

# don't write *that* book!

## Episode 104:

### “Accessibility vs. Amazon Exclusivity”

**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.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I gotta repeat the story just so our audience can hear it. AJ. So I, I'm traveling like mad and it's now a lot of speaking, promoting The Money Habit, albeit I'm not keynoting on the money habit. It's like a speaking in lieu of fee, but, you know, book sales instead. So that starting to happen. So I'm on this like, crazy campaign of speaking. I haven't been home much and that's tough, but yesterday I'm like, oh good, I'm gonna get home by like four o'clock, maybe five o'clock and get time at home because I did my speaking engagement in the morning. Went to the airport, get on the plane. There's all these questions about whether there's an nor'easter coming through is I gotta slow things down. Nothing. We board, everything's going, we get right to the runway and we're the next plane to take off. And you get the engine's cut and I'm like, oh yeah, that's not when the engine's cut, that's not good. And then we sit there for literally 30 minutes before the pilot comes on and says, okay, lemme tell you what's happening. Another plane was coming by and saw that our tire was flat.

**AJ Harper:** Oh,

**Mike Michalowicz:** Is that... Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** So the, the sensors in the, the plane itself did not pick up on that. Another plane had to look out the window.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Isn't that crazy? Like, you ever drive down the road? I mean, this is back in the seventies or eighties, you'd be driving down the road and you see someone has a flat and shirt. I got crazy wave. And you're like pointing and trying to help 'em. You pull over behind them, tell 'em, Hey, I saw you have a flat. Like, that should be resolved by now. My car tells me, you know,

**AJ Harper:** <Laugh> On a plane, you would think you

**Mike Michalowicz:** Would totally think so. We had a taxi back to change a tire. Oh my gosh. It's not like a car tire. It was an hour and a half of waiting. Then we're now queued up against

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other planes. There was problems with gates, whatever. I got home at midnight. So it was just a funny experience.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. So you need somebody to eyeball it. You can't just, you gotta hope somebody sees it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. And you're on the runway. Yeah, exactly. So I, I hope that's not really the case every time. But maybe our sensor broke. I don't know. How, how's things in Madeleine Island? Things

**AJ Harper:** Are great. The sun is coming up. It's like a purple, blue, gorgeous, soft quiet day. The lake is quiet and we're heading back to New York. The end of the week.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I, you know, I, I run, including this morning, I did some exercise on the elliptical, but I run pretty regularly and one of my favorite runs this year was Madeline Island. I ran from.

**AJ Harper:** Oh really?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. From your And poll's home out your road. So if I have your driveway, you turn left and you hit like basically a T intersection instead of turning left, which would over time get you to that paved road? I stayed on the dirt road. I went Right, yeah. And went all the way down to, I thought it was like a lighthouse, but it was a house that looked like a lighthouse, I guess.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. At the end. Yeah. Before it turns, before the road turns.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. All the way down there. And during my, I think I did like a seven mile or so that, that would take me an hour and 15 hour and 20 minutes or something over that entire time. I saw one, you know, I saw your morning commute, the rush hour, one car <laugh>. Yeah. And one, one other jogger, which actually shocked me,

**AJ Harper:** <Laugh>,

**Mike Michalowicz:** This woman comes blazing by me, is like, oh, terrified.

**AJ Harper:** I got, I gotta tell you. So, you know, I had these retreats this summer. And at one point we, so we have two cabins. We rent for the students. There's eight students. Five are in this one house down one side of the road and the other just down our road. So you could basically walk up the beach and come up to my studio to work. We had three people there. One was a

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yoga instructor, so this is what these three people did. They would get up in the morning, do yoga on the deck in front of the lake.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Nice.

**AJ Harper:** Then the three of them would take a three mile, do a three mile run, probably on the same road you were on. Then they would come, when they got back, they would go dip in the lake 'cause like a cold plunge and then get ready for the day. And then they would say, walk to school, <laugh>. They would walk up.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, that's funny.

**AJ Harper:** Walk up the beach. Like, what kind of, I mean, does that not sound like a great week?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Every

**AJ Harper:** Day.

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

**AJ Harper:** That's how they started their day.

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

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. Pretty good. We didn't do our admire thing. Oh no.

**Mike Michalowicz:** That's what I was about to do.

**AJ Harper:** Oh, okay.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So, just for our guest, you're listening to episode 104. We're gonna talk about accessibility versus Amazon's exclusivity. Which one's right for you? And I, I think, I hope we give a, a vantage point from, from both perspectives where the wins and losses can be. I'm joined in Studio, virtual Studio with AJ Harper. Hopefully the audio is like super good. We've been slowly getting better at doing these virtually, even though there's nothing like doing it in person. Oh.

**AJ Harper:** Just, just in time for me to leave <laugh> leave the island.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. But you know, when you come back, AJ on November 17th. So as this recording date, it's still a month away. We start renovating my home podcast studio.

