

# don't write *that* book!

## Episode: 115

### “How to Leverage Readings for Book Sales”

**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:**

Tribute question, I dunno if it's really a tribute question. Just question, what's your favorite carbonated water seltzer?

**AJ Harper:**

Zero

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Flavor. Zero diet meaning no flavor.

**AJ Harper:**

Diet Coke.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

If you had to drink seltzer, do you, do you drink seltzer at all?

**AJ Harper:**

Hardly ever. It would be like a lime, maybe. A lime.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah. Limes are good. Limes are good. They make, it's become so popular. I believe they make so many variants at the store. It's overwhelming. It used to just be plain seltzer, but I'm drinking watermelon right now and it's actually super tasty and supposedly zero calories, zero sugar, zero anything. And the only ingredient according to this is carbonated water and natural flavors. I dunno if I buy that, but it tastes nice.

**AJ Harper:**

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Do you have any idea how old you sound right now? Like you're reading the ingredients on the seltzer?

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Did you understand this? It's only carbonated water. There's no show. I don't buy this. There's gotta be sugar in here. So we landed, I was landed on a flight yesterday coming home from a gig and landed in Newark and we're getting off the plane and there's these folks with these heavy New York accents, you know that, that kind of accent, Hey, do ya, good to see a kinda accent. And we get off the plane and the guy is behind me and he says, I assume to his wife, he goes, oh, it's so good to be back in New York. And I'm like, we're in Jersey. In my mind, this is my mind going, we're in New Jersey, pal.

**AJ Harper:**

That's 'cause you're from Jersey. And New Yorkers consider all three international airports, LaGuardia, JFK, <inaudible>, to be their airports for access to New York.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Their professional football team has nowhere to go except for New Jersey. We host them and they're like, oh, they're the New York Jets. They're playing in New Jersey. Their stadiums in New Jersey. New Jersey's got your back. Yeah, you can see New York City in the distance. But God, these New Yorkers, they think they own everything.

**AJ Harper:**

I mean, let's not get into it.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Well one last little story, this is not getting into it, but it is kind of funny 'cause it's it brings balance. I was hanging out with a friend of mine, Damon Gersh from Long Island. And the misery, if you live on Long Island to get to New Jersey, like no one will make that commute. Even though technically it could be as close as 20, 25 miles apart.

**AJ Harper:**

That was long. That could be three hours.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

It could be three hours. And and same thing in New Jersey. It's like, if there's any place I don't want to go, it's Long Island. Long Island. I've been there. Long Island is beautiful. It is an amazing part of New York. The commute through New York City is miserable 'cause you have to go through the city. There's congestion everywhere. It's just miserable.

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**AJ Harper:**

That's how, why, how I feel about our visiting our son in Brooklyn.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

So Oh, your son's in Brooklyn?

**AJ Harper:**

Yeah, he's in Brooklyn where most of the 20 somethings are.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

So with, with Damon and his wife, Rochelle, my wife really hit it off with his wife and like, oh, we really gotta, because we met on a trip and he said, we really gotta get together and we're only 25 miles apart. And we said, well, why don't you guys visit us? And they're like I, I don't know. And they're like, how about, how about you guys visit us? We have a boat on the water. I'm like I don't, I don't know. Like going to Long Island from New Jersey is a nightmare. How often do you see your son out there in Brooklyn?

**AJ Harper:**

Well, to be fair, it's not like we're invited. That's great. We're not really going. I think the last time we went to his apartment building, we waited in the car.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Oh, just to pick him up?

**AJ Harper:**

Yep. Yep. He was sick and he wanted to come home. He had mono, so I don't blame him. He wanted to come home to be have his mono.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Have you seen his apartment?

**AJ Harper:**

I've seen video footage.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

I'm in the same boat. Our youngest son, Jake, now he's in Salt Lake City, but we have only seen video footage of his apartment. We do plan to get out there in, out the new year. So in early 2026 at some point.

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**AJ Harper:**

But our son, you know, we see our son, he comes here, you know.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah, yeah.

**AJ Harper:**

I don't know. He's he's a an a bit of an island.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

I get it. I get it.

**AJ Harper:**

It's all right. We had a lovely Thanksgiving with him.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Nice, nice.

**AJ Harper:**

On December 2nd, in case you're wondering why we're talking about things,

**Mike Michalowicz:**

I'm so happy that we say this 'cause I've been listening to some of our shows when we travel and we do say it often, like when we're recording this, it's so helpful. 'cause It doesn't make contextual sense when you're, when you're hearing some of the references. We had

**AJ Harper:**

A lovely Thanksgiving mic, I just wanna say, and it was very quiet.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Was it you, Polly and Jack? Was there anyone else?

**AJ Harper:**

And it was lovely and he didn't want Turkey and we don't like Turkey. So Polly said, hallelujah, I'm not making a Turkey. And probably the first time she didn't have to make a Turkey in 27 years.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

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What was the, did you have a protein dish?

**AJ Harper:**

He wanted steak.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Oh, that's not bad.

**AJ Harper:**

And he wanted a specific kind of fancy steak. So we said maybe you should get it in Brooklyn and bring it.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Oh, well, may I ask what kind of steak it was? Do you know?

