

don't write *that* book!

Episode 120:

“Planning your Launch in 12 – 18 Months”

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. It is five degrees. And you're north of me, technically. Northeast,

AJ Harper

Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

What's your temperature today?

AJ Harper

I don't know, man. Frigid. I got up and did the faucet trick.

Mike Michalowicz:

So we did it too because our, our pipe's frozen. We're in a newer house, might say newer. This was built in the nineties, this house. But one room, it's our master bathroom. If it drops to 10 degrees Fahrenheit or less, it will freeze the pipes. And so I call the plumber and he goes, well, I got two solutions for you. One, we gotta tear down the wall. Other, he's like, just leave the cabinet doors open in your where, where you have the sink. And he goes, that may just be enough heat. And so we're testing it out tonight. Conversely, you were sharing disaster has struck. What, what went down?

AJ Harper

I can't believe I'm giggling about it. 'cause I had a total mental breakdown a week ago about it. But so this is not due to pipes though. At our house, at the lake. So I have, I have an alarm system there and I can, and cameras and the alarm system tells me whenever the guys come over to check on the house. So I have people who check on the house regularly, and then I could see a lot of activity. And so it's cool 'cause I can open up my camera to see the back porch to see what they're doing, you know? And I don't really spy, but I sometimes get curious about what it's like, how much snow do we get, you know, stuff like that. And I can hear the sound of slapping water.

Mike Michalowicz:

don't write *that* book!

You could hear it over your camera?

AJ Harper

There's the guy walking through water. And then I started seeing him grabbing stuff and putting it on the porch.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh no.

AJ Harper

Dog bed and stuff like that. So I'm like, okay. And then to the credit of the builder and their, because it's my builder's team that checks on the house. You know this, there's 400 people on the island, like, you know, it's, they're all, they all have multiple jobs. Anyway. They were there within half an hour. They were just like a whole crew. And they did everything they could to get it out. What it turns out that a boiler malfunctioned, which then caused an overflow, which then caused an overflow into the septic system, which then overflowed and then kept, like, all of this just kept running. I mean, no one's there, probably. Yeah. And then that soaked the ground in between the studio and 'cause the boilers in the studio and the house and flooded the house. And thankfully be.

Mike Michalowicz:

Both buildings got hit?

AJ Harper

Well, the studio didn't get flooded. It was, there's a utility room in the studio and that's where that house, it didn't make it into the Oh, so they pumped out of there into the house. And then, but the thing is, thankfully we had pumped out the septic before we left, so that, that it was, it was clear water. But they still call it blackwater because it came from a septic even all,

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah.

AJ Harper

There was nothing done, you know, so I was in a meltdown mode, but thankfully the insurance is covering it. But this is why I am like giggling because okay, this is Mountain Long Island. It, you think it's cold here? It's unbelievable. There. Like, yeah. We get the liberty below 40 below, like no joke. Yeah. Okay. Um, in fact, my, the contractor called yesterday about all this stuff and he's like, how, what's the weather? 'cause That's how everybody, you know, I have a bit's all everybody wants to talk about. Yeah, I said it, I'm really sorry, but it's 35 degrees. That was yesterday, <laugh>. And he is, he was like, that's short's weather for them, you know?

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

AJ Harper

So anyway this is the funny part. The insurance company, it's all gonna be fixed by the time we get there. So, but the insurance company, it was not fun until I figured out they were covering it. So that was not fun. The insurance company is going after, right? Like the failure of the equipment. Of course. Like, it's so cold and the ice is, is so frozen up on the lake that the ferry's about to stop running. So here's in my email box, all these like, stuff I'm CC'd on, that's like litigators and engineers that are all trying to figure out, okay, wait, what's a wind sled? Because they have to get across on the wind sled to go do, investigate what happened at my house.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, that's great.

AJ Harper

And the windsled, you should Google it. Everybody Google, Madeline Island Windled. It's like, it, it's not a boat, but it kind of is. And it's what they do in between having a ferry and an ice road. The ice road is when you can drive your car across, but there's a period of time when you can't do either, you can't be on the ferry 'cause they stop running 'cause they can't make you through the ice anymore. And then there's, you can't drive. So there's a windsled. And I'm just like, this is hilarious. This, it's all very, we're formal lawyerly engineer language, talking about how are they gonna get across? And it's just, I find it Anyway, that's how I'm getting my humor. It's just these like hearty islanders that are, you know,

Mike Michalowicz:

I think it's absolutely brilliant. I hope they're talking about bringing food supplies, Esk*mos extra people in case they lose 'em during the journey, you know, so they can procreate.

AJ Harper

They're So my contractor sent one email. Well, we'll get you to and from the wind sled. We got you there. We got you there. <Laugh>

Mike Michalowicz:

You know, your home ownership of this extraordinary home on Madeline Island been a little bit like a George Foreman fight. It's just like gut punch, gut punch. How bad do you want this? And

AJ Harper

Very bad.

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz:

You keep bouncing back.

AJ Harper

Yeah. It's so great.

Mike Michalowicz:

And it's gonna be, and, and it will be better. It, it's somehow, every time it comes out, it's even better than anticipated.

AJ Harper

You know, what, in the, in the vast scheme of things and all the things that we're dealing with in the world right now, this does not matter.

Mike Michalowicz:

Exactly. Exactly. And the big picture doesn't matter.

AJ Harper

Doesn't matter. And I love that I can get to a place of laughing about it giggling at these emails going back and forth

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah.

AJ Harper

Within just a few days. So, yay. Human resilience,

Mike Michalowicz:

Talking about resilience. You gotta have that when you're launching your book. Yeah. particularly if you're behind the eight ball. So today we're gonna talk about, if you're launching your book and it's due-- the launch--12 to 18 months from today, you're listening to Don't write That Book. I am Mike Michalowicz, my co-host is AJ Harper. We have collectively worked on 10 (11) 11. Turn it up to 11 titles together. And, one thing I gotta tell you I admire about AJ is her resilience to life's events. You've experienced a lot of them, and yet you continue seeing through them and coming out even better, even better, <laugh> thanks. Like every iteration.

