

don't write *that* book!

Episode 132:

“Creating Special Editions for your 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:

We're about to do an episode that is prototypical of my favorite episodes. I sit back and just learn from you. And I, I love that there's been certain episodes and I, I actually listen to our own show. I've done other podcasts that I don't listen to. I listen to our show, don't write that book. And I listen to becoming Self-Made, the one I do with Relay. 'cause I'm, when you're, when you're interviewing in particular, it's hard to also really deeply listen because there's, you want this fluidity of questions that, yeah. You know, so I listened to our show and there's certain episodes that you are the primary presenter, and I just love it. It's such an immersion. And I just, as this topic came up that you've been sitting on for a while mm-hmm <affirmative>. I was like, I can't wait for this one,

AJ Harper:

Because you're gonna learn, you're gonna come up with ideas on this one. I'm gonna tell you some stuff, and then you're gonna say, oh, we could do this.

Mike Michalowicz:

I will deploy those ideas. Yeah. There's no question about it. Um, I wanna start off by welcoming our guest. Don't write that book. I wanna to acknowledge you are such an Uber fan and supporter of Prince

AJ Harper:

<laugh>. That's what you want. You admire this, this is our admire segment

Mike Michalowicz:

I admire because I, I've studied him more than I ever have before.

AJ Harper:

Why?

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Mike Michalowicz:

Because of his guitar work. Oh,

AJ Harper:

He's the best.

Mike Michalowicz:

He is the best. And I never really was interested in his, that aspect of life. I love his songs. I just considered him a great pop star. And, uh, you were such a fan of his. I'm like, I really should read more about Prince. So I said, read online about his bio and so forth. Then I started reading admiration of other guitars for him. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. And then I saw this video he's performing with Tom Petty.

AJ Harper:

Is that the ri This is a legendary video Rock and roll Hall of Fame.

Mike Michalowicz:

They're doing, uh, wild. My Guitar Gently Weeps. Yes. And the ending of the song is Prince doing this guitar solo? Yes. But the, the part that is the pinnacle moment is the reaction from Tom Petty.

Mike Michalowicz:

Prince goes on and does this, um, solo that is so magnificent, so technically accurate and fast that Tom Petty's eyes pop. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. And, uh, he's stunted. I subsequently then read, uh, an article, and I don't know if this is true, I gotta do a little more research of Eddie Man Halen, acknowledging Prince to be a Faster, Eddie was technically so accurate and fast that he was considered by many people that like that hair metal kind of phase as the best guitarist of all time for that aspect. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. And he says, uh, prince is a faster, more technically accurate guitarist than I. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Pretty cool acknowledgement from Eddie Van Halen. If that's true, I gotta research that

AJ Harper:

More. Listen, that, that is warms my heart because my wife's obsessed with Eddie Van Halen. So there's, the only point I went on is even Eddie thinks Prince is better <laugh>. Right?

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. You ready to get today's show?

AJ Harper:

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Yeah, but I didn't do my admirer for you.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, I always, I'm so excited I race through that. Yeah, you

AJ Harper:

Do race through that. I do. How, but now you threw me with the Prince thing.

Mike Michalowicz:

Well, you gotta do some musical reference. My, maybe my, uh, fault

AJ Harper:

Or Oh, how to tell a story. Hang on. I have, do you know that on <laugh> on my phone, I have a video of you trying to get, uh, like a single, like a song going or something at authors were authors, <laugh>, do you know I have this,

Mike Michalowicz:

I gotta see

AJ Harper:

That. Oh, so

Mike Michalowicz:

<laugh> Oh, and this was last year in Nashville. Yeah. I

AJ Harper:

Don't remember. So there was Act Oh,

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, with Chris Ducker.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. <laugh> <laugh>.

Mike Michalowicz:

It was such a flops.

AJ Harper:

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So, I'm sorry, I wasn't planning on saying this, so now I'm laughing. Uh, we, it was after dinner and you came out with the guitars and I was like, oh, I'm gonna take video of Mike that I can give him later. 'cause he'll like to have this, but nobody was paying attention. It was like when you were in the restaurant and someone comes out with the guitar and everybody's like, whatever. You know?

Mike Michalowicz:

It was so funny.

AJ Harper:

You guys barely finished a song.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. We're like, we're done.

AJ Harper:

We're out. And that was it. But I admire about you that you were like, we're gonna, here we go, here we go with the music. And nobody was, nobody was the hero.

Mike Michalowicz:

People listened. You know who our lead singer was? Was it Chris Ducker?

AJ Harper:

I don't, I don't, am I supposed to know who that is?

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah, he's an author. He's written, uh, uh, the Youpreneur.

