Harper: I think it's the paper.

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Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. I got, I I think that was it. So I'm gonna go back to paper for the next book. Also, I was eating chicken while we're going over this, like <laugh> like one of those ones you get at the local supermarket that they have sitting there warm already. And I took it out and I was just eating a chicken leg and this juice chicken stain dripped on the rating, which makes it that much more real. So I have on that an arrow pointing to the chicken scene <laugh>.

AJ Harper: See, but you made it sound like that was actually an extra, like some, you had your points plus chicken stain chicken scene.

Mike Michalowicz: Right. Which you didn't have a chicken stain on your side. Yeah. So I, I can't credit wherever I could <laugh>. I hope, I hope that sits there for a long time. And I hope it's a discussion point. I I can't wait to come out to Madeline Island and still see it somewhere in, in,

AJ Harper: I will never take it off my shelf.

Mike Michalowicz: That's great. And technically, if there's a situation of, you know, where people are starving on the island, do you have a little chicken stain in there that's perhaps edible <laugh>?

AJ Harper: You, you could, yeah. Okay.

Mike Michalowicz: Probably not.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Today we're gonna talk about leveraging author partnerships. I, I have some stories, but you had an inspiration behind this. I wanted to learn about that first.

AJ Harper: Yeah. So last week I had Garrett Gunderson come and do a free webinar, Smart Money for Authors. I said, Hey, you know, you know so much about how, how you're leveraging your author business and thinking about money in a different way. Will you come just drop a bunch of knowledge? Let me grill you for an hour. So he came and did that. It was great. But he talked about how he's mostly driving people toward book bundles. So he has a number of books killing sacred cows. What would the Rockefellers do? Money unasked. And then several more. So those are, that's his intellectual property. So when he's doing bundles, it's his own intellectual property. He says he's primarily driving people to the bundles. And then from there, you know, they're moving into different businesses that he has or consulting or this or that. And he, he, he really wants, and then he's distributing the print bundles.

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AJ Harper: And it got me thinking about back in the day when I had a fiction publishing company, how common that was to do fiction bundles. But yes, of course your own fiction bundles, but partnering with other authors in the same genre. So, you know, people who wrote dystopian romances could go together. People who wrote high fantasy could go together and then bundle their books because they, people who love fantasy are gonna read other fantasy. And people who love dystopian romance are gonna read dystopian romance and so forth. And then I thought, oh yeah, that was a really popular thing to do back in the day. And it probably still is. I'm not that active in that community anymore. What if we get nonfiction authors to do more bundles? And then yesterday I do this thing called Marketing Mondays within my Author Collective, which is made up of alums of my workshop.

AJ Harper: And Brian Harriet is in there, and we actually talked about him last week on the podcast, but he was going through his marketing plan. He had signed up for a Marketing Monday, and he wanted to run it through and get some feedback. And one of his things was what if we did a bundle? And he was talking about a couple books that were, you know, gonna be page two books or rather simplified, but then also Big Five. And I was saying, oh, you know what? The big five's gonna be kind of hard. But if you got together with all your simplified authors, you could do Simplified bundle. Because then Page Two has Page Two Simplified, has control. It's harder when you're mixing publishers, you know, to do it. Anyway, I started thinking about all this and I thought, we need to talk about leveraging author partnerships in a way that's a little different beyond just this JV kind of situation, joint venture partnership. But more like, what are some interesting things that you could be doing with people who you're partnering with and who could you partner with to do different things? So that was the inspiration. This kind of like a Garrett plus Brian situation where I thought, Hey, let's expand and think about different ways. And also build on what I learned in the fiction community about how they leverage it.

Mike Michalowicz: My wife is into the murder. I don't even know if it's mystery shows, but it's these crime investigations, true....

AJ Harper: True crime.