**AJ Harper:** Oh my Goodness.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. So I hope we start recording some sessions there. It's gonna be cool. But that may take a little while to get done. Here's what I admire about you, and you can't really see it, at least how Riverside up now. But when we were first connecting this morning, you prioritize your colleagues books on your shelves. Yeah. Yeah. And it reminds me of a Barnes and Nobles, which I love walking through the store. I love the smell of the books. And certain books are turned to face outwards. So you see the front flap, other ones you see the spine. Yeah. And I, I just admire that you do do that. It's a rarity. I don't see oh, authors doing anything but promoting their own stuff typically.

**AJ Harper:** So I've got the most recent Top Three Book Workshop release, facing out, *Alignment* by Katie Keller Wood, which was a USA Today bestseller. Thank you very much. And also this summer we had Dr. Kerry Burnight Joyspan USA Today bestseller New York Times bestseller.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, wow. We also through *Penned With Purpose*, we worked with Dr. Amy Ian, and she's launched her book this past September. And also was a USA Today bestseller. So we're excited.

**AJ Harper:** I actually saw that because you wanna know what's so cool?

**Mike Michalowicz:** What's that?

**AJ Harper:** Now I had to give Sadé the, a new work task. Check the list every single Wednesday. Because we didn't know. Katie was surprised she made the list for *Alignment*. Like, you know what? We gotta we gotta check that every week.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Isn't that interesting? USA Today is becoming the former Wall Street Journal. I think sign in regards to significance. I think USA Today was always overlooked, at least by me. And I remember getting calls from Penguin saying, oh, congratulations. You're on USA Today. I'm like, I am.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. You never even mentioned that to me, by the way.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. I think we have like three or four books on USA Today. That, that Oh,

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**AJ Harper:** That's good to know. <Laugh>.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I know. Isn't that funny? That,

**AJ Harper:** But you know what, because you're a bus, you're a business author, so you value Wall Street Journal. But the thing about USA today that I always love is that it's just, it's just the numbers.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It's just the facts, man. There's, it's just the facts.

**AJ Harper:** Just the facts. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Just the facts.

**AJ Harper:** So something that I admire about you is, I saw this post you did of your travels and you did the audience. I, I didn't really listen, I think you were gonna get 'em all riled up. You did one of those pan shots. It was on your social media. Do you know what I'm talking about? You probably didn't put it there.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, no.

**AJ Harper:** Okay. <laugh>. Well, but in the post you talked about, you know, I, I'm on the road and I really miss my wife. And one thing I like is how you, you know, include her in a, a lot more of your posts than you used to. I, I like that.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh, thank you. Her birth, I was home for her birthday. I actually flew back, was there for her birthday, and I flew out. But we also had Profit Con going on. And so the day before her birthday, I made a video from stage with the audience participating without Krista knowing. I just was looking at the phone and I said, Hey babe, just want to say happy birthday to you. Not just from me, but from everyone. And everyone yelled. Happy birthday, Krista. As I turned it, yeah, it was cool. It was cool.

**AJ Harper:** Profit Con looked fun. I saw some picks from a lot of people I know there.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It was great. I, I wanna say it was our best one yet. We've heard this now consecutively a few years in a row. I, I think we just have the process down. We also had Profit con UK Profit Con Netherlands. And I'm next off to Australia and now wrap up our Profitcons. But it's been, it's been good. Profit Con London and, and Netherlands were both just huge wins.

**AJ Harper:** Awesome. All right,

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**Mike Michalowicz:** Let's get into the meat and potatoes.

**AJ Harper:** Let's do it. But we have, we have to do a shout out because Top Three Book Workshop alum and simplified author Brian Harriet has podcast. And why are we talking about it? Because he modeled it after ours.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Isn't this crazy? So it's called The Time Freedom Podcast. The host is Brian Harriet with his colleague Kirby. And when you listen to the show, it's like, wow. It's the same thing. There's banter in the beginning. They're deep diving on specific subjects like we do around books, but they do it around time freedom. And I was listening recently on a flight, and I, what I just love, is there a rapport? It's the Anti Bro-y show. A lot of these shows when it comes to time freedom, personal wealth, and all those things, it's like, you know, seek and destroy. And this one is participate flow. I, it's just so much, at least for me, it resonates so much more with me. So I invite all of our listeners, go to your favorite pod catcher and check out the Time Freedom podcast with Brian Harriet. And I think you'll love it.

**AJ Harper:** And also we recommend episode seven. Give that a shot.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Seven. Yeah, we, yeah, yeah. There's some great teamwork.

