

# don't write *that* book!

## Episode 121:

### “Planning Your Launch 3 – 6 Months Out”

#### **Mike Michalowicz:**

Welcome back to the Don't Write That book podcast where you can learn how to write your bestseller and own your authorship. Follow along with us as we give you an insider's view of the book industry. Now, here are your hosts, myself, Mike Michalowicz, and AJ Harper. I, uh, <laugh> have made the most absurd home building request in my life, and I'm so excited. And Krista approved. So I gotta give you the heads up. What we're doing, AJ, the, the preface to this is we went to an island in the Caribbean with a bunch of entrepreneurs, and this one particular night we're at a party and they say, we'd like to welcome our DJ. And there was no DJ booth or no nothing. So I'm like, this is weird. And the booth came out of the ground like it elevator, the, and, and the music starts and like, oh my God.

#### **Mike Michalowicz:**

It went on to be the most epic party I've ever been to in my life. Fast forward, uh, I'm sitting here and I'm, I'm just revisiting this experience over the months that, uh, subsequently gone by. And I'm like, could you imagine to have a party at our house and a DJ comes outta the ground? I'm like, I, I want that. Well, not practical, definitely not affordable. Not doable. So I'm just, I keep on iterating this, like, what would be a surprise party moment? I'm like, A disco ball. A disco ball. So I went to Krista, uh, I, I got her glass of wine, she drank it down. I'm like, Hey, you want a second class? She's like, not really. I'm like, ah, you should have it. And I say, Hey, here's my idea. Uh, in our basement, we have a drop ceiling. What if in the center, and that's where we have like our gatherings and stuff, like when we have guests and stuff over, it has like a, there's some game down here and stuff.

#### **Mike Michalowicz:**

What if we had a, and we've, uh, speakers, a mus, uh, a, a disco ball that comes outta the ceiling. So it's hidden, it's hidden until we say, we gotta turn this party up to 11. And we flip a switch, and then disco ball comes out. And she said, if you can do it, you can have it. And I'm like, ma called the electrician within seconds. And he's like, we can actually do that. So it's not done. It's still in the ideation stage, but I think we're gonna have a disco ball drop out of the ceiling.

#### **AJ Harper**

I want you to just think about all of the home projects that you have talked about on this show.

#### **Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah.

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**AJ Harper**

Young Frankenstein room.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yep. Right, right, right down there in the hallway. Yeah.

**AJ Harper**

You know, the podcast room?

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Podcast Room. There's a cold plunge, which I, you know, talked about the cold plunge space. What

**AJ Harper**

A sauna.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Sauna

**AJ Harper**

Orchard.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Orchard fi. We have three fire pits kind of laid around. Which I know it sounds so excessive. It's like, was is this guy living in a mansion? No, our, our home is, I think 2,500 square feet. It's not a small home, but it's not big by any imagination.

**AJ Harper**

It is big by many people's imagination. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

You know, I take it back, I take it back. For the area we live in, uh, most houses are about 3000 square feet to bigger. So in, in, in this town, this community, it's one of the actually more average to average smaller sized homes.

**AJ Harper**

Okay. That said, you realize where you're going. Right? Like,

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**Mike Michalowicz:**

Insane.

**AJ Harper**

Do you remember like, Neverland?

**Mike Michalowicz:**

<laugh>? Yeah. Well, I did think about getting a cage. We could put a monkey in.

**AJ Harper**

Don't do that. Don't do that. No, no animals in cages. Um,

**Mike Michalowicz:**

It does feel that way. Just

**AJ Harper**

Want you to. Just want to have a moment where you're like, you

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Know what it is, aj, I now, I realize is we're empty nesters. So these rooms, it's not like we are building or expanding. We're taking our kids' rooms. I'm taking our kids' rooms and converting them to the young Frankenstein room.

**AJ Harper**

No, that's not what I mean. I mean, maybe we need to have just like a reflection moment of where

**Mike Michalowicz:**

I think I do.

**AJ Harper**

How, what is what? Where's the end? Where's the end?

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Uh, yeah. And I wonder if it's 'cause I miss, miss the children. Like, this is what I'm doing to kind of, so I don't have a totem to them. And I walk by and I'm like, I wish Jake still lived here.

**AJ Harper**

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I don't think that's it. I think you love a fun project. I think you

**Mike Michalowicz:**

I do. And I do too. Yeah.

**AJ Harper**

You always wanna cool thing that you can be focused on.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah. So disco ball,

**AJ Harper**

And I shouldn't really talk. I built the whole other house,

**Mike Michalowicz:**

And by the way, the disco ball based upon my calculations, has to be the size of a softball. So I think, I think people are visualizing like, like a real disco ball. No, I, it is gotta be small and I gotta get two lights somehow pointing at it. So this is a big

**AJ Harper**

Thing. It's gonna be the size of a softball.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah. For it to, for everything to fit. It's a small space. It's not like it's a big space, you know, but they make 'em that size and they still function. So it's, I wonder if it's gonna be anti-climatic. Right.

