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Episode 135:

“Hybrid v. Traditional: Revisiting Publishing Path Decisions”

Mike Michalowicz:

So Matt has, uh, on this camera here, which I can see, you can see, but our guests can't see. It's a countdown or count up camera. That's why it says the word up there. And the reason we did this is the last few I got so emotional. The last few episodes we recorded, I'm doing my watch. And so you're talking and I'm doing this to monitor the time. And he has simple solution for it.

AJ Harper:

You're emotional about the clock?

Mike Michalowicz:

No, I just had a, I got a little something in my throat, so I made it sound emotional.

AJ Harper:

Oh. I thought maybe you were emotional about how geeked out you are.

Mike Michalowicz:

I get very emotional about clocks.

AJ Harper:

You just love this room. You wanna sleep in here, <laugh>.

Mike Michalowicz:

I love this room. And so this is formally my son's bedroom.

AJ Harper: Oh.

Mike Michalowicz: And

AJ Harper:

Was that the closet there? I'm looking. I had it a at a big void. Yes. Is that the closet

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Mike Michalowicz:

That big voids a closet. And so a couple things, when we were cleaning this room out, you find things you don't want find,

AJ Harper: I mean,

Mike Michalowicz:

Or gosh, uh, he 23 years old and he moved out. Oh no. And there was a collection of stuff ever since he was like five. So you see some things, it's like, uh, that's

AJ Harper:

So cute. Mm-hmm <affirmative>.

Mike Michalowicz:

And then you get to certain things like, oh my God.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

Matt and I came in this room after it was deconstructed and everything was removed. And we're trying to figure out how to film. And where you're sitting is where we were talking about setting up the original cameras. Matt would sit there and you and I would be on this wall where you're facing. And we did some quick measurements, <laugh>. And the thought came up, if we can get into that closet, like physically a camera in that closet, it gives us more space. 'cause we wanted to build this shin. So this here, this chimney, um, is, it's just, it's like a, I dunno what the materials, like, A cloth behind that is a is a Murphy bed. So this converts to a guest room also.

AJ Harper:

But why don't you do that? There's so much partic-- I mean, with

Mike Michalowicz:

So many rooms we have, when my wife's side of the family comes, everybody comes. 'cause our, they're, they live in Hawaii, my family. My, my wife's family. Yeah. So when they come, they're here for a month. And so we have, uh, my father-in-law and his wife, they get the pre premier bedroom. Her brother and wife, who had a new baby recently. A little preemie, but doing well,

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knock on wood. Uh, they come, so that's the second bedroom. Um, and then my daughter, my son, and my other son, so that we can have like seven bedrooms. And we don't have seven bedrooms in this house. It's a four-bedroom house. So we have these rooms that convert into bedrooms when needed.

AJ Harper:

Got it.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. And when it's just to further bore you.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. I wanna hear you wanna hear Where does everybody eat breakfast?

Mike Michalowicz:

Well, yeah. Well, yeah. Uh, in your room. Um, we only have two active bedrooms. There's the master bedroom and we have a guest bedroom. So if you wanna sleep over tonight or you need to, we have the right room ready to go. But every other room has a function. Like this podcast room. My office converts to a single bed bedroom. Uh,

AJ Harper:

You are just, you're not messing around.

Mike Michalowicz:

We don't mess around.

AJ Harper:

But I thought of that too. For our lake house. Uh, we often have to have a lot of folks. Yeah. How are you? I made sure we have these. Um, have you seen the new, they're probably not new, new to me. Beds that you, um, the four, um, what are they? Air mattresses? Yeah. But they actually have you push a button, it comes out of the bag like a robot. And it also has a frame.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh,

wow.

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AJ Harper:

And like, it's

Mike Michalowicz:

A, so it kind of rolls out and it's structured.

AJ Harper:

It's like a bed.

Mike Michalowicz:

That's amazing. Yeah.

AJ Harper:

I got a couple of those to be on our porch. And then the, the library, my wife's little library, that small little room, we made sure that the little window seat fit a twin. Things like that.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. That's brilliant. That's brilliant. Yeah. A lot of techniques we use here. Uh, and maybe we're using too, from tiny homes, like how to fit a lot of stuff in a small amount of space. Mmhmm <affirmative>.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. That's not what we talk about on this show though.

Mike Michalowicz:

What do you mean

AJ Harper:

Interior design?

Mike Michalowicz:

No, <laugh>. We should start a new show. Oh my gosh. I'm, what do you hear back about Our banter are so it is like hot or cold. I, um, is what I'm getting.

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AJ Harper:

It's either I really enjoy that. Yeah. Or I fast forward.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. Which I, I totally respect that

AJ Harper:

Too. I think these are both good options.

Mike Michalowicz:

I think it's a good option.

AJ Harper:

But we, people don't understand is we're trying to get into the thing because

Mike Michalowicz:

It gets the juices flowing.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. It gets, yeah. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Mm-hmm <affirmative>.

Mike Michalowicz:

Today we're gonna talk about hybrid versus traditional. We're revisiting the publishing path and the decisions around it. You know, what's so interesting is, I thought we did this relative recently, and you said this was episode five, perhaps

AJ Harper:

Pretty early on the first maybe 10 episodes. We covered a lot of basics, including one entire episode about the three primary, each of the three primary paths. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. So that's been a minute.

Mike Michalowicz:

A few things have changed since then, but mostly for me at least, it's perspective, a better understanding of the

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AJ Harper:

Public. Yeah. And that's what I wanted to talk about is before I was educating you about hybrid. Yeah. Now, not only did you publish with a top tier hybrid, you have an imprint at a top to your hybrid. Allah has changed.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yes.

AJ Harper:

Since, 'cause I think we were working on all in when we started this podcast.

Mike Michalowicz:

Working on

AJ Harper:

All in. Yeah. Mm-hmm <affirmative>.

Mike Michalowicz:

That's actually hard to believe. Yeah. Has it

AJ Harper:

Been that long? I think I'm right.