**AJ Harper:** Be good for our listeners. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:** And you'll, you'll learn why when you listen in, think big ideas. Okay. So let's get into the stuff we wanna talk about today, which is accessibility versus Amazon exclusivity. I think AJ we should start off by defining what that title means. So your turn.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. So, you know, if you're, if you're a self-published or hybrid published author, I mean, let's just be clear. If you're traditionally published, you don't have a lot of control over this. But Amazon bakes a lot of incentives into giving them the exclusive distribution so that you are not distributing your books through other platforms. So, for example, this is primarily ebook and audiobook related, by the way. So you, you can give them an exclusive, so your ebook is only available through their Kindle program. Or you can make your book available on any platform so that anyone can access no matter how they read eBooks. And if you do that, Amazon, I would say penalizes you for doing it. It doesn't give you all the good stuff. So they would say they have incentives for exclusivity. I would say it actually penalizes authors, but I'm super biased about Amazon,

**Mike Michalowicz:** So, yes. Well, I wanna dig deep in

**AJ Harper:** So there's there's merits to both. Yeah. Which is what we wanted to talk about.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** I wanna dig a little deeper into the Amazon structure. I was reading last night on my flight since I had so much spare time, Codie Sanchez's book, which is, I didn't say new book. It's not, not that new anymore. It's the Main Street Millionaire. And I, I subsequently met Codie Sanchez was, was on her podcast. What a force to reckon with. She's phenomenal. And in there she talks about acquiring businesses, but there's a parallel to authorship. She goes, watch out for Amazon. So I was like, oh, this is, this is interesting. <laugh>. And she goes, the FBA, which is fulfilled by Amazon. She goes, what they do is they will slant toward whatever earns them the most income. Uand many cases, Chinese manufacturers will, will identify a product that's selling well, come in, undercut it, Amazon will then prioritize. So she goes much, most of those products you're buying are Chinese direct manufactured, meaning it doesn't even come through a US retail, or at least that was my understanding.

**Mike Michalowicz:** But the other part is Amazon will use it to knock off certain items, so they'll outsource to China. So you're selling a mug and it's doing particularly well. Amazon will say, okay, our data shows this type of mug sells. Well, let's replicate it. Let's produce at a lower cost point, and we'll call it the Amazon product line or whatever. And the, and they intentionally, there was a term for it, like shadow. You basically, they demote your, they put you outta business. And what Codie said, and I I wonder if if this translates AJ, I'm really curious in your feedback, is when you become dependent on a platform, the platform dictates your future. The day Amazon says, we're done, we're done. She says, you must control your distribution of your products and services. Does that, to me, it felt like that translates to books, but I'm curious on your perspective.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, I think so. I think Amazon, now I'm, some people might disagree with me. I think Amazon is a necessary evil at this point, but I don't think they should have exclusive rights to anything. I think you need to have a diversified, just like you need multiple income streams, you need multiple distribution mechanisms.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So Amazon represents how much of the market for books right now?

**AJ Harper:** So it's, it's hard to say exactly. And they're pretty tight about their own figures, releasing those figures. I mean, they don't, so it's, it's somewhere around 85% of books sold, but that doesn't mean 85% of print books. So that would be in all formats.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay. So formats include print, audio,

**AJ Harper:** Audio, ebook.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Ebook. There's now some what they call video books, which I don't think Amazon does yet. And it's not necessarily popular, but there's these little popular, there's a little upstarts. We, we worked with and still do a company called Lit, LIT. So if you wanna check out video books, you can see how they did it. Okay. So Amazon's still the big Kahuna. And

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admittedly, I, I buy like, I like to listen to audio books and again, get print books. I would say I buy more than half my books through Amazon that are print. I'll go to the Barnes and Nobles, we have one down the street, or I'll walk through an independent bookstore if I'm in an area, especially that's new, new because I like to explore it. There's one at Long Beach Island I love. The audio though. I buy Audible exclusively. I've committed to that platform. And that's owned, was acquired by Amazon years ago.

**AJ Harper:** Mm-Hmm

**Mike Michalowicz:** So if you, it sounds like if you ignore Amazon as an author and say, you know, I don't want to play their games, and they, they take advantage of me, it sounds like it's gonna be really difficult to sell any books. Is that fair?

**AJ Harper:** If you, if you stay away from Amazon? (Yeah.) If you don't, if you don't have a book there at all?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** Okay. So yes and no. Okay. There's actually a lot of people who do direct sales. For example, there are a lot of people who sell their books exclusively doing Kickstarter campaigns. Isn't that cool?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Mmm. Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. So I'm gonna say this last name incorrectly probably 'cause I don't know him, but I've been following him for a while. Russell Nohelty, he I think started putting stuff on Amazon now, but he primarily sells books through Kickstarter and he'll do these bundles. Right. So there's just the book, and then there's you can get a book and a course, and you can get all these other books, his bonuses. And so just like with any Kickstarter campaign, there's these different levels. And then he's delivering the book six months, eight months later, <laugh> like, he's literally funding the book while he is writing it.