**AJ Harper**

So you well, you have to do that. It's like, uh, all anticipation. You should get like fog machines. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Everything. Yeah.

**AJ Harper**

Boom. Here comes, here it comes. Like, so that when it finally comes, it's so funny 'cause it's small,

**Mike Michalowicz:**

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It's tiny. I love that. The, I love it. <laugh> Flo Riders low is playing low, low, like, and, and all of a sudden this little ee baseball comes down.

**AJ Harper**

That's better now. Okay. Now. And,

**Mike Michalowicz:**

And it has a squeak too. Every time it revolves it goes ee <laugh>.

**AJ Harper**

Oh man. Okay. That's funny. That's funny. Oh,

**Mike Michalowicz:**

All right. Uh, today we're gonna talk about your book launch. If it's only three to six months away, last month or last week, we talked about it being up to 18 months away. You're listening to Don't Write That Book. Uh, this is AJ Harper, who I'm speaking with. She is my colleague, my co-writer, and my friend and the co-host of the show. I'm Mike Michalowicz. And, uh, the show name is Don't Write That Book because too many authors are writing that book. The throwaway, the the lack of effort or, or interest in making something that's impactful. And gosh, the world does not need more books, but it does need more great books. And you have the opportunity to do that. AJ I admire that you riff with me. I talk about something so silly and absurd and you're like, oh, here's what you can do. <laugh>,

**AJ Harper**

<laugh>.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Wow. Get, get a fog. You added a fog machine to it.

**AJ Harper**

Well, 'cause it's funny that, it's funny, but I thought you were gonna do a big old disco ball and now you're telling me it's the size of a softball. That's, that's now, now it has to be the funny part of it that has to be like the Michalowicz of it.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Oh, I love the buildup. I love it. Yeah.

**AJ Harper**

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Um, I admire that. You're really freaking strange, Mike. You're a weird with a capital w and you are happy there in that space. Pleasing and amusing yourself.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

That that's what it boils down to. Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

I was sitting, 'cause you know, I'm a football fanatic in my little space down here where the disco ball is intended to go watching television, just loving all the nonsense around me. The memorabilia, the, the multiple television. So I can watch the same game in current live time, but also on a 32nd delay, just in case I missed something on the live. I can look over to the delay and have the stats in front of me. It's insane. The only person I know on this planet who is more eccentric and odd in regards to their home is Sally Hogshead. Oh.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

If you ever get a ch she's one of my favorite authors of all time. Uh, she wrote a book called Fascinate. I think that's a pinnacle piece of work. Um, her most popular work actually is how the world sees you. But I'll tell you, if you pick up a book, it's fascinating 'cause it, it shows how people become fascinated with things and interest, uh, in books. And if you wanna sell your books, it's gotta be fascinating. And she shows you how to do it. So get her book. Well, I've never been to her house in person. She lives in Florida, but she has taken me for tours of it. And it is, um, what's the, what's the term when you collect, um, animals that have passed away and you, you preserve taxidermy. Yeah. So she is, uh, into taxidermy, but of odd creatures like a two-headed snake, um, is in her home. Um, she has all these peculiar things. It's not just animals, there's just that, that just stands out. 'cause she's a couple of these odd animals in taxidermy. She has an absent, um, serving device. Like who drinks absent that was from the ni like the 17 hundreds. She is the most lovely, eccentric, awesome human on this planet. So,

**AJ Harper**

You know, I gotta, I gotta say, I think that, um, I don't, well first of all, I don't have anything as great as that in my home, but I do have an entire, I do have a ridiculously huge porch at our lake house.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yes, you do. <laugh>

**AJ Harper**

Could roller skate in there. And I have one corner of it completely dedicated to jigsaw puzzles.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

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Oh my gosh, that's amazing. There's

## **AJ Harper**

Four big chairs, the table. And then I have the turn the turny thing that the puzzle goes on. And it has

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Like a lazy Susan almost,

## **AJ Harper**

But it's giant. And you can, so you can flip it around and the puzzle table's round and then there's drawers inside the puzzle table so that you can do little sections and then keep the things, the pieces sorted. And that's an entire corner of my porch, which was intentional. And we said to the architect that I need a dedicated, this comes from years of having to move the freaking puzzle from, so some people can eat or something. And I just want, I just want a puzzle that's there all the time. And you know what's cool is when my authors come to do editing retreat Yeah. I leave it there so that they can participate in whatever puzzle I'm working on and help me finish it.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

The absurdities of, of how our interests manifest. Um, while we're about to talk about this, this window to launching, I'll tell you, if you want to get your softball size disco ball or a jigsaw puzzle rotating table, you need to have the money to do it. And you can do it using the Money Habit brand new book that I wrote with aj. I think it's the pinnacle of our work to this point. Um, check it out at your favorite retailer. I'd be honored if you pick it up. All right, so let's, let's talk about this window, this three to six-month window. AJ, why, why do authors get in this place in the first place? 'cause this last week we talked about an up to 18-month window.

