

# don't write *that* book!

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Welcome back to the Don't Write That Book Podcast where you can learn how to write your bestseller and own your authorship. Follow along with us as we give you an insider's view of the book industry. Now, here are your hosts. Myself, Mike Michalowicz and AJ Harper.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

People are into our show, AJ, they're into like, I'm, I'm getting occasionally emails now just about <laugh>, like these nuanced little things that we discussed or I shared and they're like, oh yeah, I've been in the same place. Or, I was really thinking about, I listened to that episode four times now. <laugh>

**AJ Harper:**

I hear that a lot too. I'm, I think we're hearing from different people, but that's cool. Yeah,

**Mike Michalowicz:**

It's really, yeah, it's really cool. And I didn't think I was very concerned about the banter component 'cause I don't want it to be superfluous distraction. And, um, the feedback I get is like, Hey, I really enjoy that because I, I see the connection between you and AJ <laugh> and, um,

**AJ Harper:**

<laugh>. I hear that too, but I also hear occasionally people say, I've 10 x that or 5x that to get to when you actually,

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Right. Totally. I think that's a great, I do the same, like, sometimes I get frustrated, I'm like, give me the meat on some show. And then other things, I like the banter. So I like that people now have the option. <laugh>,

**AJ Harper:**

I guess. You know what? However you consume it, you do you.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

So here's a vanity thing I wanted to share, because I, as we were filming, look, I'm leaning down. I'm like, look, I'm like, that bald spot is getting bigger and bigger. Like I can actually see it myself. The interesting thing about going bald is you can't, at least the way I'm going bald is you, I can't see it when I look in the mirror. So I'm like, my hair's fine. But when I, I was looking down, I was like, oh my God, I am, uh, I'm praying, not praying, that's not the right word. I'm

# don't write *that* book!

anticipating medical advancements, total selfish man vanity, that there's a pill. And miraculously I have this, this main grow back, or,

**AJ Harper:**

That's funny because I was just about to ask you, when are you just gonna shave it all off?

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Well, that's where I'm going. So I'm, I'm cutting it shorter and shorter to kind of blend it, but at a certain point I have to shave it off. I don't, I don't know, being totally bald if that's gonna be my look, but maybe it's destined to be.

**AJ Harper:**

You can do a full Michael Port.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

He, that guy I thought he pulled it off. He pulled it off.

**AJ Harper:**

It

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Is, it's, it's shocking when you see someone with a facial hair or head to hair change. Like I accidentally, um, so my beard here, I was using a trimmer and um, I accidentally over trimmed it because I put the wrong guard on and to bounce it all out, I trim it way down and I just walked out. My wife goes, wow, she almost didn't recognize me. Um, today's episode, we're gonna dig into, I, I love this topic. Two ways to make progress on your book this summer, even if you don't write one word. If, if time avails itself. I wanna show you something that, uh, I created, um, in the last couple weeks, well, actually, our AI integrator. I know we have an upcoming episode around AI on book analytics. And, um, I think you're gonna find it fascinating. And the nice thing is, 'cause we do a YouTube channel.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

I think I can share it on the screen. Um, but this topic really caught my attention for our, our guests. You are listening to, Don't Write That Book. I'm Mike Michalowicz, author of Profit First, uh, the Money Habits and some other business books. I'm joined by my co-host, my friend, my co-writer, AJ Harper. She's the author of Write a Must Read. Um, I say it all the time and it still frustrates me when I have met people who listen to this show and I'm like, oh, how do you like the book? Oh, I didn't buy it yet, or I didn't read it yet. Like the, the, if there is a concrete foundation for the show, it's right. I must read like, it's, it's the foundational structure behind

# don't write *that* book!

these, this, this building we're building through this podcast. So get that book, AJ before we kick it off,

**Mike Michalowicz:**

What I admire about you, um, is flexibility. Today my car is in, I think we shared on a prior episode that, uh, my car was hit by a drunk driver, uh, while parked. So today it's in for repair and it's gonna be a doozy of a cost. But, uh, I'm happy I don't have to bury that burden or bear the burden of the cost. I admire your flexibility. We were supposed to start recording over an hour and a half ago, and I was able to squeak this in with the repair center and they said, you gotta drop it off at eight o'clock promptly. So I had to drive out there and just got back home. So, thank you.