AJ Harper

Appreciate It. I'm told though, from astrologers of all ilk, that, that that's over for me now starting in February. So,

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz:

Well, you've, you've paid your dues, sister. I think the next half it should be easy coasting for you.

AJ Harper

I'm doing it. I'm ready for the coast. I admire about you. You know what, you're the same though. You know, you, you kind of roll, you know, you roll with the... What's coming. You know, you don't, I've never seen you crack have you cracked?

Mike Michalowicz:

Rarely. You know, who I admire so much, what this aspect of his life was, George Washington and his emotional thermometer and the necessity of that. I think emotion in, in the moment can be packed away if you want and reserved for a different time. But people that don't have that emotional throttle I've seen like blow up the situation and make it worse. Yeah. Because they're there. Yeah. So I have the ability to swallow it, not to

AJ Harper

Are you reading about him?

Mike Michalowicz:

But to, to swallow it and, and hold it, which I, and it often deflates as time goes on. Anyway, so

AJ Harper

I just talked over you terribly, but this makes me think you're reading about George Washington.

Mike Michalowicz:

<Laugh>. I I did finish my, his biography, but we did, I tell he went to his Francis Tavern in New York where he gave his, oh, he gave effectively a, a commencement speech to the Revolutionary War, to his generals. And so Krista and I went there and you can still, you can tour the facility. The room where he spoke is still there, reserved, preserved, meaning you can't use it. And then you can eat there. There's a tavern below the original tavern. But I'll say that for another episode. We gotta dig into this. This we

AJ Harper

Do. But a minute, I gotta tell you something. I've never invited you to do this, but just, just five minutes from my house, the 1776 House. Have you been there?

Mike Michalowicz:

So you told me to go there.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper

Oh, that's right. You already went there. I already sent you there.

Mike Michalowicz:

And I'm, I'm eating in tears and it was unbelievable.

AJ Harper

That's right. I already sent you there. All right. I should know

Mike Michalowicz:

Right now. There's one, there's one portrait hanging upside down.

AJ Harper

I should admit right now that I have told you everything.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yes, you've revealed it all.

AJ Harper

All right, let's go.

Mike Michalowicz:

All right. So, so this is gonna be a series of episodes that we're gonna be exploring stuff like this on, on the book Marketing and the Business of Authorship. You got a text from a listener. Do you mind sharing what that was all about?

AJ Harper

Yes. This is from Top Three Book Rorkshop alum, Roseanne Capanna Hodge. I know she won't mind me sharing this with you. Her book is The Dysregulated Kid, and it comes out later this year. She said, so the letter from my intern is working for endorsements. It's definitely giving me some endorsements. Genius idea that you all had about Mike and his mother inspired me. <Laugh>, Even when they say no, they write back something very nice. So she's got a letters going out, written as her intern, you know, she, so instead of mom, it's the intern. And it's working for her.

Mike Michalowicz:

That's brilliant. I love when, I love when someone takes, here's an idea and then they package it, that's congruent with their who they are as opposed to reject it and say, I can't do that. Good job. Yep. Roseanne she's part of T 3. Are you doing some more T 3 related stuff this year?

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper

Of course, we have a membership. I do master crafts all year. I've got my annual class, you've got readings. But the thing that's coming up right now that's free and super fun, and I only do it twice a year, is writing Sprint Marathon. It's on March 21st. You do have to register. So if you're on my mailing list, aj harper.com is where you get on that list. You probably already know about it. You can go to my social media, or you can, you want more information, email hello@ajharper.com. Check the show notes for this episode, any of those things. We'll get you a link to register for writing Sprint Marathon.

Mike Michalowicz:

I will be there myself. Actually, I booked it on my calendar. I don't think I'll be there for the entirety of it

AJ Harper

And you don't have to be. You can come

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. You know, and that's the beautiful thing. You don't have to be, but I will tell you, you have to show up. Like, you don't have to be there for the entire thing. You have to show up because it is a magical day. It's, and the money habit will have launched. Well, it's actually launching on it's by the time this episode goes live, it's, it's out there. So it's launching as of this recording just a few days from now. So you can get The Money Habit at your favorite retailer. I promise you. It's a transformative book. And I can assure you it is the biggest launch we've ever had because the pre-orders indicate that. But what we're gonna do, AJ, on launch day, is have a ticker, kinda like a QVC show, how many sold we're gonna be reporting that throughout the day.

AJ Harper

Oh, that's, that's cool.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. It's, it's gonna be a good number. I'm sure. I'm confident, but we'll see. We'll see how the day goes. Why? So today we're talking about this, this runway of 12 to 18 months. And I, I think people receive it two ways. I hear 12 to 18 months, my actually heart. I can feel it speeding up right now. That's not enough time. <Laugh>. Conversely, I hear other authors go, oh my gosh, I I'm not gonna worry about the book marketing until 12 days or 18 days beforehand. Why does a, why does this time matter and runway matter?

AJ Harper

Well, I think the chief reason is strategy. I just don't think that you have enough time to implement, first of all, to come up with a strategy and then implement it. What you're gonna do is maybe come up with a strategy that you can't execute. You know, some things take a long

don't write *that* book!

time. Yeah. I think, I think having enough time to think it through and implement it, but also relationships. That's not something you can rush. If you've got a short runway, you're dealing with the relationships you already have. If you have a longer runway, you can build some and maybe nurture some that are not as warm as they could be. And so then now you expanding that leverage,

Mike Michalowicz:

Talking about relationships, it's interesting. I will receive a contact, usually it's email and email. I, I rarely, I don't even monitor my own email, the majority of it, Amy does. And someone will reach out and say, Hey, Mike, you know, we met like seven years ago and so forth, and I have a new book coming out. Hey, would you promote it for me? Don't remember who his person is. There's been no contact for seven years. Amy just admittedly will ignore them or delete 'em, or they go into an archive for me to look at one day, and maybe I'll see it two years later. Yeah. Conversely, there's a, there's a fellow his name is David Schnermann. He's writing a new book called 11 Suitcases. It's a memoir and it's about a commitment he and his family made to move from New York City to Barcelona.