AJ Harper:

Oh, oh, okay. I do know.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, he just released a recent book. And I'm so sorry if Chris, I know he's listening in. I can't remember the name of it. Um, he can sing and that guy can sing like Delta Blues type music. He's British. Like, like Matt. Um, and for whatever biased reason, I'm like, you're gonna sing Delta Blues? He's like, yeah. And he gets this grovelly voice, and it was spot on. So then I start hitting, uh, lose Yourself by, uh, Eminem the guitar. Dun dun dun. He nails it. So I'm like, dude, we're, we're, we're taking this downstairs. He's saying

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AJ Harper:

Lose yourself. Oh

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. That's insanely good. So then, oh,

AJ Harper:

I wanna hear that.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh my God. So we went downstairs in front of everyone they're eating. No one's paying attention. Yeah. Like, screw it. So we go outside. Oh, Jesse Finkelstein, founder of Page Two, comes over and starts singing with us. John Jan, who's also a singer, comes over and is me, Jeff Walker, who's a guitarist, Chris Ducker, Jesse and, uh, John. And we start jamming out. And it is, it ends up being fabulous. We're doing all these amazing songs, but it's just five of us. But

AJ Harper:

I didn't hear that at all. I was inside talking to Tim Grohl.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, he's such a great guy. Yeah. You're gonna be speaking at Authors for Authors this year. What's the topic you're gonna be bringing? We'll see. Yeah. I can't wait. You know, we talked about this this weekend and my ask is, I have topics that people have shown interest in, but the most important thing is that people speak from their heart and what's meaningful to them, because that means transformative. Yeah. That's what you did last year.

AJ Harper:

It's true.

Mike Michalowicz:

So I can't wait. I also, um, and right now, uh, so Authors for Authors is facilitated by me, Don and Rory Badden. My primary role is to, uh, first goes to Rory, and then I interview authors. So we're interviewing authors right now that are gonna be invited in. Um, I also manage the entire, uh, agenda of speakers. I have a potential surprise speaker we just connected this morning that is going to be mind blowing.

AJ Harper:

Will you tell me who it is at

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Mike Michalowicz:

After this, yeah. Okay. Yeah. Um, she, uh, is an author. Um, she is globally recognized, um, not for her authorship, but for, uh, events in her life that she's written about. And, um, we're, we're actively working to see if she can come there. Cool. To be a one time speaker. Exciting. Okay. So today we're gonna talk about creating special editions of your book. And perhaps you could just start off by explaining what a special edition is.

AJ Harper:

So it's a, the same book. Okay. But it's a different, some different component. Usually there's an artistic component that's different. So this is very popular with fiction. For example, a limited edition cover, maybe sprayed edges, you know, you know what A sprayed edges? No. So if you look at the, um, pages, right. And they're sprayed with a design. So when the, when the book is closed, you can see what the design is.

Mike Michalowicz:

I had no idea. That's what it's called. Yeah.

AJ Harper:

It's called Sprayed Edges. So you could have say, um, a lighthouse or bumblebees or waves or whatever you want. So when you, when the book is closed, you can see the design. And then when it's open, you obviously don't,

Mike Michalowicz:

Now is that already called a special edition? If it has no other modifications, just a sprayed edge.

AJ Harper:

Sure. So a special edition is just what it sounds like, a special edition of an existing book. It's not a derivative, meaning it's, it's another person writing something related to that book or, um, anything like that. It's not what you're thinking of. It's, it's an like a collector's edition. Think of it like that collector's edition. Okay. So they're rising in popularity, primarily in fiction, almost exclusively in fiction, but I think we can learn a lot from that and borrow from it for nonfiction. So it's become really rising in popularity, for example. Um, now, I mean, it used to be that you would get a special edition if your book was super popular. Part of part of our popular culture kind of thing. So then people who are super fans, they want those collectors' editions. Right. Think of like, if you're a Star Wars fan, you want a collector's edition Millennium Falcon, even though you might already have a Millennium Falcon mm-hmm <affirmative>.

AJ Harper:

You want the collector's edition version. So it's like that. But for fans of books. And then you'll also see these special editions of classics that are in the public domain. Right? So the Bronte

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sisters and their books, or, you know, whatever. Right. And, um, they make, do you know how much money they make? So much money off of classics just issuing with beautiful different covers. They get a wonderful artist to change the cover, or they do some beautiful illustrations inside. Or maybe it has foil stamping, or maybe there's a case that the book comes in and that case is beautiful and it's just a beautiful display.

Mike Michalowicz:

Are they typically consumed for display purposes?

AJ Harper:

I think it's like, I, I, I love this, so I wanna have this other version of it that that's what it is. But

Mike Michalowicz:

It's not necessarily the content. It's more about the presentation of the book itself. So

AJ Harper:

Sometimes it's also content. So in fiction, maybe the, the extra content would be say, um, an epilogue or a map or illustrations of characters or character breakdowns. I don't know, just whatever's relevant. And so you could have additional content in there as well,

Mike Michalowicz:

But it's not necessarily a substantial revision of the content. It's not,

AJ Harper:

Okay. No, it's a additional things, additional content, and then a different sort of design or art presentation.