## **AJ Harper**

We did. And right at the end of the podcast, you, you correct immediately. Like yeah, you're immediately like, no three to six months. No, I question that at a month. At another month. You got it. The truth is there will still be people who just only have three to six months. So to be clear, we're not saying what do you do in the last three to six months? Right. We're saying, what if you only have from start to finish a three to six month window? Um, what are the reasons why the number one that I see with my students is just procrastination. And I've done it too.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Is that fear? Is that fear driven or what?

## **AJ Harper**

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Yes. Well, okay. The two primary reasons are fear and, and, um, slash overwhelm. I think fear and overwhelm are linked, but then there's also, uh, overcommitting. And that's my Achilles heel. Hmm. So it's, you know, it's just, uh, uh, uh, too much, uh, too much going on. Yeah. So you end up with a great big plan that you then have to eliminate things off the plan. Um, or you didn't start soon enough. So procrastination is number one. Um, but then sometimes people do have this short window. It's maybe their publisher wants it out at a certain time. Maybe it's related to current events. And so you're in a hurry. They're fast tracking it because there's this brief window. Um, that, that could be the reason. Uh, there's a whole host of reasons that could be personal to you, why it needs to go get out in time. I do question most people when they tell me that. I do think most people are, unless it's coming from the publisher, I think most people are shortsighted about the release date. I think they're trying to meet, well, it, okay, here's one that I heard. I've heard, I've heard, well, it's Women's History Month,

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Right? Okay.

**AJ Harper**

No, no one cares. No one cares. Right. Do something in Women's History month next year to promote your existing book, but you don't have to line it up with, you know, Independence Day or whatever that special day is related to your book. Secondly, it doesn't matter if you've got, you're booked at a big conference and you want to book out for the conference, that's shortsighted. There's how many people at the conference? 500, 2000. It, that's not, that's not nothing. But you don't have to correspond the launch with that. You can do cool things with pre-order at that event. You can do all kinds of things. You can

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Exactly. That's how you handle that.

**AJ Harper**

You don't don't, you don't have to have it out at that time. And then the number one, the number one reason that is the most shortsighted, and I hear it all the time. I want it out in time for Christmas

**Mike Michalowicz:**

<laugh>. Why? I'm gonna give you a bigger reason actually, but I like that one. But

**AJ Harper**

They, this is what happened. They wanted out in time for Christmas for two reasons. They think that there's gonna be this big rush for people to buy stuff as gifts when in actuality most people are buying their gifts much earlier. So people say, I need out in time for Christmas. And then

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they think they're gonna have some sort of December release date, way too late. Books that are designed to be purchased for Christmas come out in September. I even August. Um, definitely by October. But also that's shortsighted too. The second reason they want that is to give it to their friends and family. Like they're having this moment of, I really wanna add this precious, here's my gift to you, my book. Print it out a Kinko's, stick it in a box and be done with it.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah. Yeah. And then become Special Egg an heirloom, because it was the first print. Um, I'll tell you, every holiday season, all of my books sell at a higher level. Uh, there's a seasonality to it. The books that are the most popular profit first, the Pumpkin Plan, clockwork, Algan start to move that way now too. There's a, a notable jump during the holiday season. And so what I have concluded is, 'cause I do this, if a book is, is popular and it's of extraordinary impact, I'll buy it and gift it to someone. I bought How To Win Friends and Influence People, which is over a hundred years old. Um, I bought the most copies of it ever this holiday season to gift to people that I think would be served by that. Well. But I'll give you the number one, number one reason. Wait, wait a minute, wait a minute. People rush a book and they shouldn't, here it is. Because they think that if they don't release it immediately, someone else is gonna beat them to the punch. And their book is no longer relevant.

## **AJ Harper**

True. But can I back up? (Yeah.) Just because your books have an increase, you just made it sound like you should have it ready by Christmas. That's

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

No, I didn't mean that. No, I I mean, it's gonna jump no matter what. Yeah.

## **AJ Harper**

But it's not the goal. Every season goal is not to have it done by Christmas.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Oh, no, no, no. Just every, I'm saying every holiday season there is demand for books that are popular.

## **AJ Harper**

So already in existence, not new,

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Everybody in existence ain't already popular.

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## **AJ Harper**

Yes. Yeah. Okay. And yes, let's, yes, you're right. People are afraid. Someone's gonna jump on their idea.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Oh, it's the worst. It's like, I have this amazing idea. I'm not gonna tell anyone about it. I'm gonna be super secret. I can't talk about it and I'm gonna release the book. And by the way, it's so secret. I'm not gonna reveal all the details in the book because they, I want 'em to hire me. Which by the way, is the biggest flop of a, of a book ever, is not to reveal everything.