**Mike Michalowicz:** That's so interesting.

**AJ Harper:** And he, he's, I think he's only just starting to put some stuff on Amazon that are more fiction oriented, but there are people who are completely directed, completely committed to direct sales. And so it's doable. It's just, you know, I still think you need your book on Amazon because people treat it like a search engine to see if a book exists.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** That's exactly the line of thought I had is that Kickstarter campaign sounds great, but it also sounds like it doesn't trigger the secondary sale. Meaning if I buy the book and fall in love with it, do I tell the person, go to Kickstarter. Like, it just seems...

**AJ Harper:** Can't, you can't. 'cause Then the Kickstarter's over.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay. So he, in his case, he needs a community of whatever size, but he needs a community that's gonna buy it is, are there other methods to getting the book out that allows that kind of secondary, ongoing sales that's non-Amazon?

**AJ Harper:** I mean, yeah, if you just, you can go ahead and if you're, if you're self-published, you can put your book up on IngramSpark and then decide not to distribute to Amazon, but, but still distribute to everywhere else, like Barnes and Noble Bookshop, et cetera. So you can opt out of Amazon and still make your book available in other, for other retailers.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I was talking with a fella, his name is Dr. Brent Ridge, and some of our listeners are gonna know this company. He is the co-founder of Beekman 1802. And when I told my wife about this, she's like, I love Beekman 1802.

**AJ Harper:** What is it?

**Mike Michalowicz:** It, they, they make soap and they make.

**AJ Harper:** Oh, okay.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Goat milk based soap. And I'm hoping to get Brent and his partner Josh, on a future podcast. I'm doing a, I'm doing another podcast, maybe a sister podcast that's almost called Becoming Self-Made. It's about the entrepreneurial journey as opposed,

**AJ Harper:** Wait, are they New Yorkers?

**Mike Michalowicz:** They're, they're, yes. Well, New York Staters, is that, does that count?

**AJ Harper:** Oh, okay. Because I think I've, I think I've heard of them actually. I think they have a book.

**Mike Michalowicz:** They do, yeah.

**AJ Harper:** Oh yeah, I know I've heard of them.

**Mike Michalowicz:** It's called Goat, goat Wisdom.

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**AJ Harper:** Yes, yes, yes.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So here's what's so interesting. So I, I spoke with Brent last week when effervescence around this guy and, and the energy, and we're, we're talking about how they grew his business. So the, the quick backstory is they, they buy a goat farm because they're, I think it was the COVID crisis. And they're like, we're out of the city. We're going to New York State. They buy a farm. Farm unbeknownst to them comes with goats. So basically the neighbor next door said, I have nowhere to put these folks, these goats. Can I put 'em on your farm? And they say, yes. And the, the farmer says, and I'll take care of them. So they say, okay, you got a deal. Now they have all these goats, which brings back goats milk, do some research. They start making soap. Fast forward, this is only like five years later, it's over a hundred million dollars in revenue. It's like crazy. It's massive. And so I said, well, what do you attribute it to? And he goes, well, how we sell it is we don't go to the major platforms. He's like, we didn't go to whoever the major retailers are. I'm just gonna say Walmart, but probably wouldn't sell a high-end product like this. But whoever the high-end soap shops would be.

**Mike Michalowicz:** He goes, that's the place that we didn't go. We said, where does the consumer go that they wouldn't normally see soap, but the consumer that buys soap also goes to these places. I'll give you an example for that. In my own experience, I go to ACE Hardware, occasionally there's, I used to go to a Home Depot. Now there's a, I found there's an ACE closer to me and I actually prefer it. And right when you check out, there's this thing called like Sasquatch soap or something like that. <Laugh>. But it's like, you know, it's very quote manly. 'cause That's what it even says on it, the Manly soap. And so I'm like, oh, I'll buy this. And sure enough, I'm, I've purchased soap at an Ace Hardware. And Brent was sharing goes, that's the marketing where the real opportunity is dominate these spaces where no one else is willing to go. And you'll build some reputation for excellence. The big platforms will come to you and beg for you. And now they are on, I guess like QVC and, and these different platforms. Because you started there. And I, so I'm wondering, is there an opportunity for authors to build a presence? And maybe you already indicated that with the Kickstarter campaign and do this absent the big platforms, and have the big platforms come to you?

**AJ Harper:** I mean, Amazon's not gonna come to you.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay. Yeah. They're that big. They don't

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. Yeah. No, they don't come to anybody, you know. So it's, it's not gonna be like that. And it's, it's easy enough to get your stuff on Amazon if you want to, and you can pull it down if you want to. It's not a big deal. But yeah, I think there's, I think the, the, you know, we're getting to the, the sum up early, but I really do feel, I'm gonna go on the accessibility side. Having your book available in as many places as possible is better than Amazon exclusivity. And for a lot of the reasons you're just saying, because you wanna be in different places that, I mean, let's be real, you're not, if you're only on Amazon and you can't get the book anywhere else, is

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your local bookstore going to be able to carry it? No. They're not going to buy a book from Amazon to carry in their store.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah.