Mike Michalowicz:

Seth Godin, when he introduced Purple Cow, he, uh, sold, oh, may, maybe I'm conflating things, but he did, but he made these mega-sized books. That was, instead of like, what's the standard height of a book? Six inches or eight inches by,

AJ Harper:

It depends. But most hard covers are six by nine. Six

Mike Michalowicz:

By nine. He made six feet by nine feet. Like he did, he went to the Extreme <laugh>. He also, uh, I think it was with Purple Cow, you could get it in a cereal box. The book would arrive in a cereal box. That's

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AJ Harper:

A special edition. Yeah. I mean, you wouldn't want the Giant one.

Mike Michalowicz:

N not, well, some, some whack job probably wanted that. And they,

AJ Harper:

Okay. But we, this, these should be accessible for, right. So you, you wanted to sell a lot of 'em.

Mike Michalowicz:

I worked with a guy named Paul Schneider. He was the founder of Yeah. Hedgehog Leather Works. And he made Sheaths knife sheaths, and he would do, uh, community projects. So he'd say, Hey, I'm making a new sheath for such and such knife. And he'd reach out to the community and say, what do you want it to look like or be included? It was so fascinating as when he put it on market, he put it a limited quantity out. 'cause they had to be custom made. He sold a couple hundred, the people who helped co-design it, like went racing to get Yeah.

AJ Harper:

You wrote a story about that in one of your books.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yes. Is this something you build with your community? Is that an idea due to, I mean, I

AJ Harper:

Guess, see, I told you this is what I said was gonna happen <laugh>. I said, I will tell you about it and then you'll say, oh, what if we did this? Yeah. Yeah. That's what's happening right now. Yeah. Yeah. You could. I don't believe that's happening.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. Okay.

AJ Harper:

So here's what's happening. The special editions I are coming becoming more popular in part because TikTok book talk social media, so they're visual. Right. It's a, it's visually beautiful. It's something new and cool that you can show off showing off the money habit, or even write a or write a must-read behind me. It's just,

Mike Michalowicz:

It's just a

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AJ Harper:

Book. It's not a magical art piece. Yeah. There's nothing super fancy about it. Yeah. But people get really geeked out about, oh my gosh, look what I got. And so it's that visual representation in the visual media that's creating this demand. Then I would say there's another factor, which is authors who are focused more on direct sales. And so they have their Shopify store and they can issue their own special editions and you can, you know, charge a premium for them. And they're seeing the value in creating these things themselves. And, and so, uh, having these sort of art souvenirs, right, these fan souvenirs, um, is becoming really, really popular. And you might think, oh, it's just gonna be a small amount. But I actually pulled something. Let me get, I had to read it. Yeah,

Mike Michalowicz:

Pull it up.

AJ Harper:

So this was in PW, Publishers Weekly. This is about fiction, but, um, okay. This is a romantic book called Onyx Storm. So the special edition, which you can get on, you can get on Amazon, you don't have to go to a special sort to do it. Onyx Storm Wing and Claw Collection by Rebecca Yaros sold 1.7 million copies. That's the special edition. The standard edition of Onyx Storm. Meaning not that special one fi uh, 573,000 copies. It's so the special edition, it's tripled. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

Wow. So it, it, she tripled sales with a special edition. Is why do you think, I mean, I'm, maybe you're not familiar with this book, but why do you think,

AJ Harper:

I think it's the wanting to have the special cool thing, the additional content and the look of it. I really do think I want the special cool thing, the extra stuff that's in here. And I

Mike Michalowicz:

Wonder if the consumers of that are even reading the book.

AJ Harper:

Yes, they are.

Mike Michalowicz:

Are they, are they buying the original to read it perhaps in the special edition to display it?

AJ Harper:

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Probably both.

Mike Michalowicz:

I used to, uh, collect comic books when I was a kid. I still actually have some leftover that have potential value, and they would make the same thing. Collectors editions, certain graphics were added, they call 'em graphic, uh, novels back at the time were graphic comics. They were more articulate, enjoying. And those, I remember I purchased and in store away instantly Rabbit Seal to protect it. 'cause it increases in value.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. But I don't think they're doing this to resell it. And this is a fan thing. This is, readers love this thing.

Mike Michalowicz:

So I wonder if, if, of those 500,000 readers, are they buying three copies? Or did she enter a new consumer base that wouldn't have bought the original book?

AJ Harper:

I don't know the part, I don't know. But that's pretty impressive. In

Mike Michalowicz:

Your notes here, you say that publishers are requesting this in contracts?

AJ Harper:

No, I think, I think that agents are probably the ones requesting it. So they're putting that special, you know, you, if you were lucky enough to get a special edition of your book, it means it was a super success. But now some of them are writing these special editions into the contracts. When you, for the main book,

Mike Michalowicz:

Are you considering doing a special edition for write of must read?

AJ Harper:

Ah, I don't know. What would I do? I think, I think if I did, you know, a cool thing I think would be, uh, director's cut kind of version for non-fiction. Right? What? But, you know, that means what the editor didn't cut. But then as an editor, I have to say, if we make the book better, so I don't think re-add a bunch of content is good, but what if it had the, the notes and the margins in the author's handwriting?