**AJ Harper:**

What's the point in not being flexible? Like it's, it's funny, like, I appreciate that you say that. I always am surprised when people, what, who's not are people not,

**Mike Michalowicz:**

You know, for me there's like a righteousness sometimes. Like when someone's like, Hey, um, we're gonna meet at Friday, uh, for lunch at noon, and I'm sitting there at noon. I feel like I, I've committed to my obligation and I get this, you know what, maybe that's a communication issue. 'cause then they just don't show and they, they text.

**AJ Harper:**

Well, that's different. That's bailing.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

That's different. That's different. Yeah. That's different.

**AJ Harper:**

Yeah. You, you told me days ago that we need, maybe we should move the time. Yeah. Whole different thing. I think we, I do know some people that are not that flexible. I take it back. They don't like a, well,

**Mike Michalowicz:**

You know what, 'cause it, it, it

**AJ Harper:**

Plan to change,

# don't write *that* book!

**Mike Michalowicz:**

But it it, I'm forcing you, I'm forcing change on you. You have to adjust to your schedule, you, your life. Um, so I'm imposing in that way and just I appreciate that you're very go with the flow. You're so good with the flow.

**AJ Harper:**

I'm so go with the flow. I'm happy there. I like living there. I'm cool with it. If I couldn't have done it, I would've said, and then we would've found something else. And nothing is nothing. Both of those things are fine. It's not that big a deal. Um, you also go with the flow. 'cause I hit you with, um, ideas for the podcast and you, I don't think you've ever said no, I don't think one time have you ever said no,

**Mike Michalowicz:**

You know, the pod-- Thank you. You know, the podcast I like the most are the ones where we have different vantage points. I think our listeners are getting the most value out of that. If you hear the same thing and we're just parroting each other, you don't get this holistic perspective. Um, so I particularly like when you say, here's a subject I'm gonna talk about, we're gonna talk about AI coming up and we have different opinions about it and different perspectives, and I think people can come to their own conclusion because of that holistic vantage point.

**AJ Harper:**

Yeah.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Um, and not have to pick sides either, you know?

**AJ Harper:**

Yeah. So what, but today we're doing something else which is inspired by the fact that I'm about to hit my summer, summer of writing. Um, I'm so excited and I've structured my whole summer around being able to get a bunch done. I'm writing right now, but I'm doing two, two books this year. And right now I'm finishing one book, so that this sort of huge book, really big book, I can focus on it over the summer, which I intended to do last summer, but I could not do it because of o other stuff that took my time away. So I've restructured to make sure that I get it done, but it occurred to me, most people don't get a lot done over the summer.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah. So the topic is, uh, how to make progress in your book, even if you don't write one word. I didn't realize with your book, your books that you are doing sequentially. I, I think we had an episode where we talked about writing multiple books. In, in your practice for yourself, do you find take one to fruition and then to the next? Or, or how's that structure work?

# don't write *that* book!

**AJ Harper:**

Well, I'm working on, I would say I'm working on two at the same time, but just in different levels. One, I'm actively writing and the other one I'm still in development, so I'm not actively writing two books right now.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Okay, okay.

**AJ Harper:**

But I used to, when I was a ghost, I used to write many books at the same time.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

You know, historically, summer is, uh, for me, Long Beach Island, um,

**AJ Harper:**

The Dairy King,

**Mike Michalowicz:**

<laugh>, I gotta take you down there some point. Oh Krista.

**AJ Harper:**

And there, I just, I just, to me it's, you've talked about the stories.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

I know. Yeah. Dairy King. Yeah. There's tradition around it and it's an opportunity to fully disconnect from work. Um, but there's always something going in the background. There's always something going in my mind. Like, I'm always, always thinking about something ironically or not. Ironically, in Clockwork, the closing story that you discovered and researched was so effective and so profound that I now share it on stage when I'm talking about Clockwork. And it's Lin Manuel Miranda. Miranda, I think

**AJ Harper:**

Miranda. Miranda.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Miranda.

**AJ Harper:**

# don't write *that* book!

He is a playwright, um, known for In The Heights and more significantly, uh, Hamilton.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

He did something on vacation. I'd love for you to share that story if you would.

**AJ Harper:**

Well, he was, um, In The Heights, so very successful musical. And it was moving from off Broadway to Broadway. And in between there was a brief window where he could potentially go on vacation and his wife encouraged him, let's go, let's go. Um, and uh, so they went on vacation and he brought with him the autobiography, or not autobiography, biography. That would be funny. Autobiography,

**Mike Michalowicz:**

That'd be great.