Mike Michalowicz: True crime. That's what, yeah, exactly. True crime. What's so interesting is she doesn't just consume one podcast. She watches a few television shows around the stuff. She listens to multiple podcasts, she reads books on the subject. It just, it points to what you're saying is that when someone falls in love with a genre, they don't fall in love with a specific exclusive source for that genre. They, they wanna investigate more of it. It's interesting, I was talking to someone who read Clockwork and said, oh, I tied it in with literally yesterday. They said, I, I tied it in with EOS, which is Gina Wickman's book Traction talks about the entrepreneur's operating system. And he said, oh, they really work well in concert.

Mike Michalowicz: I took, I cherrypicked my favorite stuff from Clockwork and my favorite stuff from Traction and blended it together. And oh, I also read Systemology and these other

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books, and I see it over and over again that when someone has a thirst for knowledge in an area, they want to go deeper. I've also seen that some authors are resistant to collaborating with other authors. They, they almost feel threatened. At least that's my perception, that if, if I support another author's work, I'm gonna be threatened. Have you seen that? What's the psychology behind that? Yeah.

AJ Harper: Honestly, I, I don't know if I understand the psychology. I just know that I think it's an amateur move. I think that, you know, real professional authors, they understand that there's a person has 10 books on their subject. They, they get it. They know that's how it is. They might wanna be the number one, you know, in that group. But they understand that readers aren't just picking up one book on a topic. So it's in their best interest to work together.

Mike Michalowicz: I had an author I invited on to, to be on a podcast. They wrote a book that's a *Comp to Clockwork*. They came on and they shared some really amazing insights. *Clockwork* was just coming out and I asked this author, I said, Hey my book's coming out. Would you be willing to consider endorsing it or a blur? He goes, oh no, it's a competing book. I would never do that. <Laugh>, that's how we end the podcast. I'm like, okay, well I'll still broadcast the podcast 'cause it, it serves my audience. And I wonder if it's a scarcity mindset versus abundance mindset.

AJ Harper: That's probably it. That's probably the psychology behind it. It's kind of the same energy when people come in. When I get a newbie author and the first thing they ask me is, how can I keep people from stealing my idea? <Laugh>.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah,

AJ Harper: Yeah. Wrong question, man

Mike Michalowicz: . Yeah. Thank you. How can you get your idea to go viral? Is is the right question?

AJ Harper: Exactly. Exactly.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. I understand the psychology too. 'cause You put something out there, you think someone else is gonna run with it, but no one knows it's the way you do. No one knows your story. I, ideas on the general level can be copied and cloned. It happens all the time. I mean, that's how chances are, the book that you're writing came because of stuff you've read in other books and life experiences. And it's an amalgamation of all these different things. You and I, so we were at this author event down in Nashville that you spoke at. And it was, it's quite an amazing group. In that group was James Clear. And James went up, we had this like, you know, who do you want to come up and vote to speak? And people had subjects and they wrote their

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name next to it on this whiteboard, and you could put a check mark next to it. And James Clear didn't do anything. He just wrote James Clear. And people just start checking it off.

AJ Harper: I know. It was so, it was fun. He had the most most checks.

Mike Michalowicz: He had the most checks by far, by far. So I busted his boss too. When I go, I, because I'm hosting that event, right. I'm, I'm put in front Mike. Well, James doesn't have a subject, but they liked his name. t

AJ Harper: Just stand there.

Mike Michalowicz: Stand there, James. But he shared something that was interesting, but I also contested it.

AJ Harper: He said, I know what you're gonna say. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: And so, but I think, I think he made an excellent point. But I also want to debate this. So he said, identify the top, I think it was 25 books in the category you're writing, and find a way to make them irrelevant. So basically write a book that is so superior that it becomes the Bible for that market. And my counterpoint is, how can I have the top 25 books integrated into my own books, supportive. How can I make this 26th book make the 25 books go up? So that was my counterpoint. Now let's just give some qualifications here. I've sold 1.5 million books. James Clear has sold 1.5 million books yesterday.