**AJ Harper:**

Yeah, I was like, Wagyu steak.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

<Laugh>. I was like, oh, porterhouse maybe. Maybe a tea Wagu.

**AJ Harper:**

Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Is Polly or you

**AJ Harper:**

Better get that.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Does she, is she great at prepping? Stuff like that?

**AJ Harper:**

She is amazing.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

I've never cooked Wagyu and I've never had Wagyu. I just heard it's like

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**AJ Harper:**

She said you need to cast iron skillet and then it's pretty basic. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

I don't know if I ever, I would

**AJ Harper:**

Have to let it rest. I'm just saying things I heard. I'm just quoting things I heard. I know nothing. But he did love it. And then we had sides. We had all the traditional Midwestern sides and the only thing missing from our Midwestern sides was a relish tray. And other than that, we don't do those anymore because there's nobody over 65 in our house. So we don't need a relish tray anymore. But if my dad were here, he would wonder where it was.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah. So we make, I make, I make the cranberry relish in our house.

**AJ Harper:**

Oh my gosh. I have to ask you a question. Did you go get pies from Michael Port?

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Oh my gosh, yeah. Let me send pictures. I'm so happy that our team is insisting that we oh, I just got upgraded the first class. I just got a text in from my upcoming flight. That's nice. Because I travel so much. So my daughter, Adayla, she's like, make sure you show visual content on these. And there's the picture I wanna show you our buddy Michael, the two pies he made. So I went down and visited Michael Port. So if you're watching the video, if you're not, make sure you subscribe to our YouTube channel. I'm gonna give a closeup picture. And Michael Port has retired professionally, sold his company and followed his passion, which is baking. He bakes, i, I gotta call it almost obsession. He bakes 12 hours a day. But when he steps into something, he steps into something. Look at that pie.

**AJ Harper:**

I, I can't. It's so great. And did, did you see he's been renovating his dining room so that it's an extension.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

I told him I, I'm not the contemporary designs to sell land with me in homes until I saw their house. Their house is gorgeous. They, so it's Amy and Michael. They're both retired. They're finding their thing. Like Michael's found it, Amy's exploring painting and stuff. Amy's a listener to our show and they showed me around the home. It's gorgeous. So I get there, I'm like, Hey, I'll

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get there at eight 30. And I, I text Michael the night before. I'm like, Hey, I'll, I'll rather get there at eight because I wanted to spend some time with you guys. This guy. He's like, no problem.

## **AJ Harper:**

He's up here. So it's already been away five hours by the time you get there.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I dunno what time. Yeah, yeah. So I get there, there is one of those baking trays, like I say, baking trays like, you know, on wheels with has like six racks high. And a couple of racks have massive cookies on it. And I sit down her, Hey, you want some tea and, and a cookie? I'm like, my God. Yeah. And Michael's like, don't feel compelled to eat the whole thing. I'm like, dude, I'm eating this whole thing. The first bite I was like, this is the most <laugh> delicious cookie I've had in my life. Finally, there's a cookie that has the right sugar salt balance. I was like, you know, a cookie has to have salt in it and the store-bought ones is so much sugar that, that you can't consume it. This one, it was, and it was buttery. And I like the chew.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

It had the right chew, but the right crunch on the outside, kinda like a bagel would have a crunch in the chew on the inside. I don't know how he nailed it. And this thing was the size of a, of a small discus. Like it was a good sized cookie. And of course I fired the whole thing down. And I, if they would've had me, I I would've liked to stay for like six hours. Just ask them questions. They're such wonderful people. Their journey is so extraordinary. The, the thing I wanted to know about most, and I'm pitching it now to our sister podcast. I'm calling Becoming Self-Made.

## **AJ Harper:**

I was gonna say, you're gonna have a mom becoming self-made.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah. Because I said, well, tell me about retirement. Is it what people tell you? It is like, it's the golden years. You have all this freedom this time, and these, this you save and prepare for it. They go, no, it it, it's hard. It's a journey too. It's another chapter. And like, this is stuff that we don't hear about. So I'd like to interview them. So it was amazing. The pies were extraordinary. Like the biggest hit. Michael made a pumpkin pie that had a caramel base, some other ingredients, and then you topped it with Strel. Which was in itself was insanely good. The final thing I'll share about that visit is I'm leaving and he has like these containers to protect the pies, which was amazing. So I can transport safely to Krista.

## **AJ Harper:**

This and everything everyth-

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**Mike Michalowicz:**

To, he's like, I'll need the, I'll need the baking trays back, you know, or the pie trays back. I said, oh yeah, of course. I said, I mail 'em down to, he's like, okay. He goes, but if you wanna drive 'em down, he goes, there may be a pizza waiting for you. And he goes, it's gonna blow your mind. I'm like, I'm

**AJ Harper:**

He's making pizza now?