**AJ Harper:**

Um, of Alexander Hamilton. And so he read the whole thing on the trip. And had he not had this time away to just read it, um, we may not have had Hamilton and, and you know, it's, that's not as clean as that. I'm sure there was a lot going on. But to have a break away from the world, but to still be an artist, meaning he was still, that's his what, his jam. He's always thinking of new thing he wants to make. Um, so he's turned on in that way. He's, he's likely to notice the what could this be. And, um, so he read the biography and then we all benefited from the movie. The movie. I gotta get some coffee.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

I got, I've, I'm on my second cup.

**AJ Harper:**

Yeah. I'm, I'm a little slow. I just got back from a big trip and I'm moving a little slowly. We all benefited from the amazing musical Hamilton. Because he went on that vacation.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

And, um, if I, if I recall the story correctly, he's also now a major proponent for these breaks, if I recall that correctly. Suggesting that people take extended vacations for the benefit of seeing your work from a whole new perspective. Yeah. Okay. So let me ask you the not so obvious answer. Can you, can you really make progress on a book when you're not working on the book <laugh>?

**AJ Harper:**

# don't write *that* book!

Yes. So, you know, this occurred to me that, you know, I, I'm gonna work on the book this summer and do some writing, but may most people can't. So I think we decide, well then I'll have to wait till the fall or I'll wait till the new year, whatever you decide. But actually you can get a lot done even if you decide you're not gonna write. And so I wanted to talk about two very specific ways that you can make progress on your book. In fact, these are the type of things that you could be doing always to get ready to write. I think we're too often thinking of things in this. Um, I'm either writing or I'm not. And there's so much you could be doing to get ready to write that. Then when you sit down to do it, it's so much, um, richer and better. And, uh, a lot of times then when you, when you wait, there are other things that you think, oh, I don't have time to do that now. Research or testing or other things. So if you get yourself in that groove of focusing on other things that are not gonna take up a ton of your time, but will turn in the background so that when it's time for you to pick up now you've done yourself a massive favor and you've made a lot of progress.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

That's interesting. 'cause it, it sounds like as a new form of work, um, what, let's go through the elements. Like what, what are some of the ways that I can work on my book while not actually writing the book? Well,

## **AJ Harper:**

I wanted to give focus on two specific ways. Um, there's a lot of ways, but there's two that I think you could do with a lot, not a lot of effort. So the first one would be a reader survey. Okay. And that might sound, oh, that's, that sounds boring. It's not. So for example, if you don't know your reader that well, can you, can you actually say right now listeners that you know very in,

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

I love how you said the tonality in your voice listeners,

## **AJ Harper:**

That you know intimately exactly what your reader wants. Like you really know what they think, what they believe, uh, what they would say they want. And do you know what they want in the next six months, 12 months, year? Right? If you aren't sure, you should pull them and find out same, same deal with what you think the problem is, what stands in the way. Um, on my website or in my, actually you can go to my book to get it, but on my website you can get it for free. Um, which is a reader profile that has, uh, some questions you could ask, including burning questions and chief concerns. You can take a lot of the questions that are in that reader profile, <inaudible> up a bit so that it works for you. And then you have a survey that you can send out.

## **AJ Harper:**

# don't write *that* book!

You get a survey together and then you get that churning. So it's not just one time, but all over the summer you're just continuing to push the survey out so you keep getting more and more results. And then when you're ready, you can pull all the results together, look for patterns, and then start building from there. Instead of just guessing. Instead of doing just a quick little, I'm gonna go on LinkedIn and see what people think for a second. No, let's get hundreds of people to come together and answer these questions so that when you're ready to write, you can sit down and say, oh, this is what they think, this is what they believe. Okay, let me go from that point forward. And once you've built these survey, again, it's just, you can get your team or yourself to just send out routinely over the summer and just build the number of people who respond.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Uh, the website is AJHarper.com to download that for the survey. Am I querying the same people iteratively over the summer or am I going to different segments of people?

**AJ Harper:**

I think you could. Okay. So you could also do a, um, more elaborate, but I'm just talking, let me just see what they want, what's standing in the way, what they believe, just some general understanding of where they're, who they are, what they want, what's standing in the way, and just get it out to as many different people as possible. You could do a follow up if you wanted to, but I'm trying to keep people simple for the summer, you know?