AJ Harper: Like, <laugh> it,

Mike Michalowicz: It doesn't even compare this, this guy is dominating the space. So take what I share with a grain of salt. What are your thoughts around that though?

AJ Harper: Yeah, I, I think it's, I think for him it was an exercise in trying to uplevel his book.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: So I think it's worthy, I think it's a worthy exercise for you to say, okay, let me look at these five books, or 10 books, or in his case, 25 books and let me see how I can, you know, blow them outta the water, basically, so that nobody needs these other books. And I think that's actually a really good exercise when you're writing the book. But I think then going forward, you can work together after that. I, I don't think it has to mean that you ignore those books or think they aren't worth anything, or don't connect with those authors. Right. There's always going to be another factor, which is voice and story. So even if his book is definitely what makes them

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irrelevant, because all the knowledge in his book is comprehensive and delivered in a simpler way and more accessible, there's still the X Factor, which is voice.

AJ Harper: And so you're, you might love Atomic Habits, but you might also love a different book on the topic because you just love that author. And is, that's always gonna be the case. You can't really make any book irrelevant because you can't account for taste. You can't account for what draws someone to another person. And I think one of the reasons that you're successful is voice. So yes, you are very good at simplifying concepts. Yes. You are very good at making sure everything is doable. Yes, you're a good storyteller, right? All that. But honestly, it's a huge part of it is voice. So there's, there's always, there's always gonna be people who prefer your book to someone else's

Mike Michalowicz: With James' book Atomic Habits. It's a, to me, it's a very practical read. It's excellent. Then there's Power of Habits by Charles Duhig, which is more of an academic read. And it's excellent. What I noticed, and this is just a third-party observation, so also take this with a grain of salt, is James' book is selling extraordinarily well and Power of Habits is selling even better since Atomic Habits came out. Like it didn't, it didn't, even if he was, if that was one of the competing books, he didn't eradicate the book, he still elevated it. He, to your point, positioned his book to be the best possible book he could write. Yeah,

AJ Harper: Yeah. Think of it as a writing exercise, but not as an authorship exercise.

Mike Michalowicz: So what, what are some of these strategies? You were talking about the book bundles. Have you had authors do this? Is there a timing? Is there an approach? How do you ask authors? What's your knowledge around this?

AJ Harper: Yeah, so I wanna, again, part of my inspiration was Garrett. I know he does print bundles and he fulfills it on his own. So that's a more complicated thing. And if you are traditionally or hybrid published, you'd have to get your publisher in on this, which can be kind of challenging. But if you're self-publishing, which I know Garrett took over all of his books, so he's got complete control notes.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, I, I didn't appreciate that. That's amazing.

AJ Harper: Yeah. So I remember when he and I started our professional partnership, which became a friendship when we became friends, I said, why are, why do you, why don't we have control over this <laugh>? Like, why, why don't you know this? Why, why don't you have the rights? You know, you should be handling it. You shouldn't be having this person to handle it. You're leaving money on the table. So he, over the course of about a year or two, got everything. So now he has total control and that's been a game changer for him. So that's not always a possibility. For example, you aren't gonna be able to get your Penguin Random House book.

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You're not gonna be able to get those. So, but you do have control over several titles. And then now, because you're with page two, you have way more control as well.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. So that's a big consideration for authors listening in, is if you go the traditional route, there are traditional parameters around your book publication. If you go hybrid, there seems to be a lot more flexibility. With page two, there actually is a lot more flexibility. And then self-publishing, you have the greatest degree of flexibility, but there's trade offs at each level too.

AJ Harper: It just depends on your priorities.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. You have to prioritize. So for me, the hybrid solution, page two, and now our imprint with them simplified has is the best of both worlds. There's the flexibility I want, but there's the structure that can support large volume, large distribution, international distribution, great editorial team. So you gotta strike that Delicate Court. You know, one thing we formed was Simplified. So I, I dunno if I told you Ryan Deis joined us. Ollie Richards just came on board who you, we were on that phone call together. You, you helped us. I, I hope he signs up to do a retreat at Madeline Island with you. And we have now six authors and two more that have given us verbal commitments. It's just timing.