**AJ Harper:** Now Amazon does have expanded distribution. You can, you can opt for that, but it is more limited than, Ingram Spark. So, you know, if you want to try and go into different markets, you want some direct sales, some Amazon, et cetera you know, I think that's the, the better option. But we can go into all the details of the different formats.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, I would like to do that. I'd like to get a sense for the pros and cons of the exclusivity. May maybe that, is that the starting point for discussing

**AJ Harper:** Amazon? Yeah. I mean, we'll start with print sales. 'cause There's no Amazon exclusivity for print sales. So they don't give, they don't give you any incentives for that.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So let me make sure I'm a hundred percent clear. That means soft cover, hardcover. If I sell through Amazon and choose to also sell it through, we'll say Barnes and Nobles or some other retailer, local independent store right here in Boonton. And Amazon will not penalize me, so to speak, if I'm doing that.

**AJ Harper:** No. And there's no real incentive. So either, whether you call it a penalizing or incentive, however language you wanna use, they're not say, giving you a better royalty or anything like that. Or a better promotion. The one thing I'll say that I have seen, and I can't prove that this is a thing, and don't sue me Amazon, but <laugh>, one thing I've seen is that if you don't also have Amazon KDP, and let me, let me back up. If you're gonna self-publish, you've got Ingram Spark. Ingram is the largest distributor in the world, and it will allow you to distribute to more than 95 countries. All the retailers, including Amazon. Then you have Amazon, KDP, which used to be called Create Space. And then they, they rebranded it. So you, you can do expanded distribution through Amazon KDP, but it doesn't have the same range as Ingram Spark. Here's the thing. Sometimes I see with Ingram Spark people that it will say their book is low stock or out of stock, but if you also add KDP so that you have two, you have IngramSpark and KDP distribution, then it's less likely to show out of stock because Amazon can print it quickly.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So I didn't realize you, you can do KDP and Ingram at the same time.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, no, just, I want one asterisk. If you are listening to this episode, and it is months or years from now, and you are listening, I, I want you to understand that Amazon changes the rules constantly, all the time.

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**Mike Michalowicz:** Constantly.

**AJ Harper:** And so what I'm saying do not <laugh>, if this is six months later, it could all be different, but we'll say at this time, which is October 14th, 2025. Yes. What I advise self-publishing students, that those students of mine that opt for that option, what I say is use Ingram Spark for pre-order. Because by the way, Amazon, KDP for print, you cannot do pre-order. There's no pre-order option. So you can do pre-order with Ingram Spark. There's a lot you have to do to figure that out. I'm not gonna get into the technicalities of that right now, but if you wanna do pre-order and we know how important pre-order is, then what I would recommend is an IngramSpark for pre-order and then say maybe like two days before your release, also throw it up on Amazon KDP, so that by the time you have the release, it's also available. Amazon, KDP, it's seamless. No, no customer sees anything different except that now Amazon can print the book too. Then you are less likely to say outta stock.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Did you hear why Amazon ditched the name Create Space and went to KDP?

**AJ Harper:** I don't think I knew that.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Oh. Because Amazon does not create space for anyone. <Laugh>.

**AJ Harper:** It's true. I mean, they ditched that, they ditched Amazon Advantage, which as you know, you still have an account, I'm sure, because you're allowed to keep it. But anybody who

**Mike Michalowicz:** That was a great platform. So, so, and then, which shows the evolution of Amazon and how quickly it moves. So Advantage was you could literally stock inventory at the Amazon warehouse. Yeah. And it's, and now it's print on demand as their orientation. What's interesting now with pricing, this is in the similar veins with books as they used to Amazon start adjusting the pricing to position themselves competitively. So there's a retail price, the MSRP, if you will, for say \$30. But then there's the retailer's actual price, and Amazon has the right to adjust it to any level they want, as long as they pay you the percentage they've agreed to upfront, right?

**AJ Harper:** Mm-Hmm <affirmative>.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So they don't do that anymore. The discount. So it used to start off at 30 bucks, and you see over time, based upon demand and their algorithm tweaking, your book on launch day may be at \$17, which is very appealing to a consumer when you see a retail price and a discount. But now I don't see it on any books including *The Money Habit*, which, which we have out there now.

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**AJ Harper:** You're not seeing a discount?

**Mike Michalowicz:** No, it's, it's, it's, msrp is 29 and it's sticking with 29, and we've moved quite a few. The other note I made is there was an author who reports to have the Guinness Book of World Records this year, and most books sold in history. And it was Alex Ramzi who did not sell his book, which I think it was called A Hundred Million Dollar Plan, or I, I don't know. It was a new book.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. He just had that big launch.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Not on Amazon at all.