Mike Michalowicz:

Wow. Okay. Well, I wanna welcome our guest to the show. Uh, I am joined in studio with my friend, my partner, my colleague, uh, AJ Harper, who has written a book that you must read called Write a Must Read. I mean, it's in it, it's in the name. It's in the name. You must read it. Um, also, she has courses available for authors. I was just taking, talking with a, a friend, uh, a long time friend of mine, um, who I don't see frequently. So just haven't talked to him in years, ran into each other. I actually didn't even recognize him. So when I say friend, I mean, I adore this guy. I don't see him that frequently. So, and you know, people's change, they get facial hair and stuff. Yeah. So I didn't recognize him right away. I'm like, oh. And, uh, he's an aspiring author.

Mike Michalowicz:

He is written his first book. Hmm. And I wrote back to him, he said, what do you think my book? I said, the stories you have are extraordinary. Your writing level is not there. I said, I have a

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friend I wanna introduce you to, but step one is, you must listen to this show and listen to some episodes. And then once you hear it, if you are committed to being a career author, because that's what he says he wants to do, I said, you have to work with AJ Harper. Go to Madeline Island and just work with her. So you do these retreats on Madeline Island. And I think maybe that's a very one way to demonstrate commitment, but it also instills it because you're surrounded with people who are committed to the author career.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. At the time, this airs will already be pretty well into the summer. And I don't know that I'll have any spots left, but which I do three editing retreats in the summer. Okay. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

But go to ajharper.com. You can maybe get for next year. And you have tons of other

AJ Harper:

Resources. Have a lot. You know, the thing is just come, this is what I always tell people. Just start coming to writing sprints. Mm. So writing sprints, you can do it for, you know, I have a set monthly fee, but I also have a button next to it. It says, pay what you can. I love that. I don't pay attention. I don't even look at that because that's, that's for me. I was one of those free lunch kids. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, okay.

AJ Harper:

So I don't wanna, I don't, you don't need to have a talk with me about it. I just want you to come. So I have a pay what you can button and I do mean that. Yeah. And that's a monthly subscription for our writing Sprint community, which there's absolutely no riding Sprint community like ours. Number one, we have two riding sprints a day. Wow. Weekdays, that's almost unheard of. And, uh, Laura Stone runs the bulk of them. I do Fridays. But I mean, she's just a genius at building community, keeping people accountable, keeping this positive home base. That is the starting point. And then you can learn about everything through that and just kind of get the vibe and the community. But if anybody, like your friend wants to be a career author, author, or even not, I just, you want some level of authorship. You need to get out of the cave. And that's why having the sprints helps, because you get knowledge, support community. Um, so I just, now, this was not what we were gonna talk about right now, but you're always recommending my Stefan here. And I think it's good. Just go, go start writing, writing for almost nothing. You could do it. And just kind of get the land of land. I love that.

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Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. And that brings me to my admiration of you. What I admire about you is you meet people where they're at. And you just explained in one circumstance, I didn't even fathom that. Pay what you can and why by seeing in interviews, you know, some people come into these interviews and, uh, they are in a hurting state, perhaps. And there's no judgment. And you, you can just feel it. It's like, okay, we're, we're here. Together. We're here in this moment. So you meet people where they're at. And I admire that.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. But tell your friend, you know, there's a trade off. Everybody thinks they wanna be a career author, but it's not like the movies.

Mike Michalowicz:

It's funny. I, that's what the message, I left back to him. I said, Hey, dude, uh, great stories. Powerful. Not, you're not a career author yet. Uh, and you have a lot of work to do. But I said, Ani, you listen to this podcast first and measure your sense of commitment, because it, it has to be all in. And the last thing I said is he was thinking about writing one book every year just to get him out. I said, write one book that lasts for years. Yes. You have to be all in. He is the type of person who will absorb this, contemplate it, and then make a commitment.

AJ Harper:

But is he fiction? Is that what you

Mike Michalowicz:

No, it's not fiction.

AJ Harper:

No. Oh, then definitely not one book a year.

Mike Michalowicz:

Definitely not one book a year. Yeah.

AJ Harper:

But you, you know, that's kind of what we were doing though

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Mike Michalowicz:

In fiction. Oh, we were. I know. Well, I know. Yeah. And I know

AJ Harper:

Now not so much now we're not doing that,

Mike Michalowicz:

But it, but it was kind of one book a year, but it kind of wasn't, it was one book a year that we were producing on the output, but leading up to it was about five years of work. I mean, I'm working on these things in parallel, behind doing the research. It it wasn't just vomit.

AJ Harper:

I didn't say it was vomit. Except,

Mike Michalowicz:

Except for Search <laugh>.

AJ Harper:

I did. That wasn't vomit either. I know. We worked hard on it. I know. Just no one read it. Has that earned out yet? I'm keep waiting for the day. No, no. I thought you said it was close like six months ago.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, maybe I did. I I gotta look. Um,

AJ Harper:

Close is relative, I guess. Close

Mike Michalowicz:

Is relative. We're recording this one on April 2nd. And, uh, what I love about ap, well, March 31st, April 1st is it's royalty time. It's royalty season and all the checks are coming in. It's a beautiful thing. And this is one of the differences that we're gonna talk about with traditional and hybrid. And I still don't a hundred percent get it. Yeah.

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AJ Harper:

So we're revisiting this because you're in a different position. Also, I'm trying to make a decision right now about what I'm gonna do next. So this is a good conversation to have.

Mike Michalowicz:

Well, like with a publishing platform decision next. What do you mean? Yeah. Meaning are you considering traditional versus hybrid versus self?

AJ Harper:

Always. I mean, I'm always, until I make, until I until I make the decision.

Mike Michalowicz:

That's interesting. Yeah. Okay. Uh, this podcast is sponsored by Simplified, which is an imprint of page two. So I just wanna acknowledge, uh,

AJ Harper:

And that's a coinky dink **Mike Michalowicz:**

That is a ky dink. Yeah. That's

AJ Harper:

The ky dink that today's topic is hybrid.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. It was not intentional. No. But, uh, page two is my publisher, uh, simplified is the imprint that I'm doing with them. And we were talking with Trina and Jesse over there, and Jesse, if you're listening, I did see you toast with your whiskey. Um, we had this whole conversation about whiskey. 'cause she made a little toast. And I'm like, oh my gosh, you're drinking some whiskey. And I know my whiskeys. And, um, we, we agreed that, uh, for them to sponsor the show, they're big fans themselves and big supporters. They want us to keep propagating the word. So thank you for your support, Page Two.

AJ Harper:

I mean, we're both their authors.