AJ Harper: I think that's really impressive, by the way, Mike,

Mike Michalowicz: Thanks. And I'm, I'm really proud, I can't share all the names yet, but I'm really proud of the quality of people We have of every single one of these authors an absolute devotion to their craft and to their community. Additionally we have some authors that this isn't their first rodeo. This is their fourth book or their sixth book, but they're looking for a better solution. So,

AJ Harper: And I'm proud that you have three of my Top Three Book Workshop alums on the roster.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm, I'm, I'm proud of that too. There, there's some people that are, are transitioning from a career or entrepreneurship into caring for communities through authorship. The point we're getting to is we're flying down to Austin, Ryan Dice's place, I think in November. I've asked Karen, December. December, oh, you know, in December.

AJ Harper: I know because my, I had, I, these are my people in your, my community crossover with yours. Well, Brian Harriot, one.

Mike Michalowicz: John Briggs is another.

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AJ Harper: Scott,

Mike Michalowicz: Scott Todd. Scott. Todd just literally just signed with us and we're we're,

AJ Harper: So I know he, he announced it in a, in a I think a live edit. And everybody was like over the moon for him. We had no idea. And we were just thrilled. We were so pumped.

Mike Michalowicz: We were so pumped. Yeah. So we're all getting together. And the idea is how do we elevate each other's work? We are all in the same domain. Entrepreneurship, self-improvement almost, but how do we elevate each other? And so we're, we're, we're spending three days, well, two half days, one full day together just about cross marketing each other. And this is one of the ideas, book bundles but also integrating each other into each other's books. A website that is the simplified website that we all are linking to. And when you check out my books, it encourages you to check out the entire simplified platform. That's one of the, I think we have over a hundred ideas already accumulated that we're gonna start investigating and go line by line and say, what can we do to support each other? Now here's the funny thing is this is a deliberate practice through the simplified imprint where most publishers, contrary to what we're doing seem to divide their authors, seem to discourage collaboration in any collaboration we had while I was with a Penguin Random House was me seeking out on my own. And even self-publishing, it was me seeking out on my own. Why is that the common case?

AJ Harper: I don't really know <laugh>, I, there's so much in publishing. I was like, why do you do that? I don't know. It's so entrenched. It's been decades, you know, this is, it's so much of it is, this is the way it is. I was, when, when I was talking to Brian and Scott, I, I need to pause and say this. I really do. I, I was talking to Brian and Scott and I said, you do realize that this is what Mike's always wanted. Like he's creating the kind of author experience that he wishes he could have had. Like you, I remember when you went in the first time with Pumpkin Plan to Penguin, before it was PRH, and you were so excited, like, can I meet these authors and how can I help these authors? And you came in with so much enthusiasm and hope and, and excitement, and every single idea just shot down, shot down, shot down, shot down.

AJ Harper: And now you've created this imprint. I'm really, really proud of you. This, you're, you've, you created the thing that you wanted.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, thank you.

AJ Harper: And I think it's actually going to smash. Like, I think it's going to be incredibly huge. I don't even know if that's, that's probably a bad slang. I think that means something else. Now, <laugh>, I think it's going to be a game changer. And I, I just have to pause for a moment. I know we're talking about leveraging author partnerships, but it just, while you were talking, I was thinking, I think the thing that both of us are doing now is trying to bring about the change

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that we both want in the industry. Yeah. Like for me, it's through editor certification and also uplifting marginalized voices.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And you are doing it through this new design of how being at a publisher should be. Yeah. How it should be a group, a family, a unit for the common good.

Mike Michalowicz: Exactly. Ooh, that gives me chills.