## **AJ Harper**

I also think some people have three to six months because life got in the way. I've had students who had a death in the family. Other things like that. It just was unavoidable. We talked about big and little earthquakes on a previous episode. That's okay. You know, so don't, if you, all you have are three to six months for whatever reason. And if we haven't convinced you otherwise, so if we haven't convinced you that any of your reasons aren't worth doing, if it's a legit, I have three to six. That's it. That's what I've got. Then we're here for you today

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

And, and you can pull this off. So one of the greatest successes in modern times of books that was quote, rushed, and admittedly, they didn't even have three to six months. They had about three to six weeks was *You're a Badass* by Jen Sincero. Um, she contacted me back when she was doing her book launch to ask some questions, um, and went on to sell this book that has sold at massive volumes. I wouldn't be surprised if it was over 10 million books. What's so interesting is she was kind enough to share. She said, I, I was procrastinating all these things. We said all the things, and she's like, the day came that she had a publishing deal. The publisher's like, the book is due now or it's done. And she gave herself effectively a weekend. Yes, it is lightning in the bottle. Um, but she, she pulled it off and it's been an extraordinary success. Spinoffs and derivatives have come out of it. Uh, it's, it's made a lifetime career for her over a weekend. I'm saying this, this is absolutely the exception to the rule, but it is doable. So I want to give, I wanna share our best insights on if you're packed and crunched for time, how do you do it?

## **AJ Harper**

Yeah. What are I think the thing to talk about or what's gonna give you the most bang for your buck. Yeah. What did you absolutely focus on? If you,

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Well, you know this best. I mean, you, you, you have so many authors you work with through top three, your retreats at Madeline Island. People can go to [aj harper.com](http://ajharper.com) right now to sign up and join one of these events. The sprint is coming up, but a portion perhaps many of your authors

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get in the situation where they've procrastinated. What, what have you found to be the best practices?

**AJ Harper**

Well, number one is keep it simple, which sounds like a hallmark card or coffee mug. But

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Keep what simple?

**AJ Harper**

The whole marketing, everything. Just, just, just go for, like, in the last episode you talked about how Andrea's been helping you limit the variability on your.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**AJ Harper**

Plan. This is even more, even more so limit the variability. You're not gonna do all the things. You're gonna find the things that are gonna be, what are the critical pieces to do. And you're gonna, as exciting as you want it to be, you're gonna tamp it down because three to six months is almost no time. And can Go ahead.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Can we make it super practical? Like I was saying last week, if you have 18 months, five things is pretty much the limit, the five big things. Are you suggesting

**AJ Harper**

Well, yeah. We've done more of a list here, but I just want an attitude of simplicity. Yeah. Like, don't feel like I'm gonna try and shove all the things I would do in 12 months into three to six months, is what I'm trying to say.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

I wonder if you flip it and said like we say, here's the five big things. I wonder if you say, here are the five potential things now. And let me start with the number one. Like, it's gonna be warming up my own list. Okay. I, I can have that. I have enough window to get my list warmed up and promote. Number two is I'm gonna ask confidants and friends to promote. Like, I wonder if you go through the list that way now, as opposed to saying, we're doing all five, I'm gonna start doing highest impact, easiest lift

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## **AJ Harper**

For sure. Yeah. Okay. And of course, before you do any of that, setting goals. So, you know, yes, what's the goal here? Am I, am I gonna try and sell a thousand books? Am I gonna try and just raise awareness? Do I, you know, just make some choices that then inform how you choose which of those potential strategies you're going to implement and don't. Some. And what I would argue too is implement the strategies. You can only do pre-launch. There are things that as authors we can, we can't do anymore when we've, after the book is out,

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Just gimme like a sampling, a little appetizer on week. What are things we can't do once the book's out?

## **AJ Harper**

Last week we talked about revving up the sales team that they might be interested post-launch, but they're kind of not. Yeah, they're, they're, they're really focused on front list and books, specifically books that are on deck. And so your window, you know, three to six months, you're still probably not gonna get their much of their attention, but you still have a chance. So if you have a sales team through trade distribution, you still have that. So if that's still a goal for you, you need to focus on that, um, because that's gonna be gone when the book comes out. Another example would be if you, you know, there's, you can still get media attention after your book comes out, but when a new book is out, you're more apt to get more interest in it. Um, I think also, uh, if you want trade reviews in advance, um, you de you know, you can always get, you can always pay for them afterward. You can pay for a trade review. But if you are gonna pay for them with, and if you have to have a traditional publisher for this, it needs to be in advance. The window's gone. Uh, once you get to four months out, the window's gone to get that.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

I got a proposal for another episode. I just wrote down how publishing sales teams actually work. And so fraught with, uh, mystery and, and, uh, myth. I wonder if you and I separately do a, a deep dive analysis, you know, a lot more 'cause you run a publishing company. I don't get it at all. I wonder maybe if minimally I just interview a sales person from a publisher and then we come back and say, here's the inside facts. So just

## **AJ Harper**

Like, yeah, I would love, I would love to do that. Yeah. I, so you know, there, there are a few things that I think also there's some behind the scenes stuff. You know, for example, like what net galley, edelweiss, you know, these are within the industry where, um, digital versions of your book are listed and people can read them in advance. People meaning industry folks, librarians, book bloggers, et cetera. And that window is pre-launch after launch. Knowns doing it.