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Mike Michalowicz:

Exactly. Yeah. But thank you. But there, uh, I'll tell you other publishers who have not sponsored us, who we've been authors for, Penguin Random

AJ Harper: No,

Mike Michalowicz:

<laugh> not Say Yes. That's exactly right. Yes, that's exactly right. So thank you page two for stepping up. Um, okay. Well first talk to me. You're, you're considering what?

AJ Harper:

I'm just always considering. I, I think everyone should, why, why would I reconsider the best solution for the each book?

Mike Michalowicz:

Okay. Is that, you don't have to be

AJ Harper:

Facetious. No, I mean, is that the question? Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

Why are you reconsidering? Should, should, why should, why don't

AJ Harper:

You just stick with one way? Is that the question?

Mike Michalowicz:

No, I'm not trying to imply anything. I'm just saying, why are you reconsidering for your next book?

AJ Harper:

Oh, me. Well, I always do is what I'm trying to get at and why, and I think everyone should. Okay.

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Mike Michalowicz: And why should everyone,

AJ Harper:

Because your circumstances change. The book itself changes. Your goals for the book might change, and maybe your readership changes. There are a lot of different reasons why you might need to revisit the publishing path decision. And I think it's a good conversation to have with yourself and possibly others every time.

Mike Michalowicz:

Okay. So maybe this is a great opportunity to go into the list of the differences and the elements.

AJ Harper:

I didn't mean to be snarky. Did it come off snarky?

Mike Michalowicz:

It came off snarky. I did. Yeah. Like, why was I even questioning you? It felt like,

AJ Harper:

Oh, I'm so sorry. No, I can be snarky. You

Mike Michalowicz:

Can be snarky. Yeah.

AJ Harper: But

Mike Michalowicz:

I, like, I think it adds zhush to the show.

AJ Harper:

Okay. I don't wanna be mean.

Mike Michalowicz:

You're more mean. You weren't mean.

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AJ Harper:

Okay. Okay. (You weren't mean.) I just think everybody should consider it's not a bad thing. And I think any publisher who tells you otherwise is a red flag publisher. Yeah. So just let people think about it. Is this gonna be the best option?

Mike Michalowicz:

This is a, a kind of a similar circumstance. I'm considering LASIK surgery or some kind of eye surgery. I went to, uh, this place just a couple days ago in New Jersey. I won't say who they were. And they went through the process. They're telling me about it and so forth. I never met with a doctor. It was only the assistants. And they're like, oh, do you want strong distance vision or close up or combo? I'm like, um, I don't know. What's, you have to choose? Like, yeah, yeah, yeah. Um, I would just choose distance. She says like, O okay, um, are you ready for the commitment? I'm like, I'm like, I don't even know. So I, after this experience, and by the end, uh, the one guy says, well, are you, whatcha gonna do? I said, I'd like to think about this. This says eye surgery and I like to think about it for a day. And they're like, well, if you wait, you sometimes don't do things. So I'd encourage you. I'm like, I'm done. I am done.

AJ Harper:

That's nonsense. It was gross.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. It was gross. I then go on the internet, um, to look up about eye surgery, about this distance versus, and it's true, but they said you can get contacts that emulate it so you can experience which preferred vision setting you have for the my Oh, great. Yeah. Yeah. They didn't offer that.

They didn't suggest, they said, what are you committing to? So it is gross when someone forces you down a choice for them

AJ Harper:

Or just makes you feel, makes you feel like you're not smart or savvy because you wanna just pause.

Mike Michalowicz:

Have you seen publishers do that? Sure. To your authors?

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AJ Harper:

Sure. And not, I think I'd say publishing professionals. Right. So not necessarily always publishers, but maybe people who consult in that, or agents, you know? Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. I, I have a call coming up with an author next week who had an agent represent them that put 'em right down a path that really served the agent well.

AJ Harper:

I mean, that's the only way they get paid. It's

Mike Michalowicz:

The only way to get paid. Yeah. And now the author is a little bit behind the eight ball because they, they couldn't meet the expectations. And the publisher, there's no clawback happening, but the publisher isn't happy and it may have resulted, and they, they won't be, they're gonna have a tough time publishing again. And, and when I was talking to, I'm like, why are you going down this path? Like, because the agent says the best path. I'm like, you, you don't understand the cost to you.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. So this is the thing is you, you try so hard to get published. Yeah. And then when you, or get an agent, so you get, you hit these milestones, oh, an agent wants to represent me, or Oh, a publisher wants to publish me. Yeah. But then you don't really, you kind of go into a passive role then. But it, because also there's some gratitude and relief. Yeah. Oh, chosen finally. But it might not be the right thing for you. And if you are, and it's not, if you are choosing a deal, that may not be ideal, but it's been hard for you to get representation or hard for you to get the deal. You need to be savvy enough to figure out, okay, this isn't gonna be just what I need, but how am I gonna work around this and then level up for the next thing I wanna do. But I don't think authors are strategic. I think they're passive.

Mike Michalowicz:

I had dinner with David Muldau. Do you know David?

AJ Harper:

I do. You know. Okay. So I do now, because I was at one of Alex's dinners with David was also in attendance. Oh. And we were sitting next to each other. And, um, but we had never met

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because he, it, when I was writing with you then I was truly a ghost and nobody knew about me at Penguin. So we actually never met my until that day.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh my. So David Muldau is my first editor.

AJ Harper: Yes.

Mike Michalowicz:

He was with Penguin. He's the one who brought me in. He discovered toilet paper entrepreneur. And he said, oh yeah, thanks, thanks to John. I'm like, John, who? He goes, John Janz. I'm like, what? He goes, John Janz was working with him, said, oh, have you heard of this guy Mike Mcal? You gotta check out Toilet Paper Entrepreneur. That's when David read the book, called me and said, we wanna do your next book.

AJ Harper:

You know, you owe it all to John. Yeah. You need to send him a present.

Mike Michalowicz:

John Janz is, John Janz gave me a speaking career. John Janz gave me a membership organization. John Janz gave me a book career. He, I think he's, I

AJ Harper:

Feel like you owe him stuff. I wonder if he should, should your father, you, you might owe him this house. Oh geez. You should at least have a room dedicated to him. Since you have a young Frankenstein room.