AJ Harper: Exactly. And I'm just, I'm just having a moment right now where I'm, you know, because I think for, for the two of us in our work together, it's always been what's the next book? And now I feel like it's not just, I mean, we're on hiatus from writing, but it's what's the, what's the change? And I'm just, so anyway, I'm just, that just came over me. And I just had to say that in that moment that we're both working on change,

Mike Michalowicz: There's an author named Jonathan Goodman. He's got a book coming out called *The Obvious Choice, timeless Lessons*. Do you know Jonathan?

AJ Harper: Well on LinkedIn. He's always we're always communicating. And he was just running through he used my book for a lot of that.

Mike Michalowicz: The guy is awesome. So *The Obvious Choice, timeless Lessons on Success, profit, and Finding Your Way*. It comes out January 14th, 2025. So get your copy now.

AJ Harper: 2026.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, I say oh, oh, oh, oh, oh. Am I reading the wrong?

AJ Harper: It's already out?

Mike Michalowicz: I'm mixing. I'm, oh gosh, I hope I'm mixing up. He has a new book coming out. I'm, I think it's a non-obvious choice. Gosh, forgive me. He's got a new book coming out that is his existing book. That's true. What he is doing though, is brilliant. He came down to Newark, to New York. He said, Hey I wanna meet up with you. And I said, are you ever in New York? And I said, yeah, yeah. I'm gonna be in New York. My wife and I went out to see a, a, a show. I said, I happen to be there with my wife. I I can spend like an, like a half hour, hour meeting up if you want if you happen to be there that day, that day. And he goes, this is unbelievable. Because I happened to be there that day. Well, I met with Jonathan now, it would then, amazing guy.

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Mike Michalowicz: I met with him about a year later and he goes, remember that meeting in New York? I said, yeah, yeah, yeah. And he goes I wasn't gonna be in New York. I the, the second you said you're gonna be in New York. I flew down from Toronto to be there to meet with you. And I'm like, that dude, thank you. I'm flattered and honored. You asked nothing of me. You were just there to connect. He's like, yeah. 'cause He goes, it's all about building trust and collaboration. He goes, over time, something will come about. So now we're talking about ways to promote each other's book after the launch of our books. And I'm so far, sorry, I gotta look this up and maybe De can do it. I, I'm mixing up his books, but his new book that's coming out is launching as of right now on the same day as the Money Habit.

AJ Harper: Oh, really?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Yeah. So at first there's a little banter back and forth, like, you're, you're ruining my launch. He's like, you're ruining mine. But what came out is, well, how do we support each other? And what was interesting is how do we support each other post-launch? I think there's so much focus on the launch that if, if there wasn't a match and we just didn't see a way to match each other, to, to support each other and also win more exposure for our own books by working together at that point, that I think the default is like, well, I guess there's no match here. But instantly you said, okay, for the launch, maybe we don't want to do something like a launch, that that's probably not gonna serve us both, but what can we do the month after? And so we have all this planning going on. I think that's the overlooked thing, is that launch day is just one day of marketing for the rest of your life. It's the first day for the rest of your life for your book.

AJ Harper: Can I just say about Jonathan too? I think you everyone should go follow him on LinkedIn because one of the things that he does that I think is so cool is he's so transparent about his author journey. Yeah. And he's very good at collecting data and talking strategy. And he's so, so go there so that you can see. 'cause He's always sharing really cool things. And I think everyone who listens to this podcast should go follow him. I have nothing invested in saying that, but I think he has really good posts on LinkedIn that are helpful for authors to, to learn about.

Mike Michalowicz: He, yeah. He, he's absolutely brilliant. So what are some other ideas you have for, can

AJ Harper: I talk to you about how the fiction world

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Bundles. Yeah. I actually love to hear that.