Mike Michalowicz:

And what their experience was like, the good, the bad, the ugly. And he called yesterday, he's like, Hey, the book's coming out. He's like, would you mind marketing for me? It's coming out in like a month or two. I'm like, yeah, dude, because I talked to David Shnerman every three months. Well, you do texts and stuff, you know, like funny jokes. We'll do calls together. He's gone out of his way to support me. He called me proactively about the money habits, said, Hey, I heard it through the grapevine. You got a book coming out, dude, why didn't you tell me? I wanna promote it to my community. He, he's not a famous author. He's not, he doesn't have a massive readership list. Quite the opposite. But I will do anything to support David Sherman. So it just points to the fact that the best way to build a relationship, if you want to garner benefit and make a big ask, like, could you promote me? Could you endorse me? Is go every way to support this person. Even if you don't have a massive list or any kinda list, do whatever's within your power to earnestly and honestly support them. And the nature of reciprocity will come back to you.

AJ Harper

Agreed. But if you're on a, but you need a long wind runway for that.

Mike Michalowicz:

You need runway. Yeah. And, and David Sherman, it's been 15 years, it's been 15 years of a relationship, and now he's making his first ask, you know?

AJ Harper

Yeah. I definitely will tell you. I I hoard my own, asks

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz:

You what you hoard

AJ Harper

Ho like, I don't, it's not intentional. You're an

Mike Michalowicz:

Ask hoarder.

AJ Harper

That sounds bad. I know. Make sure you have the K

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. Oh, you got to <laugh>. I was about to say, you really gotta un enunciate that K You do.

AJ Harper

No, I'm just, I'm, I don't, I don't, I don't often ask. Yeah. so that's a separate, you know what? We should do a whole episode on the art of the ask.

Mike Michalowicz:

Well, we'll, we'll, title it ask hoarding.

AJ Harper

Oh, maybe I'm going, I'm going down. This is getting worse, but we should do a whole episode. I'm, how do you ask?

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah, no, I a hundred percent agree. It, it's surprising to me how many people ask in a way that is legitimately offensive. And then it becomes conflict. Because if there's a no response, why aren't you responding? And then conversely, if there is a response and a, a decline or an alternative reduced a conflict, and I'm like, are you kidding me? You are burning your bridge out of this, this is the hill you're gonna die on. It's, it's actually fascinating. Gimme some other reasons to have long runway.

AJ Harper

Well, one thing is you won't overload your team, you know? Yeah. I mean, if you're,

Mike Michalowicz:

What, what is your, who, who's on your team? Like, what's a good author team?

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper

All right. This is, is a point of contention because not everybody has money for a team. Right? So I, I think it's unrealistic to do it completely solo. But you could, you're just going to have to take a break from a lot of other things. On my team, it's my two employees, Laur and Sadé, who are amazing. And then if there's a launch, there's probably also some, you know, there's a graphics people that are coming in to make sure all the media, as you know, the marketing assets are created because my team can do some of it, but then it can overload them if there's too much they have to do. So there anybody who, the person who's making a website for the book, then there's potentially, you might have, somebody who's organizing a specific event. If it's a big event, I know you have someone doing that for your big 12 hours. So, you know, it just depends on who, what, how big your launch is. But the point is, if you've got employees or assistants, or even vendors that you're working with as subcontractors, when you rush them or ask too much of them, it's hard.

Mike Michalowicz:

I'm, you know, I'm making notes for future episodes. I've been horrific with this. So I wrote down the ask, but also the team, I think this is a whole episode. I'll tell you who's on my team. So my team, oh, by the way, one more question for you. First, your two people, are they full-time for you or contractors?

AJ Harper

They're full-time. But I'm running a whole business with them.

Mike Michalowicz:

And Okay. So it's not just your book business.

AJ Harper

No. And I've definitely, you know, tested their patience about how, you know, not not being as organized as I could be, or on time as I could be. So I think this is really on my mind right now about how, how important it is to be prepared. And the only way to be prepared is to allow yourself enough runway afforded self-time.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. So for us, the team, same thing is there's book sales, there are speaking is speaking revenue, there's sponsorship partnerships, there's the marketing of all that stuff. There's courses and classes. So this is the entire kind of universe of authorship. I have collectively six additional people on my team. All minus two are part-time. But one person Lee is my speaking agent, Lee Hayes, by the way, if you're looking for an extraordinary speaking agent, it's go leeward.com with a major caveat here. She's not engaging anybody <laugh>, unless you're an extraordinary speaker. So, like Jesse Cole from the Savannah Bananas is one of her speakers. So she's difficult to get, but maybe she could direct you. She gives courses and so forth on raising or elevating

don't write *that* book!

your platform. So check out go leeward.com. I have Andrea who leads our marketing efforts, partnerships and so forth.

Mike Michalowicz:

We have Amy who's managing my email shipments and all this different stuff. Erin, my personal scheduler Kelsey, who runs our organization. So, and it goes on. Adayla is on our team. There's, there's a lot of folks working in this universe. And The Money Habit, we started the marketing planning 24 months literally 24 months ago, two years in advance of this. And we're still feeling the crunch, like, oh, we wish we had another six months to get this out. So it just, it just gives you a sense of you can choose to do very little and you can rush it out and get very little impact, or you can articulate all these moving components to work together. And to your point, the more time the better. And we're pulling it off. There's no question about it, but there's still a little bit of this heart race at the end that a more time would've afforded this, I think a little easier flow.

AJ Harper

Yeah. I think also if you have a longer runway, you can do a bigger launch day or launch week event.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. We have, we, we have two banks like backing this. And you, you can't call 'em up and say, Hey, next week we have a launch. We started this discussion a year ago so they can organize or coordinate with what they got going on. Yeah. Yeah. So we, we, we just, you know, we have our launch coming up January 27th. I know this is already alive by that point, but to call a bank a year in advance, they already have plans for January 27th, a year later. So they're like, okay, here's what we can do to restructure our marketing to compliment that. And there's also discussions about what's the win-win? Like, yes, we wanna support you, Mike, 'cause we like you, but how are we coming out in front? And that how all had to be negotiated.