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah, Dude. The dude is amazing. He could, and again,

**AJ Harper:**

I heard you're making pizza.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah. Well maybe you and Paul should, maybe we should all like raid his home. The amazing thing is he, this is not, he doesn't have a business thirst or desire around us at all. Just wants No, she

**AJ Harper:**

Way

**Mike Michalowicz:**

He and Amy donate to the local shelter that un homed people can get a meal. And he says he prepares I think it was 120, 150 desserts every month to provide for the shelter. Is this extraordinary what they're doing?

**AJ Harper:**

Oh my gosh. I didn't know that. I love hearing it.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

When you find your passion.

**AJ Harper:**

I love that. And I also, so

**Mike Michalowicz:**

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This is the Michael and Amy port episode.

**AJ Harper:**

Well, we've had a couple, but I think it's yeah, I just want, I really was thinking about you. Did he get the pies

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Amazing. It's great Thanksgiving and that was the capstone for it. Let's talk about how to leverage readings for book sales and book reviews. You have a Monday Night Reading, I get the emails, I've attended one. But you do it every mon-- do you do it every Monday?

**AJ Harper:**

No. No. So it, lemme tell you what started it. It's fiction authors and some nonfiction authors, creative nonfiction like memoir or maybe something that's someone who's super famous. They routinely get readings and use readings as part of their promotional efforts. It's pretty standard prescription nonfiction, not so much when the last time you went to a reading from about a prescriptive prescriptive nonfiction, you might be doing a webinar where you're teaching the concepts or something, but a reading not so much. And so I really felt, at least my authors have great stories. It's beautiful prose. They should have a reading. And I call it Monday Night Reading, because back in the day when I was a playwright, the playwright center had Monday night reading and it was where the core members of the center had, would get up with their works in progress.

**AJ Harper:**

This is different than what--

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Oh, that's interesting.

**AJ Harper:**

Yeah. And then it was a little bit like a, and then the actors would do the reading and it was a little bit like a tribunal little bit, but it was a called Monday Night Reading. And so, and to honor that and my roots as a writer, I decided to start my own and just showcase authors. Well that was several years ago when we started. Now we do them after one of our authors publishes. And so it, it's less of about work in progress, although I think that's still a really cool thing to do. And it's more about celebrating the author as like a milestone on the journey. So we're recording this in 2025. I think we made, I think we had maybe 15 authors publish this year. So that's how many Monday Night Readings we had.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

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Wow.

## **AJ Harper:**

Next year I, I don't know what our number is, but I wanna say so far it's maybe a dozen or 11 that are on deck. And that will also change throughout the year as people get new dates assigned to them. Like for example there are three Simplified authors who will have Monday night readings next next year. One is Scott Todd, he'll have one for his first book, which is a fixes max derivative. But then I've already talked to Brian and John, Brian Harriet and John Briggs about our Monday night readings for their books, which I've only just discovered come out on the same day.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah, I know, I know, I know. We are meeting in Austin on Thursday to plan the Simplified marketing for their books. We're meeting face to face. This is something that simplified does that I don't think any other imprint or publisher does. All the authors are gathering and we're saying, how are we lifting up Brian and John and Scott collectively and how are we lifting up the money habit to collective intentional marketing? You know? And I'm doing a reading for you in February, right?

## **AJ Harper:**

So you're doing a Monday night reading for the Money Habit. And it's I want y'all to mark your calendars because I think this, Lexi, let me tell you, gimme 10 seconds. This episode airs on the 12th. So yes, your reading is this coming Monday. So if you're listening to this on the day it comes out then go right now and register. So you can go register If you just go to well, we'll, we'll have sent an email if you're, if you follow this pod and you're on the mailing list for it. But you can go to my social media or Mike's social media and you will find the pwhere you can sign up and register for Monday Night Reading. It's totally free. It's on February 16th. And our conversation will be different than any conversation that you have around the book. So we would love for you to join us for Monday Night Reading on February 16th at 7:00 PM Eastern.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

That's right. You know, so I started reading, I I've never done that before, live. We did a series, Andrea here from our team coordinated a three-segment series. It was over three, I think it was over a week and a half or two weeks, but three different periods. And it was behind the scenes peek into the money habit. But I also read sections, not full chapters. And I a couple times take pauses as I said in the chat, like, is this landing with you? Is this what you want? And the feedback was so supportive of the reading, but I think the greater indicator is you can watch people's attendance, live attendance. And it didn't drop like, like people stayed for the entire reading. It kind of surprised me. I'm like, why do people love readings? They do. They just do.

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**AJ Harper:**

I people love readings. I think they're actually more effective than say, just teaching somebody something. And especially if you do a combo, they want to hear the, from the book. They like to be read too. As long as it's good content. And as long as that person has practiced reading, I do think that's something that you don't wanna just do it if you're not used to reading in public, if you've not done any public speaking, if you aren't sure how to how to handle that, then it could go left. But it doesn't take that much to learn how to read so that it's compelling. But people, people love it. And they're actually more interested in the book itself when you read from it than when you talk about it. You know, they get a feel for it. They, they, they see how you intended it with your tone. They see your emotional connection to your own words. And then they're way more invested in the book than if you had just told them about it. So they're more likely to buy it and they're also more likely to keep reading it.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

So do you recommend or is this something that would work after the book is published or should only be read before it's published?