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**Mike Michalowicz:**

Okay. So are you basically saying just scratch 'em off your list? Don't, no, I'm saying don't worry about

**AJ Harper**

That stuff if you do, you still have, if you still have a chance, make sure you understand what those milestones are and then hit those first. Right. Okay. So, you know, 'cause you might not realize, you might realize too late that you need to get that up. So if you're at say, the one month mark, it's not gonna happen. But if you really legit have six months hit this stuff, you're about to hit milestones at six months that you can't come back from so, or that you can't access later.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

But do you have an author of yours that comes to mind that pulled this off and you're like, they're representative of what you need to do

**AJ Harper**

In three to six months? Yeah. Um, I'm gonna actually, yeah, I was gonna mention her later. I think Vicki Laier is doing a good job. She wrote High Agency Human and uh, she's actually featured in the Money Habit by the way. Um, I think she's done a good job in launch mode and I have one of her, I'm gonna share it in a little bit, one of the coolest things she's doing.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Okay. And is her book High Agency Human, uh, available for sale right now?

**AJ Harper**

It sure is.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

All right, let's, let's support her authors, support authors. So get Vicki's book. So did, what are some of the tactical things that maybe is in this list of must dos stews? Is there anything that she did that you noticed like, oh, that was a good move to move things quickly?

**AJ Harper**

Honestly, it was, um, it was, for her it was looking at what she could do over time. So she's also, you know, works full time.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Oh, okay. That's another pressure

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## **AJ Harper**

Element. Yeah. She also doesn't have a big team. She has limited resources in that department, limited time, limited budget, all of it. And, uh, so she had to make decisions about what she could do. And then she thought about what she can do to extend the launch, which is one of my advice. I'm gonna get a whole section on that in this, in this episode that we're doing right now, but

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Okay. Extend, extend the launch. You mean don't make the launch just one day or one week, make it longer.

## **AJ Harper**

I mean, no, I mean, no. Well, yes, but it's mostly about thinking about the launch as not just those that week that the book comes out, but extending it even months after.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Clear, clear. Yeah.

## **AJ Harper**

So I'm gonna talk more about that in a minute. But I do wanna say a couple must dos that if you have three to six months, number one is you need an assistant. You, you just do. If you're that crushed for time, you're not gonna get it all done. And it doesn't have to be somebody expensive. It can be an intern, it could be someone at a local college. It can be a part-timer. It can, it's just these are people who are going to help you execute on the minutiae.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Okay.

## **AJ Harper**

Yeah, because your time as an author, as you know, Mike will be used up on calls, on webinars, on podcasts, on creating stuff, making stuff, making decisions.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

You're the spokesperson reaching. That's the one place that can't be one thing that can't be replaced.

## **AJ Harper**

Reaching onto your relationships doing that personally, you need someone else who is tracking all the little things that need to get done and helping execute on that. I also would say as

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preparation to clear as much outta your calendar as you can, don't think I'm just gonna tack this on to what I'm already doing. Think what can I, at least for the next period, either eliminate or delegate and just get it off just, and then get everyone around you to rally for you. This is temporary. It's not forever. We're just gonna rally and that's gonna help. You're gonna need more time than you think. So get as much of the calendar cleared as you possibly can. And then instead of building a bunch of new relationships, if three to six months out, if that's, if you're just starting, then that's all about the existing relationships that's rocking who you currently have versus trying to do big things with people you don't know. Wouldn't you agree with that? Okay. Yeah.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

So keep it simple. Get an assistant, clear out your calendar. Leverage existing relationships. When you say that, are we going for an ask with these relationships? Yeah.

## **AJ Harper**

'cause they could still do some promo. You can, they can still get involved in some way. Yeah. It might not be in big ways, but they, if especially if they're close to you, like if I said to you, Mike, I'm gonna do like, I just wanna, I'm gonna do this thing. I decided I'm the on a whim and I can you help me promote it? You would find a way

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

In harpy. Yeah.

## **AJ Harper**

Yeah. So I'm just saying those people who are close to you that you know, you can feel comfortable asking, they'll still help you. It's just not a time for you to do big things with people you don't know that well or know it all.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Hmm.

## **AJ Harper**

That's all. Because now you see we're eliminating, we're just going with our core peeps. So that's less to do.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

We have to have marketing assets ready, but what, which assets do we surely need in this short time window?