AJ Harper

Yeah. It's so, I mean, just, just thinking about that takes, you know, you have to have the pr it's just, it's so much coordination. Yeah. So much coordination. Also, I would say the monetization. So sometimes part of your launch is tied to the business model, right? So... Yeah. So you're launching a licensing program, you're launching, or you're in conjunction with your licensee, so they're doing their own launch stuff related to you. There's so you have to get that all in place. There's might be courses or programs you are creating that come in conjunction with that. So that's a lot of sorting out building, you know, if you're launching a program to coincide with the launch of the book or to just have available because of the book exists. That's a massive endeavor,

Mike Michalowicz:

don't write *that* book!

Dude. And we're, we're missing the biggest thing. Plus you need the time to read, write a must read from cover to cover before all this stuff happens. <Laugh>.

AJ Harper

Oh God, I love it. At this point I'm gonna challenge, I'm gonna be, it's gonna be interesting to see how you weave that stuff in. 'cause In every, I was just talking with people at, are writing one of my writing sprints about, yeah. I don't know if you remember, but in the last couple episodes you agreed to walk around with a sandwich board.

Mike Michalowicz:

A hundred hour. I totally remember. Yeah. I'm in. I I do. I am in.

AJ Harper

Okay, so now I'm just laughing. Every time you bring it up, it's like a <crosstalk>.

Mike Michalowicz:

You have to, you have to buy the supplies. Like I'm right. But I will go into New York City Times Square next to creepy Elmo and have a sandwich board that says whatever you want to say about Write a Must-Read.

AJ Harper

We were thinking the latest brainstorm was like, maybe it would just be the book cover.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh my gosh, I'm so in on that. I'm so in on that.

AJ Harper

We should everybody doing that. Just walking around with their book covers Yeah. On bodies.

Mike Michalowicz:

I, I love it. I'm in I'll, I'll walk around New York City, listen, it's great exercise. I'll walk around for two hours around New York City with a sandwich board.

AJ Harper

I'd like to see you go up and down the subway steps in it, <laugh>. And the thing is, New Yorkers will say nothing, as long as they'll say you're moving quickly, they're fine.

Mike Michalowicz:

don't write *that* book!

All right. So total, total diversion from what we're talking about. Guess what? I walked around New York City Inn for a television show, and no one flinched, I think I actually shared with you once before,

AJ Harper

Well, I believe it was with Greg, right? You were in a wedding dress.

Mike Michalowicz:

I was in a wedding dress with Greg. Yeah, you're, yeah, yeah. You, you're friend, my friend Greg, who

AJ Harper

Had a wedding

Mike Michalowicz:

And, and there's cameras filming and stuff, and not a single person flinched wedding

AJ Harper

Dress. Doing the wedding dress

Mike Michalowicz:

Boring guy in a wedding dress. Boring.

AJ Harper

Not even a thing. I my, my greatest, before we get back to it, my greatest here are my two greatest on the subway New York moments where nobody said anything. Number one entire tree on the subway. I don't mean like a little, little small thing. I mean like a tree that had to bend over to fit.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, that's great.

AJ Harper

No one said anything. Second Xerox machine, like full on 19 wheeling it. Big old beast of a Xerox machine. Two guys pushing it, pushing it on the subway car.

Mike Michalowicz:

It's so great. It's so great. Yeah.

AJ Harper

don't write *that* book!

No one said anything.

Mike Michalowicz:

All right with, with our window, that 12 to 18 months. In the notes you mentioned trade distribution. This is still something that goes over my head every time. Why is that important? How does that work?

AJ Harper

Well, if you have trade distribution, so not everybody does. If, you know, if you're self-published, you likely don't have it. If you're with a lot of hybrids, you likely don't have it. And if you're with some traditional publishers, you may not even have it. But let's say you do, they're on a long runway themselves because they're pitching to all the stores way before the book gets there. And if you want them to care enough about your book to highlight it, you have to get their attention before they're making their pitches. So you just have to reverse engineer that. If you're wondering, wait, when is all this happening? Ask, just call. Just ask your publisher. When is the sales team pitching actively going in to try to get books on shelves? When are they pitching barns and noble? When are they pitching target? When are they doing this?

AJ Harper

Find out what the cutoff is for when they're gonna choose your print run, because that's a big moment. And then you have to go backwards and try and get their attention during the window before big decisions are made. Because what you want is a sales team that wants to feature you, focus on you, emphasize you. If they feel like there's buzz about your book, they will wanna ramp it up. But they have dozens and dozens of books they're trying to sell. So they're gonna have favorites, a democracy. And if you have enough time, you can focus on this window when you are having to get their attention, which is a very specific thing different than front facing marketing. This is all happening behind the scenes. And you have to get their them to say, who's this dude? Who's this person? And so that they want to add gasoline to that fire, to that fire.

Mike Michalowicz:

I just had a new marketing idea. I, I gotta let it cook a little bit, but I, I'll share. Well, I, I I'll share just kind of what was triggering it. Barnes and Nobles we actually had them sub place a subsequent order with us because of anticipating demand, because we're working the trade distribution much better. We had a surge of orders go in through Barnes and Nobles to have them take notice and they noticed. And now it's triggering an idea how to actually do something that I've never done before. Building visibility, obviously we're, we're talking about this throughout, is the more time you have the more time you can build visibility. You know, the question I struggle with AJ is if you become aware of my book too early, does that build or destroy the precipice moment of the launch? Does that dissuade you from buying? Do you buy and then you forget? Like, could you build visibility too soon with your readers?

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper

I don't think you can build it too soon, but I think you can have too many asks too soon.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, that's good. That's so great. That's perfect. Okay, you nailed it. So succinctly, increasing your chances to get a national bestseller list. How many of your authors through T3 are pursuing national bestseller lists? How, how many folks is this important to and does it have an impact?

AJ Harper

Quite a few actually. I mean, I had, last year, I think we had 13 authors publish, and I think we had five na of those five national bestsellers.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh wow.