**AJ Harper:**

No, It should be after. It's, it's really an after thing.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Okay. So it's in the market, couldn't they? I mean, they could just download the audio version of the book. They

**AJ Harper:**

Wouldn't be seeing it live.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

And so, okay. Is it important that there's video playing out? That they physically see you physically reading it? Or is it hearing your

**AJ Harper:**

Yeah, absolutely. And and, and do it in person whenever you can. Do it in person whenever you can. Yeah. Okay. But it, it could be, it could be in person, it could be over Zoom, it could be on a live stream. There's lots of different options. But the point is, people are watching you read in real time.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

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That's so interesting. Are you engaging with them? Meaning as you're reading, you're watching the chat and saying, Hey, I see there's a comment here. Or do you just read, just read, just read, just read.

**AJ Harper:**

That's gonna be hard for you. 'cause You wanna be interactive like that.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

I totally wanna be interactive, but maybe that's distracting. It

**AJ Harper:**

Is distracting. It's okay if you have, you want them to be immersed the same way you want them to be immersed when they're reading. It's okay if you have a little aside or something here and there, but mostly you need to bring the story home. You know,

**Mike Michalowicz:**

How much of your book do you read?

**AJ Harper:**

So what I advise so when, when we do Monday Night readings, I like to space it out. I like to do two to three excerpts and split it up with questions in between. I definitely recommend that when you're doing readings, that there's somebody who introduces you. And if you're gonna break it up and have q and a type, that that pers that someone is doing that for you. So you're not answering questions in the chat, or if it's in person, you're not leading the q and a. So you, you need a person that doesn't have to be someone who's specially trained for it, but it's better if you're prepared. So when I do readings, I have my questions in advance. The author knows what the questions are. Some of it's off the cuff, but mostly they know it's coming and then we space it out. But you don't have to do it like that. You could just do one reading. And then q and a I like to break up because it, it's hard for people to listen for very long. Okay. So maybe you're doing about 10 minutes of a read.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Oh, okay. That's super helpful. So you're not reading a full chapter.

**AJ Harper:**

You could, you could. Well I think it's more important that a, a you retain their attention and B, your your first reading you do, whether it's the first of several that night, or the only one should encapsulate the main message of the book. Right? So you don't wanna just pull something randomly that you like, that you need to give them the anchor of, you know, whether it's your

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origin story that you wrote in the book, whether it's high or specifically core message, origin story, not life story, y'all, not life story. But this is the book, the foundation of it. So for example, in in the Money Habit, I would probably have you read the entire first chapter because it's of the way that it's structured. But it just depends. And then once you have established that you can then do little or bite-sized readings, which I, I then recommend that it's story focused.

## **AJ Harper:**

'Cause People love a story for a reading. So if you have a good story and or something they can consume by listening, that is a game changing thought to them. Hmm, okay. Also, inspiration works well. So if you've got a section that's really gonna lift them up, they love that too. So you have to think about this, what am I trying to get the audience to feel here as, as part of it as well. So if you structure it with smaller readings in the night or in the hour that you do it, versus just read, read, read, read, read, you'll get a better outcome.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

So I, I had an interesting phenomena happen. So I, when I read the audio book for the different, you know, platforms of distribution a book that plays out over say, six hours will likely take me 12 hours to record because maybe I mumble or more often I'll mix up a word or pronunciation when I did the live. So I did three live readings. Thank I, I wish I listened to this. We had this discussion prior to it, but I did do excerpts. I didn't do full chapters. It didn't feel right. I set it up. People were demonstrating, they enjoyed it. I made almost no errors when I was reading it. I was more paced, more controlled. Have you noticed when authors read their books, I, I feel I get anxious and maybe would stumble a lot. Is it natural and fluid for most authors? Is there some rehearsal or practice? How do they do it? So it's not this crumble jumble thing, or does that even matter?

## **AJ Harper:**

It doesn't even really matter. No, no one really cares. You know, I don't, I mean, it makes people nervous if you're, if you're nervous. So as long as you're chill about it, you know, if you're starting to get stressed of the fact that you made mistakes, other people are stressed for you. But if you're not, then it's cool. I don't know, you know, I'm, I'm actually not sure what preparation my authors do. But I will say this, watch a couple readings of other authors, could be any author fiction, whatever, and just kind of get a feel for that. And then try and read through it a few times. Especially for length. Typically you're gonna do about 135 words a minute. That's the average, but yours might be different. You might be a faster talker or slower talker. You might have content where you wanna have a lot of beats or pauses. And so definitely test it out. Watch the clock, see how long is this really gonna be. But is it, do I, I thi this feels short, but is it really? So definitely take a little bit of time, but it's not like you have to spend all day rehearsing.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

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Do I need to start in the beginning of the book and read from there and kind of work my way through Elements

**AJ Harper:**

Said, I think set it, I think your first reading should be the setup. I think the first reading should be the foundational fundamentals of the book. It's probably gonna be pulled from either your intro or chapter one depending on how you rock that. I think that's critical. And then from there, you're giving people enough that they can then extrapolate what's happening later. But if you don't give them that foundation, then they're sort of wandering around in the dark the rest of the time.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

For everyone that's listening to this episode right now, get a copy of Write a Must-Read, AJ's book. It'll transform your writing experience. And I'm curious, AJ with Write a Must-Read, did you do these readings too?