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## **AJ Harper**

Uh, that's another thing, by the way, to do immediately not okay later. If you only have three to six months, you need to update your website with your book information or create and or create a book website. Um, actually, I would say, and create a book website can be very simple. Then you need your, any graphics, marketing graphics you're gonna use on social media, in your email list, et cetera. And that you're gonna share with others to, so that they can help promote that swipe graphics, swipe copy, a set of instructions about how people can help you. Just create all of that from the get just get it done, get it done, get it done. Uh, because it's gonna take longer than you think and people need it earlier than you think. Get outta the way. Little,

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

A little tactical technique is, you can go on Fiverr, I think it still exists. Upwork, uh, 99 designs. And you can have your cover. Hopefully you have your cover ready, but you can make it look like a printed book. Um, they can present it multiple ways. You could make sure you get pictures of yourself holding the book, um, pull quotes from your book with your book colors and stuff like that. You can get a lot of that stuff prepared very quickly online. I know AJ you hired a, a photographer who specializes in book pictures. What was that person's name again?

## **AJ Harper**

Oh, it's the dreamiest photographer in the business. John DeMato.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah. Okay. We mentioned him on other podcasts too. So is there a way to get hold of him? Like, do you have a link or something?

## **AJ Harper**

John deMato.com. We'll put it in the show notes. There. Go. John's also the photographer for Phil Jones, who you know, and a bunch of people and he does what's called book boudoir

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

<laugh>. That's the best.

## **AJ Harper**

It's the best. I still say you need him to do your collection, like your catalog. Yeah, because I would love to see the whole catalog stacked up the way John sees it. Um, he has such an eye for, it's not just the book itself, it's pages, it's graphics, it's the, it, it, it's a, it's a whole vibe. Go,

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Well, you know me, I would do boudoir myself, so you could see me in some Lacey negligence.

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## **AJ Harper**

How this is, that's how you would do it. I would do,

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

I would totally do it. But I think my readers would finally say this guy's enough. Um,

## **AJ Harper**

I do have to say, I have to give a little shout to Amanda Keating, Dr. Amanda Keating's, one of my alums. And she has a book that she's working on for, um, parents who need who, uh, for potty training. And she wants to get James Patterson's attention. And she just did a photo shoot and sent me pictures of her on her bed. And she's fully clothed. Y'all like, it's just a regular bed. There's nothing saucy, there's no canopy, there's nothing going on. It's just like a regular bed, no canopy and re fully clothed withholding, like enamored with this picture of James Patterson.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Oh, that's great.

## **AJ Harper**

Very, very much your style. All right, so then I then once you've done all that, I think create some sort of simple launch week plan that's about value. So that's not about celebrating you, but that's about creating some type of value. You are more likely to get people interested in that than if you're just celebrating the launch itself.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah, I'll, I'll tell you the key words to flip is from the word me to the word you <laugh> and so much communication I see in book launches, even if they've taken 18 months or longer to prepare, say, my book is here. This is why I wanna sell what I have, as opposed to, your book is here, this is how I hope your life transforms. I want you to be wildly successful. I was, um, I, I was sharing last week I was at a conference, um, back in January and of 2026, and, uh, one of the people during this VIP session said they write clockwork. And that clockwork transformed their life because they took a for vacation. Their business has become attuned to operating independently of her as an owner. And she goes, and then my mother passed unexpectedly and she's like, I was able to fully grieve.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

And they, the whole room starts tearing up. I was able to grieve and be there, and I am so, so thankful that I didn't my, I didn't have a business that needed me constantly. And she goes, I wanted to thank you. And I, I first of all always receive appreciation with a thank you that touches me and, and how grateful I was. I also wanted to acknowledge that like a cookbook, there's recipes and there's chefs and the hard work is in being the chef. So I said, you know,

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giving you these ideas and strategies in, in print is something, but actually executing and seeing it through is significant. So I went back to the reader and said, this is your journey. This was just a, a guide, a guide to get there or a roadmap, but you did it. And I think in our communications during this launch period, better be about their story. They are the hero of it. They're the one who's cooking up the recipe that you've written. And if you go into it, that mindset, I think it'll communicate so much more effectively.

## **AJ Harper**

I love that. Um, so then after that is, let's now focus on what is a reader engagement post-launch plan. Since we had limited time, how can we actually make the most of the launch or do more after launch? And I think that's the next thing to do. So just, let's just make it the most we can of three to six months, but then put a bunch of strategy into post-launch.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Have you ever seen a author that totally flubs the launch because they didn't give themselves enough time. The book doesn't move at all, but then they go into the process of this extended launch of this, of sticking with it. And the book turns.

## **AJ Harper**

Trying to think.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

I know with, uh, just my own experience with toilet paper entrepreneur, I just went in so ill informed and so ill prepared it. It still moved during the launch week. Ultimately hundreds of books, maybe even it breached a thousand, which is pretty significant for extraordinary. That's, yeah. Um, but I'm wondering, there's gotta be authors that came out and it was like a zero book launch. Oh,

## **AJ Harper**

Well, I mean we did do that whole episode on books that tanked

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

And then they That's right. And, and they got reinvigorated. I wonder if it's attributed to the author not giving up on it.