Mike Michalowicz: This
may be the John Janz

AJ Harper:

Room. You might need to just rename this studio. This is the John Janz studio. John Jan studio live from the John Jan Jan studio.

Mike Michalowicz:

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We love it. I

AJ Harper:

It's done now, right? Yes. You need to make plaque. Plaque.

Mike Michalowicz:

The John Jan studio.

AJ Harper:

Make

Mike Michalowicz:

A placard. Matt, make a note of that. Okay. Yeah. That's gonna be very expensive to do that. We have redo everything in this, this whole place is coming down. We're rebuilding. Just

AJ Harper:

Make a little placard over there. Cute. I love that. Take a picture.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. Oh,

AJ Harper:

I love that. Then you can let him stay in the Murphy bed when, when he, when he comes over.

Mike Michalowicz:

So, uh, I talking with David Mul Muldau, and he was just sharing, um, how some people are selecting agents is they're going onto whatever AI platform they want and say what's, who's the best agent for me? And the AI is very biased in its own way. Um, and not necessarily identifying the agent who will best serve you, but identifies the agent. That it just populates the system. So it's, it's not necessarily the most appropriate. So setting that aside, I guess temporarily, let's talk about the differences between traditional and hybrid publishing. So

AJ Harper:

We have two whole episodes. One, one just on hybrid. One just on traditional mm-hmm <affirmative>. So I encourage people to go back and do a deep dive. Just in essence, traditional

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publishing is, is going to get your book to market at no cost to you. And they're following traditional writing edit, well, rather editing, traditional editing and, um, marketing and, and sales standards. Right. So they're not short cutting any, ideally there's all kinds of publishers there. Anyone can call themselves a publisher, but let's just say legit publishers, they are, they have a set of standards that maybe hybrids don't have. Not all hybrids. And you are not paying a single cent. So you shouldn't be investing, they're investing in you. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. You're not investing mm-hmm <affirmative>. But with hybrid, you should have the same traditional standards. Right. And the same opportunities for distribution, marketing, positioning, all of that. But you are making an investment in that. So they're not paying you, you're paying them. And then the only time that you get money back in that situation is if your book actually sells and you earn some royalties. So what I'm saying is there's, there are two sides of the same coin, ideally, but the main difference is the money.

Mike Michalowicz:

Okay. So hybrid, you're up fronting the cash. It's your responsibility and a traditional day upfront, the cash effectively. And in traditional, therefore, because they're paying for it, they're gonna be far more selective. Yeah. Because this is, they're making the bet on

AJ Harper:

You. They're making the bet. That said, there are top tier hybrids that have trade distribution, and they also are very selective. And then they might also have a mission that makes them selective. But not all hybrids are selective.

Mike Michalowicz:

Okay. But some, but some hybrids are selective, but not all, all traditional are selective apparently. 'cause they're, they're,

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

When, when you talk about traditional, there's the big five, or is it four now or is it six? It's five. Five. Okay. Uh, can you get a traditional deal that's not with a big five? Yeah.

AJ Harper:

There's lots of publishers. Okay.

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Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. So I was thinking of Ben Bella, for example. They're not considered the big five. No. But they have an excellent reputation. Uh, we publish an author through them, Casey Compton's work mm-hmm <affirmative>. And they offered a traditional deal. Now there's, I understand. Tell me this. Correct. There's two types of traditional deals. One is there's an advance to you, they pay you money. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Plus cover all the costs. A second one is a profit share where they cover all the costs for production of the book. They don't give you money upfront, but they give you a higher percentage of the royalties.

AJ Harper:

Those are not the only, but there's also the same royalty level, but no, no advance at all. Okay. So it's, but it's not necessarily a higher advance because of higher royalty, because of the advance. No advance. Okay. So for example, when I, with my publishing house, we were a boutique house. We were just scraping by. Yeah. And so, you know, we could, at first we couldn't offer any advances. And then once we did offer, as they were, you know, almost nothing. Yeah. Like, you know, a weekend. Okay. A little weekend getaway.

Mike Michalowicz:

So why would you offer in advance as a publisher, uh, of that size? Is it just to acknowledge the author? Does it, is it was them? Yeah. Okay.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. And just because it's, I think, you know, we were pleased to do it once we could start offering advances, because it showed we're making, we, we believe in you mm-hmm <affirmative>. Even though it was a small amount, when you get into Big five, or actually midtier and even, um, even smaller presses, you're, you're gonna still get a significant advance if they want the title and the, and the, and the advances, you know, connected to do they think it's gonna sell mm-hmm <affirmative>. So now you're in a different type of decision making. And with hybrids, they also have to care about if it's gonna sell, if they have trade distribution, and then they also have their brand to protect. So it's both, but they're only a handful of hybrids that have those standards.

Mike Michalowicz:

I is that how you're bifurcating high tier and low tier?

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AJ Harper:

Those are my terms. Just so everybody, sometimes people say those terms back to me, and it makes me happy because I think, oh, it's making, it's making the rounds because, uh, I started saying low tier, high tier, and defining it, uh, because people were thinking all hybrids are equal. And then realizing, I'm really just dealing with a self-publishing packager. This is not actually a publisher. This is just people who can pull the vendors together. But, you know, a publisher is selective about the book. They're selective about the quality of it. They, they consider its marketability where, where it fits. Right now, what other books are coming out. They think about how the, the book designed in a different and meaningful way. Um, they care about what's happening with that book, and they wanna position it correctly. They wanna take the time to edit it properly and follow all of the standards.

AJ Harper:

And they're hopefully working with trade distribution to figure out how to get it on, on the shelves. And if you're like page two, then they're also committed to backlist. They wanna make sure their backlist titles are actually doing well. Low tier hybrids is, they're not selective. Even if they say they are, and I mean, I'm sure they are to a certain extent. Like, no, we're not gonna publish these blank pages, <laugh>, no, we're not gonna publish these bomb instructions or whatever. Right. But ultimately they're in the business to get that upfront money. And so it's, you know, the point is just packaging the book and getting it to market. Usually not usually just using print on demand.

Mike Michalowicz:

So hybrid makes its money on every transaction. That's how they sustain their company,

AJ Harper:

Their the initial investment, their

Mike Michalowicz:

Initial investment. A traditional makes it when a book earns out what they're advancing to you as an author, but also all other authors that don't earn out.