**AJ Harper:**

I did 'em on the night, yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

You did?

**AJ Harper:**

Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

And your book teaches so much protocol or function. My sense is when I read your book, I almost binge through, I've read your book now. I think I'm, I'm about to start my third reading of it. I love, yeah, because it, it, it really, it really just primes me.

**AJ Harper:**

I mean, you directly to get any information you need <laugh>. But you like reading it?

**Mike Michalowicz:**

No, I do. I really do. When I say reading, I listen to it. I it is in the weight room. I'll put it on my audio and I listen while I'm working out. So thanks. Yeah, well you could, you read your own book, which is amazing. And I I, there's certain stories in there I'm like, oh, I know the story behind the story like Jack and stuff forth. But I learned something new because I discover, oh my

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God, there's these basic principles that I, I just never really understood or absorbed before. So that's why I listened to it again.

**AJ Harper:**

I mean, that's always true, right? When you read something and then you have more experience and you read it again and oh, the penny drops in a new way.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Exactly. So my question is your book, it's, it's structured with certain protocols and it kind of builds and assembles to writing a must read. Where did you get started in reading your own book when you did these records?

**AJ Harper:**

From my reading? Yeah. I, I'm, I'm, I don't remember honestly, by the way, it's up on YouTube. I have a YouTube channel where all my Monday night readings.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

I was about to ask you too. So you, you preserve it on YouTube so you can people watch it anytime?

**AJ Harper:**

Yeah, you can go watch all, almost all my authors do Monday night reading. So you can go watch. Also, Michael Port's done one since we talked about him earlier. Yeah. He was so excited to do it because nobody ever asked him. Nine books. New York Times bestselling author actor used was on many TV shows. And in Marice it was Sandy and in movies and then renowned big deal, main stage, keynoter had never been I the best in the world. Best in the World, had never been asked to do a reading. No one ever asked him.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

You know why? Because if you did a reading, particularly in person with Michael Port, you'd be salivating over what he's baking and you just get so distracted. Well, he

**AJ Harper:**

Wasn't baking then.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Well, you, you just feel it in him. He always had that baking aura around, you

**AJ Harper:**

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Know what I mean? It's like they don't get asked.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah, it's, I know, I know I'm supposed to, I'm kidding around. But yeah.

**AJ Harper:**

And then yours is there from when you did it the last time. And and also, you know, authors, they're lesser known, but we've had some amazing readings. Holy cow. You know, and then sometimes, you know, sometimes it's people struggle through their readings for sure. But, so I think it's all in education.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

You said earlier in person or virtual. What's the benefits of either, and do you have platforms or suggestions of where to do

**AJ Harper:**

These? Yeah, so if you wanna do, first of all, you don't have to be wait to given a reading. Okay. You can create your own reading. You can set one up, get somebody to host it for you. You could do readings with other people and have a night of readings. My suggestion would be to try a combination. You could do a virtual one that a lot of people can attend, but maybe do one locally. And then get a couple of other local offers and do a nine of reading. Their audience comes, your audience comes, and then get somebody to shoot video of it or photos or whatever. Go to do readings at bookstores. If you, you know, might be a harder sell if you're prescriptive, nonfiction to get a bookstore to do a reading. But you can explain to them, Hey, I'm, there's a lot of great stories in here and I think let's do a q and a. I've got the questions ready, here's the excerpts that I wanna read. It's my strategy for doing it. I can bring, you know, this kind of experience for people. Go into bookstores and do readings and offer that. People love to go to reading. People love to go. I go whenever I can. I just look, I just Google when I have free time readings in my area. Book writing.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Oh, is that what To, to Google? That's the exact phrase.

**AJ Harper:**

That's what I, I dunno. That's what I Google. And then I also will check out libraries have them a lot. Bookstores have them a lot. And I just go to their event pages and I just love to go, just go love to learn and listen to other authors. It's an important thing to do as an author. And I wanna say that for our, most of our listeners, our prescriptive nonfiction writers, most, not everyone, I feel prescriptive nonfiction authors tend to be more disconnected from authorship in general, from traditional authorship, from the publishing world, from interactions with other authors. And

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I don't know if it's why that is, if you go over to the fiction world, that is the fam family, like those people are with each other all the time. They're at events all the time. And it's lovely and it's invigorating and it's part of it. And I think so many authors are missing out on having these experiences just go listen, participate, support people.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

I had two readings. I remember that I did one, I can't remember. It may have been the Pumpkin Plan. I did a Barnes and Nobles in New Brunswick and I didn't promote it, but there was 30 people there. I mean, I must have promoted it some regard because people, some people knew me, so I must spend like 30 people there or something. That was a good reading. And then Barnes Noble sold books, so they were happy. And if they sell 10, 20 books, that's, that's income for, that's, that's hundred hundreds of dollars. I didn't did a reading at Little Point Bookshop. We did a TV show down there filming the bookshop. And I wanted to support this bookstore owner. And I said, Hey, I'll, I'll do a reading down here. And we promoted it. But only three people showed. It was just a weird location and it was still a blast. It was still a blast. And it wasn't like now sitting with a lectern in front of me reading a book. It was me reading. And then there was a discussion that broke out. And she sold 20 books because one of the authors bought, one of the people there bought 18 copies. So that still worked out. I, I think the biggest element though the authors overlook is, is their own effort to promote. How, how did you promote or how do your authors promote their virtual or live readings? Well,