**AJ Harper:** No. Mm-mm.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So, you know, if someone can sell the most books in history and not do Amazon, there are ways, there's ways to achieve it. I mean,

**AJ Harper:** Yes, he did. You know, it took him a decade to build up to that.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I'm just saying. Yeah, he Yeah, of course, of course. He didn't launch without any recognition and without a community. He, he, he built all that, but he did it minus Amazon.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah. So for eBooks, it's different though. If you, so if you want to give Amazon exclusivity, it does not impact your royalty rates. The only thing that impacts your royalty rates are the price of the ebook. So you have to price your ebook between 2 99 and 9 99 to get the 70% royalty. Otherwise it's 35%. And just a little asterisk. In some territories, it's still not 70%. And that's just because of whatever the laws in those countries, et cetera. But primarily 70%, if you price it within the 2 99 to 9 99 window, that does not matter whether you give Amazon exclusivity or not. You're still gonna get that same royalty restructure. What is gonna change is if you give Amazon exclusivity through KDP Select for which you have to be in for at least 90 days, then you're gonna get, they'll, they might promote it more. They're gonna give you options where you can be part of Amazon deals.

**AJ Harper:** They're gonna, the algorithm likes you better. So they just, it's like favorite child, favorite child is what it is. But that also means your book is not gonna be available on other platforms. So if you want your book to be available on other plat, like for example, in Canada, they're not reading Kindle, they're reading on Kobo. So do you care about that? Do you wanna make sure that your book is accessible? Whoever Kobo readers? I do. I like to have accessibility. So then you would wanna also make your book available on Draft 2Digital. That's draft the number two and digital, and we'll put all this in the show notes. And then that put, lets it go to all

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different platforms everywhere, including Amazon, if you just wanna dump it there. But I like having both and KDP ebook account and draft2digital. I like to have that control.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah, it's nice that duality. I, I, you know, I mistakenly thought it was pick a platform for distribution, and that's the only platform I didn't realize. You could choose multiple.

**AJ Harper:** You can choose multiple. Yeah. And you can also pick and choose on draft to digital. And they used, it used to be draft2digital and Smashwords, but draft to digital bought Smashwords. And so now it's draft to digital. And then Amazon, KDP.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Before we dig into audio, I, I want to invite our readers to get a must read book, which is called Write a must-read, because I didn't say that in the beginning. AJ and I ran into a author recently, and I, the name slips my mind, but perhaps because now I'm hearing this so regularly, they said, oh, I read write a must read cover to cover multiple times. And I'm using it almost as a workbook now as they're going through their book. I I can't remember who it was. It just crossed my mind too.

**AJ Harper:** Thanks.

**Mike Michalowicz:** If you don't have Right, I must read Get it. Also the Money Habit.

**AJ Harper:** Yeah, I was gonna say, can we talk about the money Habit? We need some pre-orders, man.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. We need pre-orders, man. And hey, as a listener to show, I'm gonna ask you a major favor right now. If you go to your platform of choice and pre-order the Money Habit, what it does is all these online platforms and retail stores too, it triggers an algorithm or at least a measurement on retail stores that this book is having demand and it positions them to order more books, promote the books more aggressively. Nothing draws a crowd like a crowd. So if you're willing to support me I would love for you to get a copy of The Money Habit right now and put on pre-order and send us an email at [hello@dwtbpodcast.com](mailto:hello@dwtbpodcast.com) just to tell us you did this. So I can give you a thanks, you and a shout out, thank you. Hey, thank you. And a shout out on the show. Plus I'm so proud of the work that AJ and I did on this book. I think it's gonna change perhaps your life, including someone else.

**AJ Harper:** I'm I'm certain it will, so I think even more than Profit First. Yeah, I really do.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. And it oh, and, and here's another thing that's cool, aj. And this is a marketing tip for our listeners. Set structures where you're inviting your readers if you have an existing book to buy your existing book with your new launched book. So we're encouraging

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people to pick up Profit First and the Money Habit Together. And sometimes Opportunity Strikes. Now this was an Amazon play, but Amazon dropped the price for Profit first down to \$8, which.

**AJ Harper:** What?

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. \$8 for a brand new hardcover for a period of time. And I think the MSRP on that is also \$29, like the Money Habit. So we told people, we said, I don't know, we don't know how long it's gonna go. Amazon does not talk with us. We just noticed this. And historically, when they do this, it's roughly 24 hours before it without announcement goes away.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So we said, if you wanna get now, and we invite you to get the Money Habit, which is only selling at its retail price, so 29 bucks, but when you add 29 plus eight, that's 37, and you divide that by two, it's roughly \$18.50 a book. You're, you're coming out ahead. And selfishly, when the books are bought together, it gets the bought together box. And sure enough when you go to The Money Habit, right now, you see the Money Habit bought frequently with Profit First. When you go to the Profit First page, it's not there yet. But if we motivate this and encourage this enough, I think it's just a matter of time. These books become sister books in that regard.