AJ Harper

And then one who was on the Canadian bestsellers, multiple Canadian bestsellers. Cara Poppitt. So Dr. Sunita Sah, Dr. Kerry Burnight, Dr. Katie Keller Wood I'm, I'm forgetting. So anyway, the point being I have, you know, that's a kind of a big number for my group because not everyone wants it and not everyone is a lot of people are self-published and it's much harder to do when you're self-published. But this year I have a few people with it on their mind. Like I mentioned Roseanne Capanna Hodge at the, the text from her, she's on that mission.

Mike Michalowicz:

You know, what's interesting is I've noticing the longer the runway the more you kinda get into the ethos of the conversation. So what I'm noticing is some of my most committed readers, but also some influential experts already mentioning the money habit within their communications. So I've been talking about the book for over a year for about two years, to be honest, but in, in earnest probably about 18 months. And I've been sharing insights from it and people are already deploying it and using it in their own in their own work and referencing it. But I got one more mega, mega one, but I wanna save it. But is just the last kind of bullet point to put emphasis on it in this list. Is there anything else, any other benefits Yeah. Of a young runway?

AJ Harper

Yeah, listen, if you're, if you don't have a lot of money, so you can't, you know, throw a bunch of thousands of dollars at your launch, then you need the longer runway. So if you don't have the money, take more time. 'cause You're gonna be doing a lot of things. DIY So it's a huge benefit to you to just take more time on the launch. You can actually get a lot done on your own. DI ying, it's just hard to do in a short timeframe.

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz:

I'll tell you the biggest benefit, this is the big one that I've discovered, is the more time you afford yourself, the more you get into the ethos of technology the SEO and ai EO is that, if that's the right term. But if right now you type in the money habit on your favorite search engine, you will likely see the top three listings minimally for the money habit. And the ideal scenario, I call it the page grab, is the entire search result is around you. So it's maybe the link to Amazon, maybe it's a couple articles about it, maybe it's your own website, et cetera, et cetera. Most people, when it comes to Google search, when I say most, I think like 99.9%, pick their navigation from that first page. Very rarely do people go to the second page or third page. So you've gotta be on the first page and you gotta be near the top.

Mike Michalowicz:

So you have to afford yourself time to get that. And then when it comes to ai, if you type in personal finance books it's gonna take a long haul to get there. Well, AI is reading and scraping all these websites to see are you in the ethos of other people's conversations and so forth. So you need that time to win ai EO We have a podcast I, I've created, we've renewed for season two called Becoming Self-Made. I'm so proud of this podcast, by the way. It's awesome. It's about the journey of entrepreneurs and authors and not rags to riches, but rags to wherever they are today and the challenges they're still facing. Kind of the ugly side as opposed to the insta famous stuff you see constantly, if you type in becoming self-made there was other content that dominated that space and we're slowly chipping away at it.

Mike Michalowicz:

But we're only like, we're only like four or five months into it, it's gonna take 12 to 18 months to own that. And the last thing I wanted to share, to me, the ultimate confirmation that all this marketing is working, 'cause you prepared for it, is you start seeing retailers drop the price off of MSRP. It used to be Amazon was monitoring Barnes and Nobles, and Barnes and Nobles was monitoring bookshop, and bookshop was monitoring and or Amazon. And the second one did a price drop. They all would match instantly. That's not the game anymore. They look like they're, they're no longer dropping that 'cause they know it's a race to the bottom. What they're looking at is how many people are viewing your book on their page, and how many people are clicking to make a purchase. If, do you have large volumes of people looking, maybe even putting in their cart, but not making the purchase?

Mike Michalowicz:

They start manipulating the price to find out what's the optimal conversion, which means if you start seeing price drops, they're trying to optimize around your book, which means you have enough volume that people are demanding it. If your book is selling at MSRP when the book launches, you have not built enough pre demand to justify a price drop. So the money habit, again, I'm two, almost two years into marketing this thing. The price drop only happened on Amazon about two months ago, and it's not even significant. It went from retail 29 to I think 28

don't write *that* book!

and 5 cents or something. And, and maybe it's less now, but, but the point is, you gotta be working it working and working it for those engines to start optimizing around it. And when, when the retail engines are optimizing around it, then, you know, they're very motivated to move the book and everything's coming into alignment.

AJ Harper

I love that perspective. There's so few authors that are tracking any of that and really you're, you're always tracking it. I love that.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh yeah. We report it in in our huddle too. Like what's our pricing at?

AJ Harper

Yeah, I love that.

Mike Michalowicz:

Is this, you know, listen, I, you, you know me, I go over the top, all in. But to me that's, that's what necessitates successful authorship. It's funny, I was at a conference in Atlanta and after I did my presentation, they brought in I guess like the VIP group and did a private conversation with me. So it was maybe 20 entrepreneurs. And one of the entrepreneurs says, I wanna become an author. I wanna sell the volume of books like you're selling. How do you do it <laugh>? And the number one thing I said, I said, well, well tell me I said, we're gonna do the, the Uber trick if you get into an Uber car. I said, and the Uber driver while driving says, what do you do for a living? What's your response? Like, what do you do for a living?

Mike Michalowicz:

And she goes, well, I'm an educator, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. I said, okay. And at the very end she goes, and you know, I've, I've written a book about this. I'm like, if you don't lead by saying I'm an author and then shut your pie hole, you are not committed at the right level. It's gotta be your true identity. 'cause Then we align with it. That's my overarching thing is if, if you don't see yourself as an author, period and everything else, that's just an is the add-on asterisk to your life. You ain't there, in my opinion.

AJ Harper

Okay. I am gonna give you a counterpoint. I don't, I think a lot of people don't want, I think that the book is really important to them and they do wanna sell, but it is part of an ecosystem. It's part of what they do. It's not the thing. Okay. And so I, so I, I still think you can sell a lot of books and of course, write a good book and have a great career as an author if you don't consider that your first identifier.

Mike Michalowicz:

don't write *that* book!

Okay. In that case, is this plan get modified if it's not your first identifier?