AJ Harper:

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Well, I mean, they're making money before it earns out that runs, that helps run the, they know how much they need to make for the cost of producing the book. Yeah. Right. So the advance is calculated partly based on how many books can they sell, say in the first six to 12 months.

Mike Michalowicz:

Right. Okay. Yeah. So the earnout, which means the buyback of your royalty. So if I got a \$10,000, I'm sorry, advance the buyback of advance, if I got a \$10,000 advance, an earnout would be, I earned in my royalty portion of 15% of the retail price, that \$10,000 back. And once I've burned that out. But they're making money before that.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. Because they're paying their own expenses. I see.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. I, I heard, and since you owned a publishing company, tell me if this is true, that one out of X authors covers all the authors, and maybe it's one out 10 or one out of a hundred. Do you have a sense of what that number is?

AJ Harper:

I don't know what the number is, but it's, it's kind of ridiculous and crazy scale.

Mike Michalowicz:

So very few authors make all the money for a publisher.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. Even at our little house, we had probably three or four authors who carried the whole press. And we had maybe 70 authors.

Mike Michalowicz:

You know, it's interesting, with my experience with Penguin is probably first is sold over a million copies, uh, with, uh, clockwork. It's a hundred. I gotta look now I have a dashboard. I dunno if I've shown you it. We have the exact numbers now. I wanna say it's 125,000, 150,000 copies. Pumpkin plan, over a hundred thousand copies. Um, there's another one over a hundred thousand copies. Uh, fix this next now is at 50 or 60,000. Those books are insignificant to them. Um, it, it's Profit First is the only one get calls historically about, I still talk to 'em occasionally

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and I'm like, oh, it's very clear that you have to pass a certain threshold for it to be on the map. That this is an important book for them. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. And it's carrying the organization. Yeah. So let's go through the journey of, of selecting. So we have listeners listening in right now. They may be trying to choose a publisher. Um, what are some of the kind of the key considerations in your case that you're looking at right now? Yeah. Let's

AJ Harper:

Put this in context of our own journeys. Yeah. Yeah. Well, you know, uh, I, the reason why I chose hybrid for write and must read versus traditional is because I wanted total control. And at the time, I was very, very conscious of having my, uh, digital rights so that I had full revenue from audio. That was really, really important to me. And I wasn't gonna get that with traditional. And I just wanted, the control was a main factor. But I also wanted trade distribution. And I wanted the excellent, um, standards, editorial standards that comes with a top tier hybrid. So I kind of had to put together my different set of priorities. We just did an episode a few back on the new decision points that on how to make this choice about path. But those, those were mine. I wanted total control, but I wanted the traditional publishing standards. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. And trade distribution.

Mike Michalowicz:

What motivates a hybrid to have these traditional standards? The, the top standards? Because are they making more money than, uh, someone that doesn't maintain those standards?

AJ Harper:

I mean, I think, for example, I, you'd have to ask Paige too, but I bet they make a lot more on their back list than other hybrids do.

Mike Michalowicz:

Okay. I hope there's that financial motivation for them.

AJ Harper:

But I think that they've, as you know, and Trina and Jesse have a mission, you know, they care. They have a mission. They're driven by Mission. A

Mike Michalowicz:

Hundred percent. Yeah. And it, and it's reputation too. Yeah.

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AJ Harper: Reputation.

Mike Michalowicz:

They are known to be excellent.

AJ Harper:

The books themselves, how does it help us as authors if they're not selective? Correct. So if people hear you're with page two. Page two, McMillan, that, that's a different cachet than if you're with some of the low tier hybrids. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

And so you mentioned McMillan. McMillan does distribution, I just heard this yesterday. I didn't realize this. IngramSpark, which is a distribution platform mm-hmm <affirmative>. Has different levels of distribution. And based upon your book performance, can you only qualify for a higher level?

AJ Harper:

So are you talking about Lightning Source and the different, different distributions? I don't

Mike Michalowicz:

Really know. I just heard this in, in passing when I was talking to another author. They said, oh, they're with a hybrid, but a low tier as you, as per your definition. And he said, Hey, got great news. My book is sold in a volume that's moved up a tier with Ingram Spark distribution. And I was like, I gotta ask AJ about this. Does that bring, if

AJ Harper:

You're talking about global distribution, where you start to have a different pa different per cost per unit,

Mike Michalowicz:

We didn't go any any further.

AJ Harper:

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Yeah. 'cause sometimes they use the wrong terms, like tier, it's not like there's Yeah. Here's special Secret Room in Ingram Spark where you get to go to this place. Yeah. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

So with McMillan distribution, McMillan being one of the big five, this gives this hybrid publisher, in this case, page two, access to things that perhaps Ingram Spark doesn't have access to. For sure. Okay. And what would be some examples of that?

AJ Harper:

Um, well, they have a sales team. I mean, trade distribution means people are out there actually trying to get your book on the shelves. Yeah. They're helping you create demand, not just fulfill it.

Mike Michalowicz:

I actually met the sales team at Macmillan. Yeah. I know. I've never met the sales team. We've talked about this before. They're this mysterious kind of cloud of people or AI bots. I don't, I don't know, but I've never introduced No, they're real. Well, apparently they're cordoned off into a section in a building. 'cause when we went physically, you and I went to, uh, <inaudible>. Yeah. This is before they merged with, uh, random House. We went in, we met with our editor at the time, I think it was Kasic. And, uh, where I go, where's the sales team? And he's like, kind just like that look around and goes, uh, floor 17 and

AJ Harper:

Whisper

Mike Michalowicz:

<laugh>. He whisper, he whispers floor. We're like, oh, can we visit them? He's like, are you kidding me? And they, they threw some kind of meat product come on into the room. And then they quickly closed the door and went off. And ha But with, uh, McMillan specifically, page two, they said, Hey, we'd like to bring you to meet the sales team. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. And I'm like, there's Savages. I can, is it safe, <laugh>? And, um, we went in and sure enough, I met with the sales rep to Amazon who did this, the sales rep to Barnes and Nobles. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. The sales rep to a lot of these indie stores. Powells, I think was another one. It was fascinating.