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah, yeah. I love it. I yeah, you're, you're reducing the load, but making progress. But I'm also wondering, is there strategy here that if I reach out to a, a small segment of people and a new small segment that world events may be changing. And so the way they are influenced by that and the response may change, so are, are we intentionally doing it in different timeframes? Because there's also that bias that world events or personal events bring about? I'm sure.

**AJ Harper:**

Sure. You can, you know, just play it by ear, start to see if things shift. If you wanna do another survey, that's cool. You might also decide if you have time to, if you see a specific response, reach out to that person to ask to interview them for more detail. Just get it going or keep it simple to just start collecting as many people as possible. The other thing you could do is a survey that's more geared toward the state of things. So what's going on in your industry? What's going on in the world? What's, what's this, what's happening? Just to kind of get a sense of this is this is where we are, this is, this is how things are going. Um, this is how I think things are gonna end up. So, you know, there's a lot of different ways that you can go about the survey to collect the data that you want. Just run it all summer until that you have time to collect.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

# don't write *that* book!

Is the survey necessarily a written survey? Uh, a online form? Do you do this in person? Do you have, should I use a third party? Do it so that I don't bring a bias to it?

## **AJ Harper:**

Yes, yes, yes. I mean, just, just pick one. I I, I don't want people to get too caught up in, I, I don't know if I can execute on this because I've got too many options. I don't know if this is gonna work this, am I doing it this the right way or the wrong way? I'm trying to keep this super, super, super simple. Get a type form, whatever, um, gather the info. As simple as, I mean, honestly, you could get it done in less than an hour and start doing it. You wanna get more involved. Get more involved. That's cool. Yes, you could do it over, over zoom with a, with a focus group. But let's just keep it so simple if possible, so that I don't want you to not do it. That's the point. I don't want you to not do it.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

So I wanna share a, a story, uh, which is less survey, more experiment. But I'm curious about your perspective on this. AJ, some famous author who I suspect everyone listening the show would know, sent out an email to their community saying or asking, I like your help in an experiment. Well, uh, a friend of mine, um, is Paul Schneider. I was a partner in his business for a period of time, uh, got this and said, oh, that sounds very interesting. And this author was asking a group of this community to go out, uh, at the street level, literally, and, um, speak with un homed people about how they are begging for money and to use a different method. And what the experiment was, was this different method, does it raise more money? Um, Paul ultimately declined just because of his time, but it was really interesting approach because Paul became very intrigued about the subsequent book that came out, that explored this. Um, so I'm curious, like a survey, is this also an opportunity for community engagement? Um, maybe that's a distraction is, I'm just trying to think of atypical ways as opposed to just an email blast. Would you please take my survey?

## **AJ Harper:**

Well, I mean, there's a lot of ways to get people to take it. Ask friends to help you out, um, you know, shared in different platforms. Ask, um, a ask people you don't even know who might have access to that group. Um, but I mean, honestly, I, I think, I think what I'm trying to avoid is having people get worried that they're doing things the wrong way. And I think you just need to start it. That that's, that's my view. I mean, I, yes, you can get other people to help you, you can do it yourself. Other than that, I don't think there's a ton of, I don't want people spending the summer trying to figure out how to do it. I want them. 'cause then there just aren't gonna do it. There's not, I I want people to make progress,

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

# don't write *that* book!

You know, with our imprint at Page Two. Page Two, Simplified. Uh, we're considering authors and the authors we've declined typically are in a rush to get their manuscript completed and haven't done the thoughtful stage of analysis, understanding the audience. There's this, this rush to get it done. Um, so this is, it is interesting. It, it, it's, it's using your summer, but it's also, it's a necessary process. And perhaps it's kinda like a fine wine. Like it needs to breathe a little. You, you AJ have a upcoming summer camp?

## **AJ Harper:**

Oh, yeah. I, I wanna know. Yeah, yeah. I wanna mention this because every, well, we did it once with the, in 2022 when my book came out. We did a summer camp for the whole summer, um, where everybody set a goal for how much they wanted to get done. And I, I gave all these prompts and then that was a one thing I did. But then we did it again last year and, uh, now we're doing again this summer. So I think we're gonna do it every summer now. It's taking... You register, it's totally free, and you come in and commit to what you're gonna get done for the summer. And I am doing, I do unique sprints every single time. Um, sorry, unique, how am I trying to, what am I trying to say here?