AJ Harper

I don't know. I mean, I think, I don't think it's, I don't, I don't know. I I feel you need to set book sales goals based on your book itself Yeah. And the mission you're trying to accomplish with that book, but also whatever financial goals you have, et cetera, that all of that plays into it. And then also your set of resources, because we have to have some realism. We have to have some, you know, okay. Do, look, you say you wanna sell a million books. You have to understand the tradeoff for that. Yeah. I think that's what you are talking about when you say, are you an author with a capital A? Is that your main deal? What you're really saying is, are you accepting the tradeoff? And Right. That's exactly true. You, so I think if you put in terms of, oh, let me look. Okay, what is, what is my life gonna look like if I'm trying to get to a million books sold? I'm just picking this number. So I, I think the answer is, you, you need to, you can still be successful. You can still sell a lot of books, even if your identity is not all wrapped up in authorship.

Mike Michalowicz:

Hmm.

AJ Harper

You just need to sit down and have a custom sales goal that is related to this book, your own set of resources and your financial goals. And I don't, it doesn't sound like that person who asked you the question has any clue what any of those things are for themselves. They're just looking at what you have and wanting that, but not really considering, first of all, if it's even possible with the book they're writing.

Mike Michalowicz:

Correct. Yeah. Not going with planning. I mean, those, those VIP sessions are a little bit difficult 'cause you're allowed one question that will hopefully change your whole life. And I couldn't sit down and learn from her and her objectives. But sadly, that one question is I think how many aspiring authors or established authors go into their marketing? What, what's the magic bullet for, for let's, let's pretend we were doing a brand new book together. Ubut we're the, the book is titled whatever. And, and, and, and the book is written. But now we're in the marketing plan. The very first thing we do is, and I want to be clear for our audience, you and I partner on the writing and production of the book. You do support our marketing, but the marketing lead comes, that's an internal responsibility for us. And I rely on you for additional content, additional ideas.

Mike Michalowicz:

So you bring in ideas from the outside that I haven't done and you'll support the launch. You communicate with your own community. But the, the lead of the planning organiz-- organizing is internal. And so we have a meeting in-house, it's Kelsey, our president, and Andrea who's our marketing lead. And the first thing we sit down and say, who are we serving with this? Which

don't write *that* book!

you and I already developed. So we have clarity about this and what has worked in the past to serve this community. Now you and I already identified this is what the community needs next. So we don't need to address that. But, but who's the community we're serving and, and how have we served them or given exposure to books in the past? The money habits and expansion. It's the entrepreneurial community is the heart of this. But it is not the, when I say the heart, it's the heart of who I spoke with in the past and serve in the past.

Mike Michalowicz:

They will benefit from this book, but they're not the sole beneficiary. It there, there's this, anyone who earns an income and wants to manage their money better and wants to get control and authority of their money is a will benefit from this. So we define the who and then the how's The mistake I've made in the past is say, oh, here's like the hundred things we did that worked. And yeah, a hundred things worked, but they worked at different degrees. Of the hundred things, 80 of 'em sold maybe a book here and a book there. Five, maybe 10 things moved, hundreds or thousands of books. Andrea has been extraordinary in saying, let's, let's not do a hundred scattershot things. Let's nail a few. And I'll just go back to the, the essence of what works. And then the one little caveat we do right now, your own email list, your own community, as long as they're an engaged community and you've been serving them still, dollar for dollar is the best sales mechanism.

Mike Michalowicz:

What we're 30 years into email existing and it's still is the best sales mechanism. So our own list, the second best sales mechanism is other people's email list. Who earnestly wanna market our book? Those two combined, I would say maybe move 50% of our sales during the launch period. The next thing is podcast appearances. Now, if you have your own podcast that's established and, and very popular, your own podcast is the best other podcast, appearances are very effective. As long as this podcast speak to your community. And that community has trust in that host to, to recommend books. The challenge is there is, in the entrepreneurial space, for example, a few major podcasts hopefully becoming, becoming self-made is one of them. It is one of the top 10% downloaded in the world right now. If you wanna be a guest on becoming self-made, I, I feel like a schmuck saying this, but you can't, it, it, there is now a vetting mechanism.

Mike Michalowicz:

There's a, a team that that's selecting candidates is really difficult to get on there. And this is true I think for all the major shows, but the small shows, they may be hungry for great guests. So I think in podcasts we're in the quantity game. Bulk buys, this is the one you push. Who are the organizations, groups, associations that wanna buy many books simultaneously as, as pre-orders? And then we always pick I try to do something new and we have a few things we're dabbling in. So it's not gonna be five. But we, we did the mom campaign again, that did give us some results. We are doing our first time, a 12 hour summit, 50 guests are coming on all from the personal finance space or akin to it to present. As of a week ago, we had 1.1 1,100 people already registered.

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz:

And we hadn't started promoting it aggressively yet. We're anticipating 3000 registrants. Oh, okay. How many? 1,100 registrants so far. Okay. For the summit. And we anticipate about 3000 by the time this summit comes about. And what we're doing is it's like a QVC show, so you're gonna be on there. Yeah, aj and we're inviting everyone, everyone to come on for about 10 minutes, 15 minutes in certain cases. Jean Chatzky is coming on. She, I love her work. 'cause I followed her since the Today Show back 25 years ago, talking about personal finance. We're encouraging those guests to promote to their own audience. And when you come on, we're gonna promote your thing so you know, what's the selfish benefit, if you will, for the guests. So we're gonna promote your thing, but we're also gonna have this constant count, like a QVC show or one of those dial-ins back on PBS where they're trying to raise money. Hey, we have more callers coming in, more books sold. So we're gonna talk about that.

AJ Harper

That's cute. Yeah. I'm excited to, I'm, I'm excited to see it. I've actually sent a, an email out or an email out to my community telling, because my community's author and aspiring authors that they should register just to see how you do it

Mike Michalowicz:

And a hundred percent mm-hmm <affirmative>. And hundred percent the usage of, and so we have, we have milestones as we move along pre-orders,

AJ Harper

We can pause. Can we pause? Yeah. That's a huge endeavor I'm seeing. I'm not organizing that event, but I am in that event. And so I'm seeing all the emails, all the coordination that's, you had to bring another person on just to do that coordination for that event part-time. Yeah,

Mike Michalowicz:

Marco. Yeah.