**AJ Harper:** Love that. Love that.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay. So tell me about the audio platforms. Because this also confuses me.

**AJ Harper:** Oh, God. Okay. Listen, <laugh>,

**Mike Michalowicz:** That's a good way to start this segment. Oh, geez.

**AJ Harper:** Well, okay, so <laugh>, I just have to wrap my head. All right. It, we don't actually know how things are gonna shake out now, but you know, that audible, which is owned by Amazon and uses the platform ACX for, you know, uploading and all of that, that has been this model of credits, right? And so they are basing how they're paying royalties partially due to credits. But Spotify is now in the audiobook game. They bought FindAway Voices, they're gonna change the name to all that. I don't know how it's gonna shake out. So Spotify is streaming now Amazon is gonna compete with Spotify, and they have a new royalty structure that you can opt into that involve streaming. So now we're gonna have streaming on both sides, and it remains to be seen if this is gonna be a good thing or a bad thing. So I really can't say definitively and honestly, Amazon's structure is so convoluted. You could not, you, it would, you'd have to be like, I don't know, a mathematician to be able to figure out how am I getting paid? Yeah. Seriously. And I sometimes I wonder if they're doing that on purpose. Again, don't sue me, Amazon, I'm just curious, not making a statement, but is it deliberately complicated in obtuse? I I, I, I'm starting to wonder, I think

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**Mike Michalowicz:** You can stick an AI model on it and it could figure it out. Maybe,

**AJ Harper:** Maybe, but honestly, it's, it's a, it's crazy right now. So, so let's be clear right now on if, when you are self-published or hybrid published, you can choose to give Audible exclusivity or ACX exclusivity, which is Amazon, and there are some benefits to that. You're gonna get a different royalty structure. You are also gonna get other things. Like you can do pre-order if you give them exclusivity, but you can't do pre-order. If you don't. You're gonna get free credits you can give to people. You're gonna get other little incentives if you give Amazon exclusivity. But the downside is, again, accessibility because people aren't just listening to Audible. In fact, you have to download the Audible app. You have to be an adopter of Audible. Whereas now Findaway Voices was purchased by Spotify, that's already on, you're listening to your music, then you shift over to your podcast, then you shift over to your audiobook.

**AJ Harper:** And what they've seen in the last year or so is a 10% increase in audiobook consumption on Spotify. And more people are listening to audiobooks on Spotify now because it's, they already have the platform open.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. It's fluid.

**AJ Harper:** So it's way more accessible. So I think, again, it would be foolish to give Amazon exclusivity when more and more people are using streaming. And when Amazon is switching over to a streaming platform, again, it's not, you have to opt in right now to this new royalty structure. It's also gonna change. It's gonna be be a 50/30 model and meaning 50, 50% royalty. And it used to be, I wanna say 30 or I gotta, I gotta look it up. But anyway, the royalty structure's changing over there. You can opt into this. So my advice is to accessibility. And the other reason I say accessibility for audiobook is that we know that we're getting double digit increases in audiobook consumption. We've had that for years, literally over a decade. It's gonna keep happening. And we also know that audio books are not just about the money that you get from it, the royalties, but the fact that they also sell print books. So you have to think about audio books as a marketing tool. If you don't have an audiobook, it's, I think it's not helping you. If you do have an audiobook, a person is very often going to also buy the print book. So accessibility is really important.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. I, so I have some strong opinions here specifically of where it's going. And my opinion is that musicians have blazed the path and we authors are just falling behind them, and it's likely to replicate that. So if we look at the musician's journey, it was a vinyl cut record mine with a scratch in a certain spot in yours, two aj. Right. You'd know where that pop was. And when you heard on the radio, it's like they, they forgot the scratch, and you had your set of vinyls, and you could only listen to a limited amount of music unless it was radio. Then vinyls ultimately went to CDs, and then they went into download and demand. But what happened is you no longer downloaded full albums. You downloaded this hit songs, and then it

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moved on to streaming. And streaming was a model where it, this, the algorithm is recommending stuff to you, or you're creating your own kind of loops.

**Mike Michalowicz:** So you're making your own album, if you will, with the 50 or a hundred or a thousand songs that you want. The royalties, my understanding is bottomed out. Like they make pennies a song as opposed to what they used to make in the past. But there's been an, an increased revenue opportunity for live performances. So the revenue shifted to a new area. Therefore, my sense is history repeats itself. We authors are going the same path. Our album was our book. And you people used to buy that print book. Well, since it became digitized, people can download what they want. But I think as we and, and, and move to chapters much more, you don't have to buy all the chapters. You can just download the chapter you want effectively by skipping to that section. And I, I think we're gonna become hit songs or hit elements.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Maybe the, the book summary may replace the book itself. I think we're gonna move to dynamic reading where people don't read linearly from the beginning to the end are gonna go to the section that serves their immediate need, desire, interest. And I think royalties will continue to decline. But I think. The revenue then will increase on public performance, human connection interface, interfacing with people in a different new way. So that's where I'm optimistic, in regards to accessibility. When you're talking about that, I was thinking, oh, you know, what it is, is reader first, that's your teaching. What serves the reader the best, irrespective of your short term earnings. Now, just to give one last piece of context, you know, on royalties we collect gross meaning author royalties, you and I share in it, but gross is six figures. When there was, when we were doing advances in the past, it could be, you know, upper, lower six figures, like the threes or fours, even in a given year, a hundred thousand.