## **AJ Harper:**

We promote it with an email and some social media. We do graphics for it. We have a seen graphic for the entire year. So we're moving into 2026. So we'll have a different graphic for that year. We send that to them. We recommend that they send it out. And then beyond that, it's just social media and mailing list. And I would also though, when it's a reading encourage, this is a great way by the way, to get people who are in your orbit, but they don't really understand this book thing you're doing, you know, friends and colleagues and so forth. This is a great way to, an event to bring them to. 'cause They don't wanna sit through a webinar where you're teaching something if it's not their bag, you know? Yeah. But they'll come to a reading that's fun for them, you know, they wanna see you perform almost. It's like you're in your second-grade talent show and they wanna come see you do it. So I would also then send personal invites. I would say, Hey, I really love for you to come. I'm gonna do this reading. It's free. Would you mind coming? It would mean a lot to me. And just do some personal invites. Yeah.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

And I think fellow authors to your point, it's, it maybe the, not the direct consumer of your book, but maybe collaborative folks, fellow authors to come down. You can support each other and have them invite their audiences. It's all about audience expansion. I think if you're doing a bookstore, they have a list of customers and you can work with them to send video messages. So instead of just like, Hey, we have an author coming, and you can embed a video of yourself

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saying, I can't wait to come to Little Point Bookstore and this is what we're gonna talk about. And maybe you never heard of me, but you've heard of this bookstore 'cause you've been here before. And be honored if you come down and support them. And I got something to share with you that's real.

## **AJ Harper:**

And, and you know what this is something that fiction authors don't genuinely do, but you, but the entrepreneurs that write prescriptive nonfiction, the folks that are thought leaders or in this space, y'all use the same stuff you would use to get people to do things. So what if you did some sort of special bonus for people who came down to the retreat? I like that. Maybe they're, you're gonna hand them something special in person. That's an extra thing they get to do. Who knows what it's gonna be? You will get them there. So just what I've found is that authors come into the publishing space and wait for permission for everything. Wait for what are the rules of this new planet And fair. We should learn the rules of the planet, but just know that it, the rules of the planet.

## **AJ Harper:**

It's like the oldest planet around and it's, everyone's a stick in the mud. Yeah. You know, it's so they haven't thought an author, wait, what? You're gonna give my people a free something? Yeah. Nobody said free. Nobody said anything to them. And when you do, they're gonna say, oh, that's so cool. You would do that. You know? So I guess apply your ingenuity to the new planet that you are on <laugh>. Like, it's just so funny. It's like everything is like, you know, the people, it's like, it's like being in a middle school dance and you're, you're up against the wall waiting for the person across the way to ask you up to the ants, but you won't go down. And so there's just one wall with everybody just standing there and another wall with everybody just standing there. And it's kind of like that in publishing where a new author comes in and they just feel like, Hmm, am I allowed to be here? Yes. So the things, the, the strategies you might employ and the rest of your life also give them a shot. The worst that can happen is no.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

So you also has an opportunity to sell your book. And I wanna share the worst kind of pitch ever I've seen and what I think is a far better pitch. So I saw a regional celebrity, a a television person do a speech.

## **AJ Harper:**

What? Regional celeb?

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Like a regional celeb? Yeah, a regional celeb. Someone, someone outside the northeast, particularly the New Jersey area, wouldn't recognize his name. And it's a, it is a guy. He does a

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speech and it was fine. And the end, he goes, I just wrote a book, buy my book. Like, literally that was his pitch. It was, it was like offensive. And there was a booth out there and no one bought a book. I found a far better way to, to move books, but, you know, listen, somebody

## **AJ Harper:**

Who was behind you on the plane who was coming off the

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah, yeah. But yeah, no, no, but it's similar characteristics. But but often that is the pitch. Like, Hey, I have a book. It's, you know, the tonality's a little different. I have a book I'd love for you to buy it. The people don't buy books because you want them to buy it. It's like, Hey, I, I have a car in my car. You should buy, buy my car. I have a car in my car. Lot buy it. People are looking to satisfy a need. And they also want to understand the reason for your motivation for selling it. So a salesperson could say, Hey, you're looking for a car. I'd like to help you find your car. Or a salesperson could say, Hey, I heard you're looking for a car. I'm gonna help you find your car. And I do earn a commission.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

This is how you make my living. So let's find a car that serves you and selfishly you're serving me. Thank you. People love that to understand the, the truth because there otherwise there's some form of manipulation, some strains being pulled. So do the same as an author. So I'll tell people in my presentation, Hey I've written a book, it's called The Money Habit, and dollar for dollar, I think it is the greatest investment you can make in in, in overcoming financial worry and, and achieving financial independence. And it's only \$30, but there's a second reason I think. So I think it'll serve you deeply and that's why I'm asking you to consider the book. But there's a selfish reason I'm also asking you to get the book is when you get the book, it further markets the book because the algorithms, if you buy electronically, mark and I give the explanation and it sells remarkably more books.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