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Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, that's really cool.

AJ Harper:

Right.

Mike Michalowicz:

So

AJ Harper:

Like a marked up Yeah. The, the author's marked up version.

Mike Michalowicz:

And would you have, uh, crossouts and changes in the content itself? Or how do you

AJ Harper:

Think you'd have to see if that was affecting readability? Yeah, that's why I think the margins might be cool. Yeah, just leave the text as it is. Think of it again, think of this as additions. Yes. Right. So I would maybe, um, create some additional content. I would, I would love to do more of like a, you know, film workbook type thing. I wonder if that could be a special edition. Mm. I would love to do a bigger version so that you could write in it.

Mike Michalowicz:

That's cool.

AJ Harper:

But then that's, to me, that's just a workbook. But maybe you could call it special edition and make it fancier. Does do the nonfiction readers want the fancy thing? I don't know. It would be fun to test it out. Hmm.

Mike Michalowicz:

I was thinking for the money habit, what if, uh, cut out the front cover a section of it, put a hundred dollars bill in there with a kind of a plexiglass over, and that's your emergency account. Now you gotta pay 125 bucks to buy the book or whatever it is. So I'm, I'm not gifting it, but now you have a book with also your fund inside the book.

AJ Harper:

That's cute. I like that.

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Mike Michalowicz:

Uh, one of the most fascinating, now I realize special edition, um, concepts I ever saw was from Sally Hogshead. Uh, I was at a retreat, so author, four authors, these little subgroups are breaking out. And so dory's, like, I like to run a subgroup. And, uh, I got invited to it. It was hosted by, uh, Dory and Miles Taylor. We went to Dory's apartment down in Miami, and Sally Hogshead was there and she presented all these, I didn't realize special editions for her upcoming book, which is different is better than Better. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Is the title of it. And, um, she showed a concept, but one was a, a a steel cover. I, I can't remember, um, one thing.

AJ Harper:

A steel cover.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah, it was like steel. Oh, that's cool. Yeah. I don't know how she did it. I mean, it was images of it, so I know how she did that. But how she pulled off one, I think was, uh, a mirror book, um, where, where you're looking at yourself. Um, it was this, she had hundreds of ideas. When it comes to special editions, do you believe or have you seen, do you come out with one unique one or do you just keep iterating new and new?

AJ Harper:

You could do new ones. Yeah, absolutely. I think the, the thing is, if your book is not selling now, doing a special edition is probably not for you. I just wanna make that distinction. I think if your book is selling and you have some sort of readership that would be interested in a special edition that's, you know, it's gotta have some sort of success.

Mike Michalowicz:

How would you define that?

AJ Harper:

By some number of books you sold?

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah, but what's, what's the number? I don't

AJ Harper:

Know.

Mike Michalowicz:

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I mean, in, in the nonfiction space, 10,000 books is a magical number. Print books, uh, within one year.

AJ Harper:

Yes, it is. I don't know that that's enough, you know?

Mike Michalowicz:

Is it But fan, fan engagement, like you have Uber fans. We Yes, we have people email the show, like they will ride and die for you. That's

AJ Harper:

True. It's true.

Mike Michalowicz:

It's some funny, it's some funny, some of the comments that come in.

AJ Harper:

It is a, it is a little funny. I was in, uh, we had an event the other day and, um, I'm Sade brilliant Marketing Mind who is behind on my team and behind every good thing that's happening marketing wise for me. Um, she said she texted in this group chat we have from my team 'cause everybody's remote, right? She said, I think we're gonna have to get you some security <laugh>, because it was a little bit of an Uber fan situation, really. And it's, it's hap it's happening to me more and more, which I find highly uncomfortable.

Mike Michalowicz:

Wild.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. But you must have this. I do.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. I, uh, I was at an event this, I, I mentioned it last week at ATI's super conference. These are auto mechanics and the money. I was there and I arrived early into the space and, uh, it's an interesting kind of Z list celebrity thing. Like, I'm walking into the hotel and you'll start seeing people do the eye shuffle kind of looking at you and then tap and like point like that. And, uh, one Uber fan came up and said, Hey, uh, would you mind autographing my book? I want to get you for the event. I'm like, absolutely. She, my name's Megan spelled like your nieces. I'm like, oh, shoot. Oh,

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AJ Harper:

You have a niece named Megan? Yeah,

Mike Michalowicz:

Spelled M-E-A-G-H-A-N.

AJ Harper:

How do they know that?

Mike Michalowicz:

It, it must be in one of the books, or it mu I must have mentioned it somewhere, including on the show just now, <laugh>. But this, this

AJ Harper:

We're Megan. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

So she's like, I'm Megan just like your niece. And she goes, how's Krista doing? I'm like, oh, wow. Like, listen, it's in the public domain.

AJ Harper:

It's in public domain, but it's disconcerting. But yes, those, that person who stopped you in the lobby will buy this special, a special edition book. Yeah. But I think you have to have engagement and you have to have sold a significant, and there has to be a value proposition. So in fiction, of course the value proposition is an additional story or beautiful cover. Yeah. And so forth. Do I think that nonfiction readers are gonna care if there's a beautiful cover? I don't know. I think you'd have to be really a super fan.