AJ Harper

Yeah. And so that is a re you know, a reason again, to have the long launch runway.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. That event alone started I think four months back now where we said, okay, we're committing to this. The, I I had to reach out to all, we identified all the people that qualified. We identified top 100 of people that we want on the, the summit who I already have rapport with for at least a year, but ideally 10 years <laugh>. So the, you know, I I, I didn't reach out to I don't know, famous Susie Orman. Susie Orman is extraordinary. And wow, what a win that would be. She has no clue who I am. She has no clue. I'm a super fan and I just don't have rapport with there. So we didn't even pursue stuff like that. And what's the likelihood of that happening when

don't write *that* book!

she promotes her own list? Then once we had the list, we started the, I started the outreach and transferred it to Marco saying, Hey, if you're interested, here's Marco.

Mike Michalowicz:

And then Marco organized it, and tons of moving parts. Just two weeks ago we started platform testing. We're using Stream Yard. We did two trial runs already, like a, a trial presentation and day and like, and, and we, there was lots of glitches and problems. So there's all this, this buildup throughout, there's milestones and the milestones are the big thing is the marketing of the book package itself, the dust cover, the endorsements and so forth. Then it comes the, the community assembling a street team a assembling influencers to market via email, coordinating our own email communication. And then there's this milestone of what's the big new thing we're doing? And it's this launch thing. So we, we, we had to move these things along. Part of it you don't know, like, we don't know if this is gonna result in a single book sale. We are highly confident it will, back to our grand debate over pre-orders, PR has been very helpful to see that we're making progress and how retailers are getting engaged in this.

AJ Harper

Yeah. I'm curious about how much time you think your team spends on planning when you have a 12 to 18 month runway. I'm sure it ramps up.

Mike Michalowicz:

I would say, you know, I gotta say percentage basis, I would say I'm, I'm just gonna say 10% of their time is, is in planning. In the very beginning we plan, but then there's dynamic planning and that's where most of the time in planning is spent. Oh. What we thought would come through is not coming through. Mm. We, for example we have an extraordinary website designer who got hired two years ago by a corporation and they discovered she is so good, we're gonna take all her time. So she's impossible to get hold of. And we've used her for so long and now we don't have a website designer. It's like, oh, we gotta pivot. So we moved for a lot of our stuff to, I think it's Entreport, I can't remember what the technology is to set up pages and stuff like this.

Mike Michalowicz:

So there was a learning curve and we're, we're adjusting our multi-book offer a little bit. Not that what we're offering, but how it's being positioned because that dynamic happened. Listen, our house didn't get flooded. Cough, cough, cough. But, but we have to pivot. So there's a lot of dynamic planning that happens. People listen, the launch show, when we do this, we know someone is not gonna connect because they forgot, even though they've been reminded, their internet went down because it happens all the time. Like stuff is, this is a live show, so there's contingency planning that's going on. Okay. And we have contingencies for contingencies. So there, the, here's a little scenario we went through. Person can't connect. What are we doing? We have readings prepared that I'm gonna cut live to me and say, Hey, let's read a chapter. What if someone can't connect?

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz:

And Mike's in the bathroom when this happens, like literally a contingency for the contingency. Then we're cutting to Kelsey or Andrea's staring behind the scenes of let's tell you something that's going on that even Mike doesn't know about. What about a contingency for a contingent? What if everyone's disconnected? Well, then we have a, a slide that comes up and says, we're on intermission. So we have plans. We have two studios. We have my home studio and the office studio ready to go. So we have multiple internet connections and still things could still go haywire. Yes. But that's, that's the planning.

AJ Harper

So again, that's another example of having enough time to think all of that through. By the way, way, why do you think you get to go to the bathroom <laugh>?

Mike Michalowicz:

Exactly. 12 hours, man, who did that filibuster? The governor from New Jersey, or the mayor from Newark Booker.

AJ Harper

Cory Booker.

Mike Michalowicz:

Cory. Yeah. He, so he, he wore adult diapers. He was not allowed to leave the stage. He intentionally did not drink any fluids to dehydrate himself. So he gets filibuster for, that's

AJ Harper

Gonna be you, no,

Mike Michalowicz:

26 hours or something.

AJ Harper

No, nothing.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. I'm not that level that, that's varsity. I'm,

AJ Harper

Let's just get a quick overview, just quick. Yeah. What do you think are the primary areas to focus on if you have 12 to 18 months? I'm gonna say I wanna see bulk sales. So you can ramp up pre-orders, hopefully connected to book scan. So it's reporting. Yeah. For you, and I'm gonna say

don't write *that* book!

relationships, and I'm gonna say, get all of your marketing materials and digital assets done. What else do you think are the big things to focus on in 12 to 18 months?

Mike Michalowicz:

I would say your own list and preparing them. Delivering value. Delivering value, delivering value. There's a book by Gary Vaynerchuk called *jab, jab, jab, right Hook*. It's about serving, serving, serving, and then going for the ask that I think is so overlooked. I double check mark your relationships. This is where you, you hopefully are in the position to make the ask, because you have to afford them time too. People are not waiting for the call from you saying, tomorrow's go day, let's do this. So you need to give them advance notice. Six months I find is the ideal timeframe to start asking people but even 12 months in advance. So those relationships better be strong. They better, you better be in their in their whatever orbit. And, and, and wanting to help you and start just being public about it. So, you know, for me, I'm, I've been doing keynotes now on the money habit for about a year. You should be, listen, you should be doing keynotes five years before your book comes out so you can hone the craft. And we've been touching on and working on it. I've been living the system, but being hired specifically for keynotes, it's been in this last year that it's really ramped up. So those would be the ones I would focus in on.