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AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

And then they said, here's how we give your book preferred access to Barnes and Nobles, you know, end caps or any of these different things. We can influence that. Yeah. They can. And they wanted to learn about the book. What I also discovered with the sales team is they wanna know why your book is gonna sell better than someone else's book. Not, not just 'cause you believe it, but what can they see that will make your book sell better? Because they're, they're motivated to align with that.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. There, it's, they need to understand the features. They need to understand the selling points. They need to understand what you're gonna be doing so that they can amplify that. All of that doesn't even exist though, on a low tier hybrid. Yeah. Right. So, and also, by the way, some traditionals don't have trade distribution. It took my publishing house about six years to get it, because you have to prove yourself.

Mike Michalowicz:

So I wanna share a little bit about my journey, how I selected page two. And I was a fan in the selection process. Hands down. I am such an Uber fan, I'm a loyalist. Like I will take a bullet for page two. Yeah.

AJ Harper:

So how are you, I'm curious about how you feel now.

Mike Michalowicz:

So let me lead you. What came up with this pro this, um, working with them? What, what led led to this? So I was with Penguin and what I was disappointed in as the royalty share, uh, the revenue was, I was disappointed in was I, I like to do outta the box concepts and the degree of resistance, or quite frankly, just put Mike in the corner and tell you his quiet kind of feel. Great people, the editors, Noah Schwartzberg was, is fantastic. Cow shook, I, I can't remember Ka chick's last name. Do you remember Ka chick's last name? I'm sorry. It'll come to me. Yeah. Extraordinary. Um, but, um, the, the upper kind of offices, I, I was a, a nuisance to them. The jester, the, yeah. Here, oh, here comes Mike and his, yeah. His clown outfit. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Uh, I couldn't get a call with them and nor did they ever reach out.

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Mike Michalowicz:

Now, I wanna give you contextually the owner's of page two. This is the upper, upper echelon. This is the CEO suite. Texts me, calls me, they, they go with my punches. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. They, they jab back. Um, they, they will opine on any of the ideas I have not necessarily agreeing with it. So they're not placate like, oh yeah, Mike, that's great. Let's do that one too. They'll say, here's why we don't like that idea. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. And it triggers negotiation. And better outcomes come. They are the kindest people I know. And that, to me, that was the biggest thing. Yeah. They're so good. And they're trying to put goodness out in the world at the highest level. And they wanted to change the way publishers work. Exactly. Yeah. So what led to this is I had, uh, I can't remember which book it was. It may have been the book *Before It Was Definitely the Book Before Get Different*, maybe two books.

Mike Michalowicz:

Prior to that. I started this dialogue with page two. Yeah. Don't you remember I introduced you to them. Oh, you you did. Yeah. I don't, yes. I don't, I don't remember how, but it was two, because I said you should talk to Paige too. Mike. It was two books prior. Yes. Okay. So I call you introduced me to Trina, I think, or Jesse Trina. Trina. It was Trina. Yeah. And I said, here's what's going on with Penguin. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. And here's the events that I may be getting. And there's a certain point where financially I, I've, I've committed to myself that this is the way I'm gonna go. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. And I got that advance. The next book got the advance with *Get Different*, we got a mid, almost mid six figures advance. Uh, and I'll never forget two things. I called Tri and I said, listen, they had to make an obscenely large advance.

Mike Michalowicz:

And I'm gonna go, I call it the Stephen King Advance. I'm gonna ask for what Stephen King got on his first book, misery, uh, not *Misery on Us*. *Carrie*, *Carrie*. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. So I looked up the number, it was, uh, 400 and something thousand. Said, I gotta get that number mm-hmm <affirmative>. And I said, if I don't, I'm coming to page two. But if I do, I'm sticking with them. Yep. I got the number. And the only time one time did a, uh, Adrian Zackheim call me. He's the publisher at, uh, portfolio. And he says, this is a big advance. You better deliver. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. And that was, it was almost, he wasn't threatening, but you could see the risk he was now taking. Yeah. I, I achieved a number that now this was gonna be recognized by the accounting department, that they're taking a risk on this guy. So Adrian's feeling the pressure. So I get that's the only time we ever got a call from him. Not like, Hey, good luck, not congratulations on your launch. None of that stuff. Hey, you got *New York Times*, or whatever bestseller we got, uh, we got *Wall Street Journal*, *Wall Street Journal*, bestseller, n nothing, nothing. I, I got a bobblehead. Remember that? They sent me a, that's all you got.

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AJ Harper:

That's all you got for your big advance.

Mike Michalowicz:

Uh, Trina, um, Jesse, uh, Leslie, Carmen, Ronnie, I'm trying to go through all it. When the Money habit came out, personal messages from each person, were so excited for you. Congratulations. Uh, there're hold, there's pictures of 'em holding the book, cheering and so forth. The whole vibe was radically different. But what I most acknowledge as being significant was that Trina was the, had the patience with me. Every time I got in advance, I said, I can't come now. She said, I get it, but we want your next book.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. I'm realizing this is starting to sound like an ad ha for page two, which is not the intention. No. There are other high top tier, um, publishers that are great too. They can decide how they want to work with authors. There's

Mike Michalowicz:

One called Amplify. I've heard good things about

AJ Harper:

I love She writes.

Mike Michalowicz: She

writes, yeah,

AJ Harper:

Really love. She writes. And, um, I think Idea Press is good and there, there are others, but I just, I think

Mike Michalowicz:

Inspired Girl.

AJ Harper:

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I think the thing is, is they can, they can decide to treat authors differently. Yeah. They can decide to be invested in authors over the long term. Yeah. They can care about different things. They're not stuck in the bureaucracy. And I think, I think that's really important. So you can find the right hybrid that's, that's for you.

Mike Michalowicz:

Well, I didn't expect, and I want to learn this from you. So we published *The Money Habit* January 27th of this year. We're recording on April 2nd. Uh, as I was sharing at the beginning of this, all the, I love this time of year because all the royalty payments come in from Penguin. And it's, you know, it's six figures of royalty. It's, it's, it's, for me, it's very real money. Um, but nothing came in from page two. So I call calcium. I'm like, oh, where,

AJ Harper:

Where? Oh, it came out in January.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. But, so in my mind, I'm like, I, I don't know why this is my mind. Every month there's a royalty payment. No. So I don't know why I have that. But what's the reality of, uh,

AJ Harper:

Hybrids? Well, you first have to get through the threshold. So, you know, there's a period where they're holding royalties for returns. Okay. So I was just paid by page two, my royalty check through August of last year. This is April.