Mike Michalowicz:

So, well, let me give you some books that could potentially could do it. Think and Grow Rich. I I can't tell you how many times it's referenced in the business space. Um, as a, as one of the key books. Um, Dale Carnegie's work, I, I was just talking to someone yesterday. I said that Dale Carnegie's transformed their life. How do win Friends and influence people? He's written many books how to stop worrying and Stop Living. Yeah. And I, I've seen people walk around with these books almost as this like religious literature. Yeah. They'll leave it, they'll, you know, they'll almost pray to it. And I wonder if there's an opportunity with, with those classics, how would it, is there a business model here? Could someone go to public domain books and make special editions? Yeah. Or you wanna do with your own work? How, how's it work with public domain books?

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AJ Harper:

They're, it's just like it sounds in the public domain.

Mike Michalowicz:

How's the book get into the public domain? Do you know?

AJ Harper:

It's based on the num, how long it been, uh, out of in print? I

Mike Michalowicz:

Think 99 years is the number. Yeah. And so, okay, so that's maybe a business model too. Yeah,

AJ Harper:

You could, I mean there's a lot of publishers that do that.

Mike Michalowicz:

There's also, these publishers are coming about now and buying, um, popular books. So, uh, Tina Turner who passed away, prior to her passing, she sold off her collective rights. I wanna say Bruce Springsteen's done this, but I don't know if that's true. And what the advantages to the artist is, I believe Tina, uh, received all this money for her estate in immediacy and she got whatever, uh, money and she can distribute to her estate or use it for her own benefit. And the acquirer now gets the residual income. Right. I see this happening in the book industry. There are books that are being purchased that are selling, well, they haven't passed that nine, nine year threshold. They may be only five years old and they're acquiring the book rights, paying the author a substantial, I believe just

AJ Harper:

Buying out their royalties.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. And so in those cases, um, actually I don't know where I was going with that when it comes to special editions, but I guess a redeployment of the book could be a, a, a special edition's, almost like a reason for another book launch and build awareness again. Yeah, for sure. Have you seen authors do that

AJ Harper:

In fiction? Yeah. So what I'm saying is I feel like we can do this. I feel like we can do this in nonfiction special editions. You just have to find the thing that's gonna make people want it.

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Mike Michalowicz:

And how do you think you find a thing? Is it I do a thing called Sell the Tell, where I reach out to an audience, say I'm thinking about doing this. Um, how would, if we were doing it for write and must read, how do you think you go about to see if there's, you

AJ Harper:

Know what I would, I would do a version of what you said with Paul the Cheder

Mike Michalowicz:

Schneider Schneider, yeah.

AJ Harper:

The leather guy who incidentally was in every one of the books but was not in the money habit. Oh.

Mike Michalowicz:

You know, I was just texting with him just myself,

AJ Harper:

Mike. What the hell?

Mike Michalowicz:

We gotta sneak 'em in.

AJ Harper:

We can't. How are we gonna stick 'em in? It's published

Mike Michalowicz:

As we continue down this rabbit hole. I was thinking

AJ Harper:

Special edition p Full cider edition.

Mike Michalowicz:

That's actually a good idea at Schneider edition.

AJ Harper:

You have to be a super fan to really care about that.

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Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. The only person I'll probably buy it, he probably wouldn't even buy that buy I'd buy it for myself. 'cause I love that guy so much. I wonder just going down the rabbit hole. Um, the family mascot for the Michalowicz family is the moose. And, uh, I had a meeting with my wife and children when they were itty b itty bitties and said, uh, I want to have a mascot for the family. And the moose was selected because of its perceived awkwardness, but it has a strength and nobility. And so that's how it kind of came about. And what I wanted to do, and I, I tried to do, Matt and I, when we were setting up this room, uh, today, I wanted to get a moose. Kinda like Jerry Seinfeld always had a Superman. So just on the shelving. Um,

AJ Harper:

But you, you have a wall here, the fake ish wall.

Mike Michalowicz:

He can just flash a moose up real quick. No,

AJ Harper:

I mean, when you put a moose, like a fake moose head, not a we could.

Mike Michalowicz:

No. What what we're gonna do here is we're gonna put the logo, don't write that book. Oh. Will be posted right there. And he's gonna carve it in. We have a green screen. It's kinda off offset there, but he's gonna put a green screen up and have it displayed. Um, but in Seinfeld, he always had a, a Superman that was always in every episode. I'm like, I'm gonna have a moose in every episode.

AJ Harper:

So you're gonna have a Moose edition of your book.

Mike Michalowicz:

<laugh>. No, I just, rabbit hole. I'm just gonna have a moose mascot floating around. So what would you do? So you would reach out to your audience and say, I'm thinking about doing a special edition. What's your thoughts or how would you go about it? Sure.