## **AJ Harper**

It really is. Yeah. It really is PE because people have this mistaken idea that it has to, they have to achieve something at launch. They just, first of all, they don't understand what to expect from it. They don't understand how books are sold. So now they have this warped idea. They compare

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themselves to others on top of that. And so they don't, the knowledge the com, the, the misinformation, disinformation, ignorance combined with comparison has now set themselves, set them up so that if they don't achieve that they figure there's something wrong with them with a book or they're just not cut out for it. And so then they're gonna quit, which I talk about a lot. And I think you can always reinvigorate a book. You can always get it selling. It's just that most people either don't realize how much, how long, how long game publishing is, or just don't wanna be in it that long.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

You know, it, I think a mistake that authors make is they don't appreciate that a book is a product. I used to sell computer services and when I started my company in 1996, I didn't start that company in that first week. Say, where's all the business, all the sales, they should all be here. And I'm never gonna try to push this service again. I'm just gonna sit back now. 'cause it didn't work. Every day you're out hustling and sometimes your offer has to meet a need and people don't have need during your launch week. So in any other product or service, it's the long haul and the, and the book is the same thing. So I think we have to change our mind shift there.

## **AJ Harper**

Yeah, absolutely.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

You have, um, something cool happening on April 8th. Is that true?

## **AJ Harper**

Yeah. I wanted to make sure We're gonna just do a pause because I Sometimes y'all turn us off.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Don't turn us off. No, but don't even say this because they're not gonna skip this part, AJ, I'm

## **AJ Harper**

Gonna tell you real cool. This is, this is a thing I'm only doing right now. So yeah. Um, I have, you know, I do master crafts and um, my mastercraft season is, um, pretty much now through May where I do these super deep, di deep dives on craft. And so even if you can't do my big program or my editing retreat, you can come to this three or four hour class and really learn one area very, very well from me. And it's in a workshop environment. So we're doing the work together and I love doing these. April 1st, I'm starting a two part series. So the first part of the mastercraft is about the art of the interviews. I have done over 1000 interviews for books and the goal of those interviews is to pull stories, insights, yes. But mostly stories. And there's an art to that. Um, and I don't know if you remember Mike, but I used to lead those calls in the beginning of our working relationship.

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**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yes. I do remember yeah

**AJ Harper**

Then you learned how to <crosstalk> the process

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah. From you.

**AJ Harper**

Now you lead and I fill in at the end. Yeah. But it does take time to learn how to listen for it and what to ask.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Correct. There's no question about that.

**AJ Harper**

So on April 1st I'm doing the first part of the series is how to do the interview part. And then later in May I'm doing, what do you do with the interview when you get it? So it gives people time to go practice what I teach them, get some interviews, and then come back in May and let's work with them.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Oh, That's cool. That's cool.

**AJ Harper**

Yeah. And then on the eighth I'm doing, probably, this is the thing eight people ask me about the most. We did a whole podcast episode on this. I created the, the new kind of conclusion for prescriptive nonfiction, which is Call to Greatness. And I'm, and I'm teaching a deep dive. How do you actually write a call to greatness?

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah. And it, those are so powerful. It's interesting how many readers of the work we've done together contact me and say, I I wanna talk about your dad's story at the end of All In or something like that, which is part of the call to greatness and how impactful that conclusion has to be and how it can set the tone for their life beyond the consumption of your book.

**AJ Harper**

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Yeah. And I, that's the, we call in, in Top 3, we always say the Helen Fuller Call to Greatness and I I teach, how did that come to be? Yeah. How do you structure it? What's the pacing of that? What are the requirements of that? I still think that's probably the best call to greatness ever is the Helen Fuller.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

I think it is.

**AJ Harper**

Um, but I, I'm, most people wanna know how do you build that? It's funny, I was talking to Scott Todd, he's one of your Simplified authors and he, he's awesome <laugh>. He's also, um, one of my, um, alums and he was seeing how he notices now when he reads books, how boring the conclusions are and why the Call to Greatness works so well and I did invent this, so I just have to tell you guys, most editors don't think like this, but that's okay. They'll come around if you explain the reason behind it. So on April 8th, I'm gonna teach how to do that.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Agreed. All right. Th that, that is so important. Um, a little Scott Todd story we had, and this is what's unique about Simplified. So this is an imprint I have with page two. We are seeking entrepreneur authors and, um, not that you would be an entrepreneur per se, you likely are, but you write for entrepreneurs. Well, Scott Todd's working on a book and so is Brian Harriet, uh, and Joey Coleman. Uh, as, as some of our authors, I need to, after our event, I gotta get outta Dodge and uh, get to a podcast I'm doing with Hala Taha outside of Austin where we're meeting and, and I can't get a Uber. Scott Todd's pulling in the parking lot. He's like, Hey, you need a ride somewhere? I'm like, if you don't mind going an hour outta your way. And in the car is Brian Harriet and Joey Coleman and everyone's like, you know what, let's do this.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