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Experiments or, or knowledge shares. I don't know.

## **AJ Harper:**

Sorry, I'm getting, yes. So we, so there's prompts about, um, what you should write, what you should think about, and I create new ones every summer. So, um, it's called Summer Camp, and you can go to [ajharper.com](http://ajharper.com) and just sign up totally free. And we set a goal and then every month of the summer, so this is what's different this time for the first month of the summer, um, we're gonna focus on what are the different marketing things that you wanna get done? Because normally we talk about, uh, writing your book, but this time we're talking about what is the content that you need to create, um, that you've been avoiding. What do you need to write in terms of promoting your book? And then we're gonna talk about, uh, sponsorship. Um, what do you need to do to try and get sponsors? There's a really good episode that you and I did.

## **AJ Harper:**

Yeah. I tell people talk about it all the time. It was an incredible amount of education you gave everybody. It was ridiculous. So that, that inspired me. Let's do a one month where we're getting some writing down about how do you go make the ask and yes, do some writing for sponsorship and so on. So, um, over the summer, focusing on what are some things you could do as an author to start promoting your book, getting more people interested in your book. But then you can also just come and work on your book if you wanna get writing done, whatever makes sense for you. So if you go to [ajharper.com](http://ajharper.com), totally free, uh, to come do this, uh, summer camp, and then I guarantee you, you will make progress that you didn't make otherwise. Last year we had people

# don't write *that* book!

who finished the whole book over the summer. It was nuts. Just having that, um, goal and then getting prompts every single week. That really, really helped.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

I wanna, uh, challenge our readers because I think they confuse free with optional. Like, oh, I signed up, but now I don't really have to 'cause it's free. That's optional. Free means no financial cost, but there is a commitment investment, like you got to be there. Um, so this isn't free. This requires commitment and it moves your book forward. And uh, yeah, there's no financial requirement.

**AJ Harper:**

None.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Um, then

**AJ Harper:**

There's the second thing.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

What's that? What, what, what, what, what's that?

**AJ Harper:**

Well, we said two ways.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Oh. Oh, I thought you meant for your summer camp. I'm like, there is, yeah. So the first way was surveying your audience, engaging with your audience. I got that. Um, or what is the second way?

**AJ Harper:**

So this is another way that you can make progress on your book without writing anything. And that's interviews. So you could build off of the surveys that you're doing or you can just do interviews, period without doing a survey. Um, you could do interviews that have nothing to do with the survey, even if you decide to do both. You and I do interviews for every one of your book. We do, I would say at least 20 different interviews. A lot of them never happen. Sometimes it's way more. Yeah. Um, but I want you, what

**Mike Michalowicz:**

# don't write *that* book!

You say would never happen. They never get included in the book. Meaning we interview them, we don't include them in the book. Yeah.

## **AJ Harper:**

Is that what you mean? Yeah. We just, it's just not, it's not the right fit or correct. We have enough. It's not, you know, there's lots of reasons, but actually I wanna step back a moment. You and I are doing those interviews and it, we already know. We already know exactly what we need to go get. And the, that might shape the book a bit. It definitely happened in each book, but primarily we're trying to find people we can interview to support the rest of the book. Uh, you could do that where you have a pretty clear vision. You've got teaching points, and you wanna align those teaching points with people who can speak to that, whether it's a cautionary tale or somebody tried something. And so you wanna interview them. But you know what, it could also just be people you wanna talk to around the topic and help you sort of figure out where you're going with it.

## **AJ Harper:**

It doesn't have to be something that even ends up with the book at all, but it's just people who can help you start to think about how you wanna, how you want it to go. Um, that's something that, that I've been doing. Talking to people who, I don't really know how the book's gonna shake out. I just, I just wanna talk to people who I can share my ideas with. And then I probably will interview them again later, very specifically in order to pull a story or something like that. But I'm not even really collecting information or quotes or stories. It's just, I just wanna hear what you think about that. It can be both. It doesn't have to be, I'm absolutely using this story. You know, so I think, I think people are too caught up in every single thing I do to work on my book, has to go in the book. Do you see what I'm saying?