'Cause people that are on the fence saying, oh, you know, know what I'll buy. If it's for me, I'll buy it when I'm ready. If it's 'cause this guy who's also being served I'll be ready at some point, future point, but that will tip me and I'll, I'll do it now. And I'd say in our live presentations, consistently, 30% of the attending audience will buy in that moment. When I say that, if I simply say, get the book, I, I would be surprised if it's more than 15%. So that's how, how you do it. And you can do that live, you can do it on your books. I've done it from speaking engagements. It's the most integral way to move books and it works.

## **AJ Harper:**

Yeah, I love that.

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**Mike Michalowicz:**

The backup strategy too, if people already bought books, is to ask them for a review on the platform of choice. Good Reads or Bookshop or Amazon. I did this. Getting

**AJ Harper:**

Reviews is a big part of what we do at Monday Night Reading. We actually dedicate a whole part of it to doing group reviews in that moment.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Another, and this is super significant, probably a big driver to, is invite people to message you. If it's a virtual one, when they order your book just to say ordered and they can send they consent to the entire group. I encourage people to do it to the entire group because then they other people can acknowledge it or tell you, but then thank them. 'cause That's a social is a social proof mechanism. It proves it's happening, but also inspires other people to do it. Yeah. if right now in this podcast, if we say, Hey, get a copy of Write Must Read, it's gonna transform your life. And it's all true. And by the way, if you, if everyone listening to podcast right now, which is hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people, I'll do it. Write, must Read will be a top 100 book on Amazon for a day or two.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

And that will really trigger the algorithm to move it. So the request is out there, and this is a true request, so please do it. But most people won't do it because it's a passive consumption. There, there's no way to acknowledge they've done it. So they can say, well, Mike and AJ will never find out if I did. So maybe I will to help 'em out, but may I'll do it in the future. So make sure you have that. If you have a live audience, some form of acknowledging it. If it's in a personal audience, I've done this before, some people raise their hand or give a thumbs up. Or if you really wanna be bold and still have that kind of anonymous thing, just have people text you so you can pull your phone out and say, here's my, my number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. Text me, just write the word ordered on it so I can just acknowledge you from stage. So that's another way to do it.

**AJ Harper:**

Yeah. I love that.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

What, what if no one showed, like I had a three-person event, live reading. Do you ever have can you beat three? What's your number?

**AJ Harper:**

I had a reading and it was at the wrong time of day. And this is one time a day like noon. Okay. <Laugh>. It was organized by someone else and I did not organize it. And by the time I realized

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it was gonna be at noon, I couldn't do anything about it. There was I came with my friend who drove me.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Ahuh. Okay. So, so you, so you, once you heard it was a noon, you wouldn't have done it.

**AJ Harper:**

If we could have gotten out of it, I would've gotten out of it because I knew no one's coming to a reading at noon on a weekday. Who's coming to this? No one, no one's doing it. Find a good time. Find a time that's outside of the workday. Or if it's gonna be noon, it can be on the weekend. But not, yeah. So it was not a good situation. Okay. My friend Ann Reeves drove me there and Ann Reeves was the only person in the audience. Okay. Yeah, she was great. She sat right in front, of course, like, what is she gonna do? All these empty seats. She sat in front and I was implored to go ahead and do it. So I did, I did the whole thing in front of Anne Reeves.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

And so,

**AJ Harper:**

And it was an empty room.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

So what is the learning for? Is there a learning? Is it you just, just do and show cry inside?

**AJ Harper:**

Well, first of all, don't, you know, once you gotta, you gotta com—. If you committed, go ahead and do it, but technically pick the right time and promote the heck out of it.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah. But sometimes one personal show, I, I did a keynote. I flew from New Jersey to California. I think I've shared a story before to UCI, which is University of California Irvine. To speak to, this is during the toilet paper entrepreneur years to speak to an audience of students that were in a business fraternity, other fraternities. And they promised 50 to a hundred people. I get to the room for 50 to a hundred people 30 minutes before, and there's one kid there, I'm like, oh, when's everyone showing up? And he looks at me and he looks down at his phone and goes, no one's gonna show. I said, why? He's like, there's a big party going down, bro. He bro'd me. I was you know, in my forties and this guy's like 18. He's like, bro, I was like, oh. And I did the speech anyway and it's the best speech I ever given in my life. And the speech sucked. The most important speech, I should say it's the best speech because inside I was dying and crying. 'cause

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There was no, like, that kid had to stay there. He was obligated. And he's looking at his phone, like people are texting what's going down, how we're doing beer taps and stuff. And I'm, I just do the speech to nothing. But I remember also saying, if I can do this, I can do it anywhere. I can do anything.