**Mike Michalowicz:** But royalties and earnings are declining. We move to a hybrid model where we may earn some more. So that may come back a little bit, but there, there was a time I would've said, you know what, if you just write an amazing book and it sells amazingly well, you can support a very comfortable lifestyle for a long period of time. I, I question if a book alone is enough, based upon where these models are going, especially the digitization of books. It's forcing the world these down enough that I think we also have to become performers. So there's my,

**AJ Harper:** I mean, I think it depends on the genre. I mean, if you're talking about some fiction, they're blowing it out of the water. Yeah. They're living very comfortably.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. True. Okay. My girl, Colleen Hoover, who has another book in the top 100, the, I also wonder,

**AJ Harper:** But I mean, she's, she's a but you have to understand there are a ton of fiction authors who I'm gonna say are better writers than her. Yeah, yeah. And they have wonderful series. And they're also blowing it out. You're just not hearing about them. But they have

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massive following. Fiction is has a, is a huge opportunity. And it's harder with nonfiction to have a breakout.

**Mike Michalowicz:** There's this behavioral concept. I, I don't remember the term of it, but it's the paradox of choice or something. But basically, the more options put in front of us, the more we have analysis paralysis and we refine our considerations. I noticed just listening to music, I, I listen to the same set of music. I, I I'm really expanding beyond and I've hit my limit and maybe it's a thousand songs, but just keep rehashing these thousand songs. Now I have access, we all have access to hundreds of millions, billions of songs, but we stay in this very narrow area. And I wonder if that's a threat for books as everything becomes available. Do people listen to their three hits over and over and over again? Are they gonna continue to expand?

**AJ Harper:** I don't know. No. I think if it's prescriptive nonfiction, they're gonna continue to expand. 'cause They're trying to solve the problem.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I like that. Any final thoughts before we wrap things up here?

**AJ Harper:** Be accessible.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. Reader first.

**AJ Harper:** Reader first and then tell them what we're gonna talk about next time.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Yeah. So I created a TV show. It's on Vizio. I'm gonna tell you about the, the problems with it and the lack of communication has been concerning. But the show, I, I'm, it's getting spied in the Wild. I got someone that was walking through a Walmart. I said, oh my God, you're all over Walmart. So I'll tell you a little bit that, and I learned a lot about authorship from it and spawning from this almost this little bit of a spin out of something much greater that's gonna be launching in just 17 days, not even 15 days from this recording. So I'll tell you all about that.

**AJ Harper:** But I also, what I, what I like about what you're gonna talk about about the TV show is, you know, just so people can understand behind the scenes what went into making that happen and Yeah. And how, how it impacts you as an author. How you leverage that stuff as an author. I think it's gonna be a great episode. And,

**Mike Michalowicz:** And, and I found anyone can do this. If you wanna have a TV show, I'm gonna show you a way that anyone can do it. It's surprisingly easier than I ever expected. I hope you enjoyed this episode. Go to [dwtb-podcast.com](http://dwtb-podcast.com) to join our email list. I think that would really be helpful for us and for you. 'cause We'll share, you, share free content with you. I did my first

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live podcast ever, AJ in front of a live studio audience. Not for DWTB podcast. I was a guest on the show. And golly, we got to do it.

**AJ Harper:** Just set the date. You just have to set the date.

**Mike Michalowicz:** I know I keep on saying it. I know. You know what, you know what you what? I think that's it. I think it set the date and also to send out the sell the tell technique where you send out saying, Hey, this is the date we're doing it. Are you in? And then, okay. Okay. Yeah. Okay. We're

**AJ Harper:** Just, we're just gonna pick a date.

**Mike Michalowicz:** Okay. Let's do that during our next break. Okay. Email us, say [hello@dwtbpodcast.com](mailto:hello@dwtbpodcast.com). If there's anything that you'd like us to discuss, if you want to join AJ and the work she does with retreats and all these different things with authors, you can go to [ajharper.com](http://ajharper.com). If you wanna learn about simplified, that's our imprint at page two for entrepreneurial authors. Email us at [hello@dwbpodcast.com](mailto:hello@dwbpodcast.com) with the word simplified in the title. I gotta say it, please don't write that book. Write the greatest book you can.