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Wow. That, that was the biggest insight I've learned through working together in regards to interviews was if you're, I almost have this obligation when we interview someone that we have to find a way to get that included. But to your point, I found there's, there's two types of interviews that one is, uh, just a greater understanding and knowledge of the concept from different perspectives with a possibility that will be included in some capacity. But in those cases where it doesn't get included in the book, it's often supplemental material for the blog bonus material. We record these interviews, we ask people's permission. Conversely, we go into some interviews with a very specific thing we're trying to extract, like this one story. So we have the knowledge we're imparting, but we want the story that compliments it. We identify people we wanna interview that we think have the story, and then we go in for it.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

# don't write *that* book!

I've, I get interviewed with some regularity, uh, and I got this interview, it happened just a few weeks ago for a money magazine. I can't remember the name of the magazine, but it was a personal finance magazine. And I had such a better appreciation for these journalists. She was asking very targeted questions, saying, oh, she's looking, she has a story written. She just needs a couple quotes, a couple framing around certain things. It was very targeted on asking that. Um, with, with the interview, you and I have had the situation where we've talked to people and they're clearly on a pitch. Like they just wanna share the same spiel they would share on stage. They want the exposure. They're not even listening to the questions. And I'm, I'm not trying to distract us from going to a new episode here around the art of the interview, but if, if I'm doing this in my summer and I'm, I'm just, I'm, I'm, I'm not wanting to go super intense. Is there some just basic techniques you can give me to control those kind of situations?

**AJ Harper:**

I mean, not really. Like, they just, you know, you just kinda have to say, that's fascinating. Thank you so much. I'll, you know, get back to you when I can <laugh>. I dunno, like it's,

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Well, I, I have an idea.

**AJ Harper:**

Okay. But I mean, I, I, I feel there's just sometimes that people are just too focused on promoting themselves and they just, we've, we've tried and tried. We've had, we've had sessions where we maybe try eight, 10 times over a call to try and drag it out of people and they're still absolutely, completely ignoring what you're saying so that they can Yeah. It's, it's, it's infuriating. Um, but what do, what do you think about that?

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Um, I like the courtesy of how you said it. I think time becomes a, a significant factor. So get that person off the phone, how we've done it. I remember this one person we were interviewing, I don't recall the book. It was a man, and he was so on his spiel. I, I said, Hey, I just wanna get an insight. I think it was forget different around something and it's blah, blah, blah. And about five minutes in was like this, it's clear this guy is, is this gonna go for? And there's no value in this. It was a sales pitch. So he said, oh, sorry to interrupt. I know our time is precious for both of us. We actually have the elements that we need. Um, at this point, if I have further questions of your permission to follow up and it just get 'em off the phone. Because if you continue now, now you can take up a half hour or longer listening to something that's of no value. And I think it's discourteous to keep this person on the phone, spending their time when you're not gonna use the thing. So the most courteous thing is to shut it down quickly, but always ask for permission for follow up if I have further questions and so forth.

# don't write *that* book!

**AJ Harper:**

Yeah. Which we aren't gonna have any follow up at all, I think, but, but I want, but you know what, I, I think that's an, I think that's specific to you at this point.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

It may be,

**AJ Harper:**

It may be, I think when we first started, and when most people start, they're not looking for a chance to get, um, exposure, whatever, from a person who's famous.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah.

**AJ Harper:**

So they're much more chill about it.

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Yeah. That's actually a good point. I that's a good point. I I get inquiries from people that want to be interviewed because they, they feel that inclusion in a book or on a a podcast I'm doing something will elevate their exposure. So there's this kind of second hidden motivation, um, which is very human and, and appropriate. But also they may not answer the things as truthfully as you want, or they may have slants to it. Is there a way to cut through that?

**AJ Harper:**

Yeah, I think just be upfront and say, look, I am kicking stuff around and I'm not, I'm not here. I don't know if I'm gonna use anything in the book. I just really wanna see what, you have to think about this. And I, I value and care about your opinion. And I, I may not even use it in the book, but I just really wanna know what you think about this. And, um, you know, if I think it might be something that I could talk about in the book, I'll get back to you. But just so we're clear, I'm not here to pro for you to promote anything or for me to promote anything. I just really wanna know what you think about this. And--

**Mike Michalowicz:**

Gold.