AJ Harper: I know. I keep wanting to do a “cross the streams.” It's, it's on my list of podcasts for us to do, which talk about, 'cause you know, for a long time I had a foot in both worlds fiction and non-fiction. Yeah. And so I would be ghostwriting non-fiction while I was editing

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novels. And it was cool because it helped me to see the different ways people market and handle themselves. For example. I think fiction authors are way better at author relationships than nonfiction authors. And I think nonfiction authors are way better at the launch and all of that than fiction authors. And they have a lot to learn from each other. So I still think there's, we probably need to do that. But one of the things that, go ahead. I can see

Mike Michalowicz: No, no, keep going, keep going. 'cause I, I wanted to say something about Jonathan again, but keep going.

AJ Harper: Okay. So one of the ways, this is not the only way, but one of the ways that authors will get together is they'll do usually digital book bundles. They're much easier for publishers to agree with that. So your eBooks right. Or you could also bundle with audio. 'cause There's, there's no cost really. And so what you do is you create a product that is the bundle usually for a short period of time, but you could, you could agree for it to be forever. But the point is that it's almost like its own launch. So let's say you got three authors who are all doing Regency Romance and you agree that these titles from this author, this author and this author are all gonna be bundled in for one price. And then the three authors agree that they're all sort of launching that for this period of time and and do their own promo for it.

AJ Harper: So now you're pulling in all their different audiences. And sometimes they would do it when an author say was about to have a big launch. And so then that would kick the, would help them get on, say like USA today or whatever. 'cause They would use the bundle feature. It could that, in that case it would have to be not one product. It would have to be just a cross promotion. Right. But you can elevate all those books. You can do the bundling thing if you're trying to get on the list, because now you're leveraging everybody else's stuff. And you can do it with a, with an ebook 'cause that that will count. So then it's a whole big, coordinated effort of selling the bundle itself. It's its own sort of launch. And that's a big thing that they do. And then that in it really helps too, if you're trying to introduce people to other authors in the genre. So you're gonna get so many more readers that way. And I could totally see, for example, a simplified bundle for entrepreneurs.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, totally.

AJ Harper: Totally.

Mike Michalowicz: That makes total sense. So the book by Jonathan Goodman is Unhinged Habits. I totally had a brain fart there. So Unhinged Habits launches on January 27th was the same day as the Money Habit. It's a counterintuitive guide for humans to have more by doing less. So what we said is, wow, your book is about habits. My book is about habits. Why don't we have the Habit webinar? So, James, clear Atomic Habits. We, I, I pulled up our marketing plan. Michael Bungay Stanier is the Coaching Habit. So there's all these folks that have habit books and we said this, this can be 24 hours to a new you. And we can in one day have a webinar

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talking about habit change. Now we're aligning people around a desire for self, but hitting different elements of financial book a just a general Health Habit book.

Mike Michalowicz: The way to communicate and so forth. So I thought that was super interesting. So get Jonathan's book. Another thing I think that authors can do to leverage each other is if you do live events. So we do an annual live event called Pro Con. Well, I invite fellow authors to come here. And the exchange is this, A lot of these authors speak for a fee. I will reciprocate and speak at their events fee less if they speak fee less at my event. But I'll also buy hundreds of copies of their book and give them an opportunity to give exposure to a community they wouldn't have access to. So this year we have Hal Elrod coming *The Miracle Morning*. I'm always, he's my I always make fun of him. What, what's the term? My I can't think of it, but you saw me at the event just busting his chops constantly. Yeah. I love him. Love him. And his book is extraordinary.

AJ Harper: He's such a decent guy.

Mike Michalowicz: Exactly. Melissa Dlugolecki, who I mentioned earlier, *Scar Tissue*, she's presenting Matt Sch is coming this year to talk about *Painted Baby*.

AJ Harper: Aww, That's great.