AJ Harper:

If, okay, so if I wanted to do a special edition of Write a Must-Read, I could take your idea and say, if I created a special edition of Write a Must-Read, what would you want? Would you want a different cool cover? Would you want sprayed edges foil stamping? Would you want that fancy

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stuff? Would you want my notes in the margins? Would you want additional content? What would you want?

Mike Michalowicz:

A special edition has to be a modification to the book. I assume if you had jewelry, it comes with a bracelet. That's,

AJ Harper:

That's, that's not a special edition. Okay. That's, that's a book plus stuff.

Mike Michalowicz:

Okay. So don't do a book plus stuff for a special edition. I

AJ Harper:

Mean, you could,

Mike Michalowicz:

But not for a special

AJ Harper:

Edition. But it's not actually a special edition. It's just your book plus a bracelet. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

<laugh>. Yeah. I would use typewriter keys on yours because it's such a prominent component and it's a, to me that your typewriter on there looks like a seventies typewriter. I'm not saying that's what it is, but it looks that way and it has those very distinct typewriter keys. Before they were plastic, I think you would see like the metal one. What do you mean

AJ Harper:

You would attach it?

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. I, I would insert type, I would have like write and must read typewriter

AJ Harper:

Embedded Embedded into the

Mike Michalowicz:

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Cover. Into the cover, yeah. Hmm. Yeah. I'm just thinking of ways to, to do That's remarkable. Um, I, I wonder if there's other typewriter elements you could have in there because it's, it's such a prominent part and I think I would, I'm just staring at your book. I would exacerbate or amplify elements that are already there to make it really distinct. You know, how the hammer would come flying across, right? Every time you push a key, can you put those, I don't know if we're called hammers in. Um,

AJ Harper:

I don't know if I would be as concerned about the cover as I would be concerned about what's in inside the book.

Mike Michalowicz:

But what do you mean the designs inside the book?

AJ Harper:

Yeah. Well, no, I'm really into this writing the margins thing or additional or additional content

Mike Michalowicz:

And, and maybe that's it. Maybe that's a special edition has to speak from your heart.

AJ Harper:

Well, I think it has to also be reader focused. Why, why do they want your, why do they want your book?

Mike Michalowicz:

So my Angle is right. I must read, I've probably read it now three times, four times. Um, I listen to the audios. I prefer the audio. So read I use with Liberty. Um, but what I like is I also have it displayed in my office. So I asked you to bring your books here for display. 'cause I don't want to, it's on, I've won part of my shelving there. Have you seen the shelving? It says the word read on the wall. Yes. Yeah. And on there I have a section of autograph books, original autograph books, and there's like five books there. And to me, every time I see it, it's a reminder. It throws me back to the fundamentals of what your book teaches. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. So I'm very oriented toward that display as a reminder. And that's why I'm like, oh, the cover, the more unique it is, the more it's gonna attract me as a reminder. Yeah. And yours, your angle feels more like an immersion or a new way of consuming the content?

AJ Harper:

Yeah. I mean, I think there's all different ways you could do a special edition.

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Mike Michalowicz:

You have the summer camp coming up. Like do you talk about stuff like this at the summer camp or is it just like, let's write and let's do

AJ Harper:

No, it is, we are, it's accountability purpose. How are you gonna get some work done over the summer when you normally wouldn't do it? And it's a free event that I do. We did it, we, this is our third time doing it. So you sign up for summer camp, there's a three live events associated with it, all free. And then every single week I send you an email with prompts and education. And our focus is on marketing content this summer, which is um, which is a new thing for us. But you know, as you know, authorship is not just about getting the book done. A lot of authors drop out and they need to be creating other content. So we're spending the summer creating that content with some guidance from us. You could also join summer camp if you just wanna do writing on your book though. It's an accountability piece.

Mike Michalowicz:

Is there dialogue among the students? Are they talking about ideas, maybe like a special edition?

AJ Harper:

Uh, no. No, but I mean, I do have, I do have a membership and a, a Sprint membership and, um, another membership called Top Three Offers. And yes, we do talk about those things in that, that group, that's a separate thing that's paid. The summer camp thing is totally free.

Mike Michalowicz:

Totally free. So, uh, just again, so our audience know, tell us about top three and how you get into the paid program.

AJ Harper:

Yeah, so there's a writing sprint program. We have 10 writing sprints a week for an hour. And during those times you could ask questions. I'm usually there on Fridays manning the sprints. And the other days is Laura Stone, who's my Dean of students. And sometimes Sadé's pinch hitting for her. That's an very affordable sprint membership I've had for years. But then there's also a step up from that, which is, um, it gives you education to all of my mastercraft classes. I've taught the full library, all the live classes, uh, bimonthly, q and as with me, that sort of thing. So that's a step up. If you're actively working and you wanna have more interaction with me and you wanna have access to these fun classes, I do like I'm about to do one next week on interviewing to pull stories.

Mike Michalowicz:

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Oh, I love that. Yeah, I love that. Um, let's go back to, uh, the special editions. Uh, we have a mutual friend in Phil Jones. He wrote exactly what to say. Yeah. Um, I don't know if they're necessarily special editions.