**AJ Harper:**

I think that's as simple as that. And if you, if they still refuse, that means they can't actually get out of it. You know, they just, they can't, they, you need them to just shake it off and almost like,

# don't write *that* book!

let's just, let's just chill. Let's just go have a cup of coffee. But obviously you're not having a cup of coffee, but you need that kind of vibe of we're, let's see, let's see what we can figure out together. It's absolute gold. Yeah. And I've been talking to a bunch of authors about books I'm working on. I just wanna see what you think about this. What, what do you think? This is what, and I think that's what I hope. Look, here's what happens when you try to rush through your book. You don't give yourself time to do this stuff. What I've got people I'm talking to two or three times, I might never use anything in the book.

## **AJ Harper:**

I just wanna, what do you think about this? I value what you think. I care about what you think. And first of all, who says that to people anymore? <laugh>, can we true? Can we just have a chat? What do you think of this? Why do you think this is a problem? I'm just trying to sort this out. Tell me your thoughts. What are you thinking? You need some specificity when you do this, when these interviews, right? So it's not like you sit down and say, I am writing a book about X. That's, that's not what you're doing. Like this is what's on my mind. I'm trying to solve this. I, I think I have a handle on it, but what do you think? And that is gold. Because if you're taking the time now you're building a relationship as well. Maybe it's gonna be, you know, two different times that you spend 15 minutes just chatting.

## **AJ Harper:**

Or maybe it's gonna be longer. Um, but you're gonna have a better book for it. And I think over the summer you can just collect some of those. Just start asking questions. This is what happens when we decide to rush through our books. I'm not gonna work on my book this summer 'cause I don't have time. I'm not gonna work on it this fall. Okay, now I'm gonna work. But here I had six months that I could have been chatting with people to see what they think, you know, and not in a fancy, you know, per, you know, perfect language, perfect ideas, everything practiced just what the heck, what the heck's going on? What do you think? And um, then by the way, and now you have a relationship with those people, by the way. You could be doing that with, even again Mike, if someone came to you and said, I just can't figure out why this is happening.

## **AJ Harper:**

What do, why do you think this is happening? And that was it. And you gave them 15 minutes, but it was a really good conversation. And no one ever asked you that, Mike. 'cause you're used to the same questions all the time now. Correct. You're saying the same thing all the time. But if someone came to you and said something really specific that no one ever asked you and didn't expect you to promote anything or do anything, you would actually be totally into it because you would get a chance to express something that you just only have time to think about. So, um, I just feel like that's the solution. And do that e even if only you can only do it a few times over the summer, you're already making more progress.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

# don't write *that* book!

Yeah. I really like this. It is the genuineness behind the book. It's, it's, it is the collection of the materials. You know, I, I'm thinking of a statue, uh, or something of you're building and there's the creation of the statue, which is magnificent 'cause you see the end product, but you, you need to get the materials together. It's the assembly of that. And you find these different mediums you never expected. I, I had, um, a breakfast with Dr. Mike Bechtel, his book, his most popular book is called *People Can't Drive You Crazy if you Don't Give Them The Keys*. But he <laugh>, which is such a good title, um, he's sold millions of books and I think he has upwards of five or 10 titles. And, uh, I'm sitting with him and an emotional conversation broke out around, I call it the final lap, not his words.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

He actually poked fun at me for calling it the final lap. Um, but he's retiring out and he's like, I think I've got one book left in me and what should it be? And the conversation, there was a couple other authors there too. And the conversation, uh, evolved to these coffee side fireside chats, but genuine real ones of meeting with people who have been kind of discriminated upon for aging out. They have all this knowledge, they've had all this impact in whatever capacity in their life, but simply 'cause they're now 90 years old or 80 years old, they're no longer considered viable. And so there's this wealth of knowledge and storytelling and coupled with loneliness that, that Mike can address. And so he is thinking about having these a hundred conversations with these different people and assembling into a book. That whole angle wasn't, I think what he was talking about from the beginning, but it was a conversation around how to have conversations. And it was, it was fascinating. What can come outta these interviews? And it changed the whole trajectory for his book. I I, is there, is that a risk or is that an opportunity that when I'm taking a slow summer? Yeah, what's your thoughts?