Mike Michalowicz: He's a great dude. And we have three other authors. All those authors have their own events. How actually just say, Hey Mike, can you come out and speak in the timing? Didn't work for this go around, but it, we'll find one for 2026. He's getting exposure to my audience that may have heard of him, but aren't necessarily familiar with his book. And I'm getting the same. So how can you speak at each other's with Jonathan Goodman? We're just doing a virtual version of this by having us all do a webinar together.

AJ Harper: Yeah, I love that.

Mike Michalowicz: Do you have other promotion ideas, other ways to work jointly?

AJ Harper: So thinking about fiction again, you know fiction authors are really good about banning together for live events as well, but they're mostly in person. So for example joint book signings and also getting authors to host signings so that you can draw, you know, so that the, here's this author that's coming up and they're gonna do a signing, but then the person who's mc in the event is maybe more known. Or again, books that are similar and doing an in-store event you can draw more crowds that way you can also get the bookstore to say yes more readily because it's, there's more going on.

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Mike Michalowicz: You can do giveaways too. Do I still have you, do you like you have a little tech issue?

AJ Harper: Yeah. For some reason I hear music in my ear. <Laugh>,

Mike Michalowicz: That's your wife getting, getting fired up. Is it eighties hairband music?

AJ Harper: It is eighties music. Yeah, that's But not

Mike Michalowicz: Hair bands, your wife. Somehow your wife is doing that to you.

AJ Harper: Okay. So I'm gonna try really hard to keep talking over the sound. I don't it hear that side. That's crazy. 'cause I didn't touch anything. So it's a ghost in the machine. That's

Mike Michalowicz: Funny. Which is, by the way, a band called the Ghost Machine.

AJ Harper: I know, I know. I don't know that they're music. All right. So, but then there's also panel discussions. And panel discussions are something that fiction authors are great at doing. By the way, if you wanna speak at an industry event, and maybe you're not a keynote order, you could easily put together a panel. Now there's five or six of you that are focused on the same topic. You find something that's relevant right now in the community and or in the industry. You pull people together. Now you're gonna get a yes from that event organizer because you're bullying multiple people together and you're all sitting on the stage together, but it's not like a keynote. So it's so much easier if you're not really a speaker, but you wanna get to some of these events, do panel discussions. You can join together with other authors. That's something fiction authors do all the time.

Mike Michalowicz: You know, one thing Barry Moltz did he's the author of Bounce of some other books. I I spoke with him recently. He's retiring from speaking. 'cause he just wants to change up his schedule to be more at home and more present in other aspects of his life. But one thing he would do is around the winter holidays would have a webinar where he gifts other authors' books. So he would invite authors to say, Hey, send me three or four of your books no at no cost. I will then do this live webinar and I'll hold up your book and talk about it. I'll read it, I'll talk about it, and then I'll give two or three copies away. So ironically I can hear your music getting louder. I can actually hear on my side now. Isn't that funny?

AJ Harper: I wonder if it's actually being recorded. Well, we'll find out.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. I wonder if it's me on my side. We're, I'm gonna do a rebo after that. I,

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AJ Harper: I'm pretty sure it's you.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Me. I'm broadcasting it to you. All right, well let's start wrapping things up here. Anyway, is there, is there any last tips you wanted to share?

AJ Harper: No, I just think, think outside the box and, and look for different ways that you can work together that are less obvious, you know? Okay. Different creative ways.

Mike Michalowicz: Last thing I wanna share before we wrap it up is next week's episode we're gonna talk about what we wish we knew about publishing when you and I first got started. And why not close out If you're hearing this rocking music you're welcome. This is a little bonus. Well, I want you to go to our website, which is ddw.tbpodcast.com. You can get her free resources there. Go to ajharper.com too. She's running amazing retreats and helping authors achieve the next level of authorship. Oh, now the music's getting louder and louder on my side. This is getting frustrated. Frustrating. We

AJ Harper: Have to go. Yeah, we have to get outta here.

Mike Michalowicz: We gotta go. We gotta go get the free materials. Remember this. Don't write that book. Write the greatest book you can.