Mike Michalowicz:

Okay.

AJ Harper:

Yearbook came out in January.

Mike Michalowicz:

So August, that's four more months till December plus, that's seven months back. So you're paid for royalties up to seven months ago. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. So you still have effectively seven months due to you mm-hmm <affirmative>. And then they will pay each quarter for the

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quarter up to six or seven months ago. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. So you're still a half year behind quote behind, which is exactly because you

AJ Harper:

Have trade distribution.

Mike Michalowicz:

Okay. And that's exactly how, uh, the traditional publishers,

AJ Harper:

Because you have trade distribution, <laugh>, that's, that is the, that is the com. The, the factor. Other people at page two who don't have trade distribution, who might have opted for print on demand option, um, they, they can, it'll be on a monthly,

Mike Michalowicz:

And maybe that's where I got it, was

AJ Harper:

From the, but that's not what you're doing. Year of trade distribution.

Mike Michalowicz:

Okay. So let's explain the difference between trade distribution, McMillan versus, uh, POD. Like what? Well, what do you mean? Well, the distribution itself, is it limit you when you're on print on demand? Yeah. Are you limited so much?

AJ Harper:

Yeah. I mean, for, yes. People, there's a lot of limitations. I mean, we can get into a whole big distribution discussion, but basically Ingram Spark is, is fulfilling demand. That's all they're doing. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. As an order comes in, they fill it. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. They are not trying to get your book anywhere. They are not, they don't ha they're not no one, there's no one on a phone saying, Hey, have you heard about the money habit? Or, Hey, have you heard about write and must read mm-hmm <affirmative>. Hey, I really wanna get this book is coming out. Or, um, we wanna get copies into this library consortium or this book club or these, or big box store or whatever. This is not happening. They are fulfilling orders as they come in. Yeah. That's all that's happening. So you can, it's cool, it's awesome because you can say your books

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are available where all books are sold. You can say that, but that doesn't mean they're on the shelf. It might mean you have to go order. Gotcha. Does that make sense? Yes, **Mike**

Michalowicz:

It does. Yeah. Another thing that surprised me that I didn't expect was the willingness to try out things that they were convinced were not good things. So <laugh>, these are real, uh, kinda sounds minor, but it was significant. So we simplified our imprint. We have multiple authors. We actually just had some more join us. And in particular, there was one author who's writing a book called, uh, take Breaks Work Better. And it's, it's John Brick. It's John. Yeah. And John, uh, the, the cover, it's done. It's a beautiful cover and there's always different elements. And I wrote back to them, I said that his name's gotta be bigger. They have a certain author name, size mmmmm <affirmative>. And I'm like, that's not, that's not good. I said, I want it to be bigger. And they said, we're telling you that this is their appropriate size and stuff. I'm like, I'm telling you, this is what I want. So now I'm behind John's back. John's not even involved in this. It's me. I can't even

AJ Harper:

Imagine he even cares that much. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

I, he doesn't. It's me. And, uh, I think it was Carmen and I said, I could be bigger. And she said, you know what, um, we're willing to try it out. I said, I'm willing to try out what you're saying. So let's run a pic fu text. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. So they did two cover designs with his name of different sizes and said, here's the max size we can do. And my quote, logic or reasoning is probably a better choice of words behind this, is that we want, I wanna emphasize these authors. Yeah. They're significant career authors. And their, uh, argument behind it is what sells better. So I'm like, okay, let's put this to the test. They won hands down. We ran fu the exact same cover. The only thing that changed was the author name, size, and the click rate on the smaller author name was dramatically like a three to one higher. It blew me away. Hmm. And so first I said humbled, uh, you're right. But also acknowledging the fact you're willing to test it. Yeah, yeah, yeah. And run the risks of not being Right. Yeah. So we're going with the smaller size name. Yeah. I didn't expect that. Good luck doing that. Oh, yeah. At traditional publisher.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

Would you do, so I, you already answered this. Uh, would you do your next book with, um, a hybrid traditional?

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AJ Harper:

Oh, I didn't, I didn't answer it. I told you what I did with random must read.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh. But you said you're in contemplation now. You haven't.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. I mean, I've been talking to Trina and trying to decide what I wanna do. When do you

Mike Michalowicz:

Commit, because you're, you're actively writing the book. Don't, don't You have to, don't you have to submit a proposal if you're gonna go traditional or something?

AJ Harper:

I mean, not you. Not you. Not me. Yeah. Yeah. I don't mean to sound like an a-hole diva right

Mike Michalowicz:

Now. Diva a diva, but no. Okay. Do you have some traditionals you're talking with?

AJ Harper:

No, it's, I mean, I, no, it's more like I'm making a decision about the strategy and then I'll, I'm not in a big hurry. Do you know what I mean? So, yeah. I'm not on a big schedule. What's

Mike Michalowicz:

Your number one deciding factor, do you think?

AJ Harper:

Oh, so it's, here's the thing is I'm trying to, I'm doing, I have two books. Yeah. So I know, I will say I was really proud. 'cause I had a meeting with Trina last week about it, and I told her my overall strategy. So book two and book three, and what, how book two will help me do book three mm-hmm <affirmative>. And like, this is career author stuff. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. And this is why it helps to listen to this show. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Or, or talk to people who understand this stuff. And I was very pleased that she said, that's a good strategy. That's smart. Mm. Okay. Thank you so much. But I'm thinking really long term. So I'm probably, that's

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probably about five years that I'm looking at. Okay. Um, so the second book I was never gonna do, but I'm doing it so that I can make the third book possible.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, so interesting.

AJ Harper:

And it's gonna be a bridge in readership for me mm-hmm <affirmative>. To, because then the third one won't be as big of a leap in readership.

Mike Michalowicz:

Interesting.

AJ Harper:

Okay. And so it helps me build a stronger readership and expand it and expand my reach and visibility in preparation for the third.

Mike Michalowicz:

Does two and three need to be at the same publisher?