## **AJ Harper:**

Always an opportunity. We're just, we're just moving too quickly through all these things. Yeah, we're just too, you know, so I think there's two types of, of interviews. There's the kind way of trying to figure out what you think and believe and what people care about. And you're not necessarily trying to find something that has to be written or that even has a quote. And then there's another round of interviews, which is where you have a really clear idea of what your teaching points are. And you wanna get stories built around those. But I don't think we're giving ourselves enough time to think or practice or see what we believe. I think we're just too focused on productivity and trying to meet specific deadlines. And it's causing us to turn out books that are less than what they could be.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Anything else you wanna talk about on making progress over this summer?

## **AJ Harper:**

# don't write *that* book!

No, I think, look, how easy is that? Let's do a quick survey. Could be as short as one hour. Get it together, set up a few interviews when you have time and you will have made more progress than if you did nothing. But it doesn't have to be writing.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

I love it. I have a question, uh, an important one for our audience, but I'm not gonna do it now. 'cause this is when people, 10x or whatever the X is through race through the end. Um, so I'm gonna save that and I'll pack it somewhere in the middle. But it's a very important question. Um, also we have potentially we're, we're gonna see how it structures, uh, a discussion around AI coming up. Maybe it's a debate, um, maybe it's pros and cons. But, um, there's some technology I wanna show you that we only were able to achieve via AI for marketing analytics. And uh, I was gonna show you now, but you know, we'll wait till that episode. It's, it's fascinating what we're learning and we're trying out some of these elements. It's like, oh, this actually looks to be truthful in its analysis. Meaning it, it's, it's consistent now with, with our testing. Um, so I'll, I'll share some of those details when it comes up. But next week's episode is how to set yourself apart from grifter authors. Define how, how do you define grifter? I think of theft. What do you mean by grifter author?

## **AJ Harper:**

Well, this is inspired by Vicki Lanthier who wanted, who's I think is trying not to be that she really does not have even one bone in her body that's like that. But I, she still wanted to know. And so that got me thinking. But it's, it's people who are, um, grifters messing with authors, um, in terms of getting them not just to buy books, but to buy a bunch of stuff related to the books.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

So they aren't necessarily authors themselves? They're...?

## **AJ Harper:**

No. They're authors.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

Okay.

## **AJ Harper:**

I mean, they're pretending to, maybe they're real, maybe they got a ghost. Maybe they're using ai. Yeah. Whatever the point being, what they're writing is with one goal, which is to manipulate people into purchasing stuff.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

# don't write *that* book!

Yes. Yeah. Okay, good. I'm, I'm excited to talk about that. 'cause it is, uh, it's, it's out there. Um, alright, I do have a question. I'm not gonna say it yet. Uh, I wanna remind folks, go to [dwtb podcast.com](http://dwtbpodcast.com). We'd love for you to rate the show. So whatever pod system you're listening on, it would serve AJ and I deeply. If you not just rate it, but also review it, raise, rate it honestly, whatever you think we deserve and, and speak about honestly, because we do read those comments and they do service in improving the show. But selfishly, the best thing that we get out of that 30 seconds of effort from you is it starts spreading the show to other people. And we wanna have a great impact on the author community. Um, most importantly, go to [aj harper.com](http://ajharper.com), get her book, write a must read and see all the different courses she's providing.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

AJ has transformed my life as an author. I get it so much more deeply. And I even, I personally have not tapped into all the resources that AJ has available. Uh, there's so much more. So go there. Last thing I wanna share is a, or ask is a question. So AJ, you and I were talking about it. I think we're texting about it, the possibility of doing some bonus episodes and we gotta figure out what that means. But to me it's interviews, interestingly. It's not people that, that wanna get interviews. So there's people listening say, oh, love your show. That fake automated, I love your show. So important. I have a guest for you. Not those folks. Um, there's a couple authors I've come across that have such a unique story and such a unique perspective. I would just love to spend 20 minutes with them, three minutes with them just picking their brain, me and you, and in doing a bonus episode. So my question to our audience is, is that a good idea or would that distract you? Would you, would you like a little mini material in between the shorts? If you will tell us, please email us at [hello@dwtbpodcast.com](mailto:hello@dwtbpodcast.com) and, uh, if we hear nothing that, that's the response too. So tell us if you're interested. Aj, any final thoughts before we wrap up?

## **AJ Harper:**

No, I'm excited for the next episode.

## **Mike Michalowicz:**

I can't wait. We'll see you all next week. Remember this. Thank you for joining us for this week. And remember, don't write that book. Write the greatest book you can.