## **AJ Harper:**

I mean, it was in the same boat you had the person who organized it, he was stuck there waiting until you were done. They could go join the party. Dan Ann was my ride home. So she, she had to stay there.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah. And I tell you, it's when you can do that, you can do anything. So I think it's a gift for all of us to get the, the shame, you know, the humbling sandwich, the humble pot.

## **AJ Harper:**

But you know, most readings aren't like that. Most readings are delightful. People wanna hear you read. They're really impressed. You know, that's the, this is the thing that I, I think authors forget while they are mired in their own insecurities and people who don't write books are fascinated by people who do. And so if you go do the reading, it's going to be great.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

It's just, that is such a powerful line. People who don't write books are fascinated by people.

## **AJ Harper:**

For sure they

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Are. That is ama. Oh my God, that was all the juice of this episode. It put in, in one sentence. I have one little bonus tip. I wanna save it for a little surprise toward the end so people don't do that. Fast forward, anything else you wanted to cover before we wrap it up?

## **AJ Harper:**

No, just do readings and tell us about it. If you do one, let us know. We'd love to, we'd love to hear about it. Email us about it.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

My book's called The Money Habit. It just released, when you're listening to this episode, go to your favorite platform. If you're wanna transform your personal finances as an author or otherwise, I think this is the book that will do it for you. And selfishly, if you do get a book, it

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helps me promote the book because algorithms market it. Hey, drop me an email there, there's bonuses and so forth. Just email me a [mike@mikemichalowicz.com](mailto:mike@mikemichalowicz.com) and say, bought the book but missed the bonuses. If you did, and I'll see if I can sneak something in, just include your receipt with that aj, you've retreats going on. Aj harbor.com is a place to go, I who knows who because we record these so far in advance. If it's booked up, if it is booked up, what, is there anything left or people are just this out a luck.

## **AJ Harper:**

And I do the, so I do an annual workshop to have free book workshop for 15 approximately students every year. There's that, that's a, that's a big time and financial commitment. I do also have a, a membership that people join, which is a great way for folks to be in my orbit, learn from me, connect with other authors who are like-minded in terms of their values around writing something excellent. And not just learn about the craft, but also to navigate the industry, which is its own slippery slope. So we have, we have a a membership community you can learn about as well about the retreats are really the time. If you wanna come work with me in person, I held them on an island island and we love it there. And it's an incredible experience. I only have 24 available slots every year, and a bunch of them are already taken. So you definitely wanna go see if there are any left

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

There. I had dinner with Garrick Anderson in New York this past weekend. Yeah, him and Carrie, his wife and my, my wife. We went to see O Mary, which is a Broadway show, which yeah, it was amazing. And then we went to dinner together. I met his, his two sons, just wonderful kids. And he's, he's bragging. He is like, I'm heading to Madeline Island baby. I think he's coming out, he's doing a one day workshop or something. So maybe it wasn't Madeline Island.

## **AJ Harper:**

Well, I do a VIP thing just a couple times a year for people.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

That's what he was talking about. Is that, is that a Maryland island also? Okay. Yeah. That's why he was saying it

## **AJ Harper:**

Really like, it's all me and just that person.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

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You should on Lake Superior set up something, some kind of device where it's just under the water, so, so Garrick can walk across it. So he looks like he's walking on water. He's, yeah, he looks like the prototypical Jesus with his hair and stuff. Just have him come out there. So

## **AJ Harper:**

There's a swim there that's called the Point to LA Point Swim. And it goes from the sho the kind of by the fairy dock all the way to the island. And you swim it and it people with, there's usually hundreds and hundreds of swimmers who do it every year. It's in August, come from all over the world. He should do it and then come out of the water.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

I, I challenge that. I don't know if he should do it. I think you should make a massive investment in an underwater treadmill that moves with him. So he, as everyone's swimming, he just walks amongst them, above them.

## **AJ Harper:**

A two mile treadmill.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah, two mile treadmill. I mean, it's gonna be costly, but for the gag. Alright before we wrap things up, I do have one more tip. And this is this has been a game changer in me doing the three live readings I did, but before I share it, go to DWTB podcast. Don't write that book podcast.com to get our materials. You can sign for our email list. You don't miss a single episode. AJ prepared tons of free materials for you that will really serve you in your journey that you can get there. I really encourage you to get right, a must read and go to aj harper.com to learn all that's going on. Plus we talk about it every so often. We got an imprint, we talked about it last week with simple, with page two. It's called simplified. So if you're an entrepreneurial author, email us at hello@dwtvpodcast.com and say, I'm the author you're looking for.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

And we can see if perhaps you're fit for our imprint, just like Scott Todd is, John Briggs Joey Coleman, and all these other amazing authors that are with us. Now, here's the tip I wanted to share. Aj, I have an overhead and I, I was looking at mine here. I have one in my home office. The only thing I can read off is says I-P-E-V-D. So maybe if you go onto the retailer of choice and type that in. But if you simply type in HDMI overhead, I can, I'll do it on this screen right now. Cut over to the overhead and you see my hand there. When I do a reading, I actually show the book that I'm reading and cut to it and people were going crazy over that and said, Hey, can you zoom in so I can follow along? So that is a tip for your virtual readings. As a reminder, please don't write that book. Write the greatest book you can.