AJ Harper:

They're custom editions.

Mike Michalowicz:

Okay. Yeah, that's where I wanted to distinguish. So he, I think he was speaking at Volkswagen, um, and when he was speaking there, they said, Hey, or prior to that, we'd like to get 500 or 5,000 copies, whatever. And he did a special chapter for them as introduction. Yep. Put the stamp, the Volkswagen stamp on it. Yep. What do you call that? Custom, custom edition? He's,

AJ Harper:

He's, he's known for that.

Mike Michalowicz:

He's famously sold well over a million copies of exactly one book and just keeps on repackaging and redoing it. Yes. Yep. I even have his gear upstairs. I he sent me a sweatshirt. This is the word exactly right across it. It's an embossed sweatshirt.

AJ Harper:

He went deep, he went deep with it.

Mike Michalowicz:

Brilliant. Smart. Yeah. Brilliant fella. But

AJ Harper:

He sells a lot of custom books.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah, he could do special editions too.

AJ Harper:

It's not hard to do custom books if you are working with a hybrid publisher or if you're self-publishing, you're basically just adjusting the cover and then you've got a allocation for that special chapter. He probably has a set word count. It needs to be so that they aren't going over the page count, et cetera. So he is probably got it down to the science.

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Mike Michalowicz:

Do I need to find a special printer? Like if I'm gonna do a special edition that has the sprayed pages, has right in the margins, has a modified cover, how do I actually technically go about the process?

AJ Harper:

So then you need to go to an offset printer. You're not gonna be doing print on demand with sprayed edges and you know, you, you're not gonna be able to go run it through Ingram Spark.

Mike Michalowicz:

Do we start with the, that component? Like, because we may have these amazing concepts that are just not practical or doable. Yeah,

AJ Harper:

Just talk to a printer. I mean, go look at some special editions of books. Even just Google special editions and look at even what the fiction books are doing. You can see who printed those books and then start the conversation with the, with the printer.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, that's fascinating. Um, any more concepts or discussion points around special editions?

AJ Harper:

No, I just think, I just think we're missing an opportunity probably if your book is successful enough, if you have a fan base, you know, and actually I would say even if you are okay, even if you don't have a book out yet, but you do have the fan base, right? So you have an engaged following that's anticipating your book. You could release a special edition of a new book. Now if you were trying to go for a national bestseller, you wouldn't wanna split the difference there. But once the book was out, you could very quickly, you wouldn't have to wait till you sold 20,000 copies of it or something because it's, it's about the engaged fan base.

Mike Michalowicz:

We're on pricing. I, and I was like, oh, we, we should wrap up now. But now I'm like, oh, I remember in New York City there was a hamburger that sold for a thousand dollars literally, and they, it had like some gold sprinkles on it there all these reasons to justify it. And I don't know how many they sold, but it was newsworthy. When it comes to special edition books, is there some pricing guidelines you have?

AJ Harper:

Well, the cost <laugh> often. The cost. Yeah, the cost. It's gonna be expensive. It's not cheap.

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Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. But but is there, like, don't, don't, don't be the person that makes the million dollar book or is or No,

AJ Harper:

Don't. Because what you want is people to say, look what I got. And to show it on social media and on TikTok and Instagram and wherever and say, oh, look at this beautiful book I got. That's part of what you want them to do. So if you only if only five people bought it because it was a thousand dollars, that's defeating the purpose.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. And could it be newsworthy your target as as opposed to like a human interest story that hits the news? Maybe it's a PR move or is this really about engagement with your readers? Is that

AJ Harper:

It's, it's, it's about your fan base. Yeah. It's not about a second, two second blip on a TV show.

Mike Michalowicz:

I would love to see in the comments for today's episode, just some out off the wall ideas. Of

AJ Harper:

Course you would. That's what you want. You want the, you want the crazy stuff.

Mike Michalowicz:

I like the crazy stuff. Not because I'll necessarily execute on it, but crazy ideas. Find unique new ideas.

AJ Harper:

I wish that you could, I mean, it's not gonna be doable because you have or it's it's not, it's not probable. We'll put it like that because you have so many different ways you published, but I wish you could have your body of work, your ca your entrepreneur catalog as special, a special edition of all of them with the same, like a similar design.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah, yeah.

AJ Harper:

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Uh, like you know when you buy all of the Chronicles of Narnia Yes. It's a special edition of the entire series. Yes. I wish you, that is my wish that you could have the malowitz entrepreneur catalog and it would all be fit, like lined up perfectly.

Mike Michalowicz:

And that is really appealing. That reminds me now I actually have special editions. I'm like, I don't know if I ever bought any I've exactly that about the, I think it's the Humans series and it's about the human body. The human mind. Yeah, the human psychology and it's all these and they look identical and it's perfectly Yeah. Sorted. It's in my night table. And so when I go to bed, um, I'll use it as a reference or I'll just look at the collection and it's a beautiful presentation. Yeah.