We get more time to talk together. Poor Scott Todd, we assaulted him. Joey Coleman, if there's ever a guy who can do improv comedy, it's Joey Coleman. But, but Harriet was into it too. We're saying like, someone dropped a very filthy word, like one of the top filth words and we're like, and it may have been me. And then I said, by the way, that's not normally language I would use, but I know that's what makes Scott Todds feel comfortable. So that's why I'm doing this. 'cause he's the one who taught me this. And then Joey's like, Scott Todd is filthy and we, he is such a nice guy, he would never use that language for an hour. We wrote on him saying that's all the language that he uses. So, uh, if Scott, if you're listening in, um, I apologize, but I kind of don't.

**AJ Harper**

He must have been so red. Oh my gosh. He's

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## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Such a Oh yeah. Joey Coleman had to jump outta the car, physically jump outta the car. He couldn't handle the, uh, the language that Scott, that was attributed to Scott Todd. Alright, so, so,

## **AJ Harper**

But I also wanna point out before we move on, yeah. That the Money Habit also has, I love the Call to Greatness and the money habit, which is available, on tinnitus for you to purchase.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah. Oh yeah, there you go. But there's a little reference to tinnitus or tinnitus. Um, okay, let's talk, you said the extended launch and there were some activities around this. Again, could you define what that is?

## **AJ Harper**

Okay, this is what I, this is where I think the real gas is when you only have three to six months, is to move into more like a slow launch. So I did this with Write a must read. I, I think I both procrastinated and life events got in the way. Um, and then honestly, I, I got a little frustrated with having the kind of launch I had designed. So anyway, I was behind the eight ball. What I did was extend some of the things I wanted to do during launch week or the lead up. I just did them after. And I, my book came out in May, so I did a summer launch. So I did the regular launch week stuff, but then I did an extended thing for three months and I had some programming, I did a challenge, I did all sorts of things and, uh, that actually was really effective and it helped us calm down a little bit about the urgency.

## **AJ Harper**

And I actually, I actually think it worked really, really well. So you could create a salon or a, a speaker series or a training series or something like that, that okay, you have the launch week and then you're extending it and everybody knows it's part of the launch for three months or even six months if you want to. But I think three is a good number where you have a series of events that are planned that keep the book alive, almost like the launch mode is continuing, maybe not an extreme intensity, but it's to celebrate the new book. You could also do a month long or longer challenge after the launch. You don't have to do it leading up to the launch. So it some things you can just, instead of doing them before, do them after. Um, I, this is the thing I teased. This is so cool. Okay. Vicky Lanthier, High Agency Human, which, um, I gotta tell you that book was, has changed so much for me, my perspective about um, what I can do to make sure that I maintain agency despite life events. And I love that book so much, but she's living her book for a full year and documenting it.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Oh, that's cool.

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## **AJ Harper**

So you could do that. Like you think of something, you know, you don't have to just make it all about the lead up to the launch, the actual release day. You can modify it. And by the way, if you did do 12 to 18 months, you could still do this stuff. But let's just say you have three to six. Let's shift to post-launch strategies. Vicky, you can go to her social media, we'll put the links in the show notes, see what she's doing for a full year. She's living her book and documenting it

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

With my books Profit First. Every quarter we ask people who've read Profit First, what are you doing through profit distribution, encouraging them to share that and that triggers conversation. What do you mean you're half a profit distribution? Why are you doing this? And Profit First may come up in that conversation. Clockworks the for vacation, what'd you do on this year's for vacation? So we take, um, elements of the, the book that, um, recur and then have people talk about it. So that's another strategy. Alright, anything else on this topic?

## **AJ Harper**

No, I think, I think we covered it. You can do it. We don't want you to do it in three to six months, but if you have to do it, you know it's possible and just shift most of your focus to what you can do post.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah. Geez. Like, like hit pause on the podcast and start working on your book. Oh, actually I take it back. Clear out everything else schedule for you to be re-inspired about your book every day. Listen to every podcast, uh, episode we've done. So binge this maybe once a day. Listen to one episode and then get to the work of your book. Next week we're gonna talk about how to be a profitable author. Uh, what to do with the money you earn from your book, AKA use some money har also, um, just as a reminder, go to [ajharper.com](http://ajharper.com) and you know, what's there? Free resources, tons of tools you can subscribe to, uh, AJ's programs. They are nothing short of phenomenal. Our website for this podcast is [don't write that book](http://don'twrite thatbook.com) [dw.tb.podcast.com](http://dw.tb.podcast.com). So [dw.tb.podcast.com](http://dw.tb.podcast.com). But I do have one major favor.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

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next week 'cause we're gonna make you profitable. But in the meantime, remember this, don't write that book. Write the greatest book you can.