AJ Harper

Any disadvantages of a long runway? I can think of zero disadvantages.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. I, well, I, I've seen it. People flame out. So there, there's certain people that just can't stick with it. And I, I think it's okay to recognize that I, many entrepreneurs I know get so hyped up, you better with their new idea. But then seeing it through is a real struggle for them. So to offset that, I would say you better get a team in that's gonna be the integrators. If you're gonna be the, you know, visionary, whatever. Secondly, move from this long runway into short sprints so you don't burn yourself out or give up on it. That's the worst. All this hype. And then it phases, it fades away before the book even launches.

AJ Harper

Mm. I mean, I'm curious about this. When you see that whole plan put together after it's, 'cause I've seen your stuff, your big intricate spreadsheet, the spreadsheets and stuff, all the tab all the columns. What does that feel like to you? The excitement or nervousness or both?

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah, definitely a nervous that can we handle everything? So the way we've addressed that is by reducing variability. Kudos again, to Andrea. She brought in Relationships are extraordinary. There's a, a company called Kick and Kick is a AI based accounting platform. It's remarkable. And they've become an extraordinary supporter. Relay, who I've been working with for a, the

don't write *that* book!

longest time. I just, I love 'em up, down and in between. And she's like, it's the relationships with these companies. 'cause We're all serving the same community that's so much more valuable than everything else. So reduce the variability, the variability makes me nervous. And the, the focus and concentration reduces the nervousness around variability, but increases the nervousness about, well, well, these few things work because we're only doing a few things. So I can't ever avoid the nervousness, the excitement, you know, it's, it's not there for me.

Mike Michalowicz:

I, I don't, I'm excited. I, I, I'm, I, I wanna do such a good job. The excitement happens afterwards. I, I don't know if this is like how, at least for me, for sports, I wasn't excited to go play a game. I was excited once the game was over that I put my best effort into it, even if the outcome wasn't a win. And I think, yeah, it, it, it's actually like, like with business, I, I think I told you my tradition, every January 1st join, or January 2nd, I come into the office when we're closed and I, I literally lay on the floor and just kind of look up at the ceiling and just take it all in. And I walk up and I walk around to every cubicle, every office in there and just show appreciation and just feel what the year was like. So for me it's ironic, maybe, or weird, but the excitement comes in reflection, not in the moment. How about you do, do you get excited before, after, between ever <laugh>? Is it all a

AJ Harper

Nervousness? You know me? Hmm. I do get excited. And, you know, the thing I'm excited about is I love hearing from readers. That is so cool. You know, and that's the thing I'm really excited about. I also tend to, in my launches, bring my students in, highlight people I care about. So I'm trying to also promote their stuff. And that always jazzes me up if anytime that I can shine a spotlight on the authors I work with, which I usually make that part of my launch. Now, I'm, now I'm ready to rock. But if it's just about me, no, I'm not excited at all.

Mike Michalowicz:

Isn't that funny? And let me tell you something, 'cause that just reminded me, the, the greatest foreign excitement I get to is from readers. So, and I've shared this before, I set up a loop when people read a book, they can email me. So I'm like, oh, let's load my email right now. Three minutes ago, an email came in from Kathy, I won't say her last name. And she's reading Profit First and thanking me. But another person, a say a SSE, I won't say email, just an hour or two before that saying it was a longer one. This is such a great book from Estonia. So say from Estonia just emailed me. And then Matthew Craig, Kenny, Rosa, all today have emailed committing to Profit First or some Clockwork people. And some All In people. So I've set up, I, I call it a feedback loop because my love languages is words of affirmation that gets me excited every time I get an email. Ooh, it, it makes me feel electric. That's kind of funny. The excitement's after the book.

AJ Harper

don't write *that* book!

Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

Anything else on this topic? AJ? Did we nail it?

AJ Harper

I think we did. And, and I wanna point out that next week we're doing a second part in this, which I think is really important, which is if you only have three to six months out, so not, what do you do? If you had 12 to 18 months and now you're at three months, what if all you had was three to six months? Yeah. Then what do you do?

Mike Michalowicz:

You know what I like to explore when we do that too, is do you really only have three to six months? I mean, for something that's news,

AJ Harper

You're trying to, you're trying to expand it or trying to change it already

Mike Michalowicz:

Already. I'm just saying if it's news specific, if it's world event specific, maybe I, I just, I have authors to say, I, I gotta get this book out in three months, and it's a self set deadline, and they compromise everything. Actually, we talked about it on a prior episode. There is someone who's very well known in the entrepreneurial space, like 10 times more awareness than me by or more. And they are under this artificial release, and I'm like, I'm begging them not to do it. And it's, it's falling on death ears. So

AJ Harper

True. Totally agree. We are in agreement. And, and also that's what my beautiful fairy godmother hairstylist says. And also, there are still people who only have three to six months for whatever reason. That's what they've got. So we're gonna do a service to those people. How can you maximize that? What could you do?

Mike Michalowicz:

I, I beg our reader, our listeners of the show do one thing and they get a copy of Write a must read right now. And listen, I say it all the time, and yes, I'll wear a sandwich board on this, but this, this show. You volunteer all your time to be here, aj. We are not getting compensated. We had, we did have one sponsor of sponsor, three episodes, one sponsor. Yeah. And, and you know, that did net \$250, like it did bring in massive cash to pay for us for this platform for two months. <Laugh>. It, the greatest way you can honor us is to get AJ's book and gift it to a friend. So, I know this is a big bold, but would you please right now go onto your favorite retailer and

don't write *that* book!

buy, Write a Must-Read? Okay. this website or our website's at dw.tb.podcast.com, AJ's prepared free materials are waiting for you.

Mike Michalowicz:

You can join our email list. It's a great way for us to communicate with you when we have cool happenings going on. If you want to pitch us on a show idea, or you want us to share your story and give a shout out just like we did a little earlier in this episode, email us at hello@dwtbpodcast.com. I'm overseeing an imprint called Simplified. It's an entrepreneurial imprint at page two. We are so proud of what we accomplished and we are seeking additional authors for the imprint. If you speak to entrepreneurial community, if you have a profoundly unique, simple idea and you are gonna go all in on authorship or already are that we should have a conversation. Thanks again for joining us for this episode. As always, the grand reminder from AJ herself, it's this,

AJ Harper

Don't write that book. Write the greatest book you can.