AJ Harper:

And you like the feel of it. You like the page, maybe, maybe you're gonna use, uh, more expensive paper and it's just the weight of it. Yeah,

Mike Michalowicz:

That's exactly what these are. They're heavy weight. Yeah. Yeah. Find a gloss finished paper. Yeah. Highly pictorial.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. So I mean it's sucks that you can't do that for your own catalog, but it's also a reason why you might choose self-publishing and I publishing to have control over things like that.

Mike Michalowicz:

Alright, so I'm gonna keep going. Questions. I wanted to wrap this up here, but do, is there a better publishing platform for special editions or less effective publishing platform?

AJ Harper:

Platform? What do you mean

Mike Michalowicz:

Traditional versus path? Hybrid versus you mean path is that path, is that the right word?

AJ Harper:

Yeah. Platform to me is Ingram Spark or

Mike Michalowicz:

Okay, so traditional then say path, traditional, hybrid or self, what's the better platform or best

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AJ Harper:

Sell for hybrid? Because you have control. Yeah. Unless, unless your publisher is, you know, you can have these conversations and say, this is what I wanna do. They have to, to see if it's economically viable for them. And you know what that process is. Is this the bureaucracy? The

Mike Michalowicz:

Bigger Yeah, the bigger the organization, the more the bureaucracy is the general

AJ Harper:

Yeah. I mean, I'm saying it wouldn't happen if you sell a ton of books. I think you'd be hard pressed to get a publisher to do a special edition of a non-fiction book the same way they would do it of fiction. So you just, if you want control and you think that you can sell it and Yeah. You traditional's gonna give you a hard time over that.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. I even find hybrid that they have their protocols, they have their established process. That's why they're so effective. Uh, that it, when you introduce something that's unique or off the wall, it can still be jarring for them.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. But you still have the power. You

Mike Michalowicz:

Still have the power self-publish.

AJ Harper:

You have all the

Mike Michalowicz:

Power. No, yeah, you have all the power. No. Yeah.

AJ Harper:

Now you have, and authors are just using, um, Shopify stores and creating their own special editions and they're doing Kickstarter campaigns to create them. And you know, I mean it gets, it's a whole thing and, and you can do it if you wanna do it.

Mike Michalowicz:

I'm inspired. I can't guarantee it'll happen this year. I can guarantee the conversation's gonna happen within the next week.

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AJ Harper:

Start thinking about

Mike Michalowicz:

It. Yeah. We have Kelsey, myself and Andrea have a biweekly, uh, generally marketing call, but we have a call regarding other elements of the business and so there's different topics. So I guarantee this will be a topic. You know

AJ Harper:

What, you have a special edition, but it's an audio book.

Mike Michalowicz:

What do you mean

AJ Harper:

You did a special edition audiobook of the money habit

Mike Michalowicz:

'cause of the riffing.

AJ Harper:

Uh, well, and also the interviews.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. That's pretty unique. Yeah.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. So you're, you know, you just have to start thinking like that. What would you do for a special edition? That's

Mike Michalowicz:

A good point, right? So a special edition is not limited to the print. It could be audio, it could be the Kindle or, I mean,

AJ Harper:

It's not really that serving the purpose of what we're talking about today, which is having this it's true visual souvenir kind of thing. But I think you're already thinking creatively like that. And so just extend it to the print version. I love that. And probably you haven't thought about it because

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you've been trapped in the traditional mind, you know, traditional factory where this is the way we do it, period. Done, move on to the next one.

Mike Michalowicz:

And it engages readers in a whole new level. Yeah. A whole new way.

AJ Harper:

And you have the fan base, you could do it.

Mike Michalowicz:

I, I have some raving fans. You have rabid fans, like, and I'm starting to learn this now you've, people are like, oh my God, they're intense. I

AJ Harper:

Think they would drive into the desert for me. Like, where, where does the body go? <laugh>?

Mike Michalowicz:

Where do we put

AJ Harper:

Mike Thankly? They don't have to worry about that with me. Yeah. Where do we put Mike <laugh>? Um,

Mike Michalowicz:

Next week we're gonna talk about why your book needs a test drive. What, what is a test drive?

AJ Harper:

So test driving, um, beyond the concepts. So if this is, this is for prescriptive nonfiction, it does not apply otherwise, but the test drive is the frameworks, the processes, the tools, the um, the series of questions, the multi-step, this or that. Um, anything you're asking them to do.

Mike Michalowicz:

Great. I can't wait for that. I hope for our audience, uh, you're enjoying this episode like you have every episode, but we wanna know back from you, what did you think about the quality of the show? This new in studio setup we have? Is this giving you something more? Is it a special edition of a podcast? Kind of, I don't know. Also, I ask that you rate and review the show. I know it takes a minute or two. It is of massive impact to me and AJ because it gets the word out on the show. We love your honest rating and review. If you want to work with AJ Harper and you want to work with AJ Harper, go to aj.harper.com. You can email us both at hello at dw tb as

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