AJ Harper:

I, you know, I really, I really like the idea of that because these three books are all part of one grounding mission. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. They're not separate. They're, they're a catalog of work. And so I would like it if it was in one home. And also all of the books will serve page two authors. Okay. And, you know, so, and they, so I think it's a nice fit. It's just that I, the trade distribution thing is a factor for me. Okay. You know, and, uh, the timing of it, because there's this, this second book I might wanna get out faster.

Mike Michalowicz:

Okay. So there's a timing consideration, there's a distribution consideration. I assume there's a cost consideration it going with a Oh yeah. Hybrid. It's, it's real money upfront that you're not gonna see back for years.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. But I mean, I have, I, well actually I saw mine back within, it depends on how you count it. So if you're just, if the amount of revenue I gained from write must read without just the royalties, just immediately, because people who came within months, I'm talking like three months, who came and signed up for very high ticket.

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Mike Michalowicz: Oh,
I see. You're saying

AJ Harper:

That was, that was, IM almost immediate. That was this three or four months. Yeah. And then it was a, you know, I don't know how long it took to actually with royalties, maybe a year or two. Yeah. But I mean, this, you know, if you're strategic about it, it's not gonna take you that long to earn that investment back

Mike Michalowicz:

For, you know, me, for considering for my next book. Um, I can't imagine not going with a hybrid. And I can't imagine not going with page two. Like, I, I am so loyal

AJ Harper:

And they're my favorite. They're, I'm loyal to them as well. It's just, you know, money is a factor and money's a factor. And also I can, um, if I really wanna do something quickly, which I normally don't do, but I'm kind of trying to figure some stuff out right now, I can self-publish. Like no one would even have a clue that it was, I, I mean,

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah,
self-publish,

AJ Harper:

I have all the people, it's not hard for me.

Mike Michalowicz:

Self-publish. You still pay upfront, but it's a little more trenced because you do it at your pace. I mean, you're, you're still paying for everything. Yeah.

AJ Harper:

But it's, it's very different. I mean, it would probably cost me with my contacts.

Mike Michalowicz:

Well, right. You're your team, you know the team, you have an editor. I,

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AJ Harper:

I could do it for, I honestly think I could do it for less than \$4,000.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. But you're, it's totally d just so the exception. You're so,

AJ Harper:

Yes. So this is, but they're talking about what I, how I'm making this decision, you know? Yeah. Going to, going to traditional adds time that I don't necessarily want Uhhuh. I don't know, I'm kind of torn. I'm actually waiting to hear from Trina what she thinks we should do.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. And that's the other thing. I, it does sound very pluggy of page two. I love that they will tell you their true thought, even if it's not serving them.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. I mean, it's, um, it's just a matter of, I just have to make my decision. And when I hear from her, I hope this is interesting to people, and it doesn't feel like an ad because this is really what it is. How am I thinking about this?

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. I'm afraid of that too.

AJ Harper:

But, you know, apologies to those who think that, but who don't. I think if you've listened to this show, you know us pretty well that we're just trying to talk about how we make these decisions. And I think people are wondering how to make them. And I am, the reason I'm loyal to page two, just so everybody knows I get zero from page two. I do not get a referral fee. Yeah. You have an imprint with page. I have an

Mike Michalowicz:

Imprint, which means I get a percentage of the royalties

AJ Harper:

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I, I send people to sent you to page two. Yeah. I send so many people to page two because I think it's the right fit for them. Yeah. And I think they'd be lucky to have page two, select them. And I think page two would be lucky to have that author. I only send people when they're ready. I don't send people to page two willy-nilly. Like, I'm usually holding people off. I don't think you're ready to go there yet. Yeah. Because I don't wanna waste their time, you know, I know that they're paying attention when I send something, send someone to them. I have zero financial anything that comes outta that. And that's the way I like things. I, I keep that for my way of doing business. So when I say I love them, I love them. You know, and even though you just said, can we say this, can we just reveal that this app podcast is sponsored by?

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. What

AJ Harper:

About it? I don't have any pennies from that. You don't have any pennies from that? No. We are saying it's sponsored by Simplified. Yeah. And page two. Oh,

Mike Michalowicz:

It's just an endorsement, or it's not,

AJ Harper:

It's just an endorsement. Yeah. Yeah. Mike and I are not taking home a Oh

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. There's no money coming. Yeah. <laugh>,

AJ Harper: You
just

Mike Michalowicz:

Said it. We can totally say that. Yeah.

AJ Harper:

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So my point is, I, yes, I, I love them. I, I think there's no one better, honestly. Um, but I don't know if it's the right thing for me to do on this next book. So I think that's okay to say those things. Agreed. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

I, I'm thinking for myself, is there anything that would woo me back to traditional? And if you ask me this, maybe five years ago, I think my knee jerk would be, well, if it was a \$10 million advance, like there was a certain number, and now I'm like mm-hmm <affirmative>. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Now I'm like, no way. It, it can be a hundred million dollar advance. Well, maybe a hundred million. What, what we back, there's a certain dollar amount that seems tan tantalizing, except you have to earn that out. And if you don't, it will compromise you for all the books down the road because you can't earn out in advance. Hence

AJ Harper:

The carry advance.

Mike Michalowicz:

What's that?

AJ Harper:

You got that advance. And I think that was the thing.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, they, oh, I thought the C-A-R-R-Y, not r

AJ Harper:

That was the beginning of the end, the end with, um, with Penguin. Even though there was probably three books after that.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. Yeah. And were three. And interestingly, right before that, they were trying to do a multibook deal with me. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. And I was like, Hmm. And I, you and I spoke about it. I was like, Hmm. Why they benefit. 'cause they're locked, locked in. Yeah. How, how So

AJ Harper:

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As long as you have that big five distribution that you're getting the full benefit of that. Yeah. It, it doesn't make sense to me. Honestly. If you, if you have the money to invest,

Mike Michalowicz:

Well you can do with hybrid, and I think we mentioned on another episode here, is you can, um, earn money prior to your book launch on products and sales. We inserted in the money habit, a founding family, people paid for that recognition and they became certified. That was a prerequisite, but then they could kind of publish or advertise themselves in the book itself. But, uh, Brian Harriet, who's writing Time Freedom mm-hmm <affirmative>. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. With, uh, PhD Simplified is doing something very novel, is with pre-orders of the book. He's giving you the audio, uh, in today. So the book doesn't come out until September, I think September 27th is his launch. Or 17th, something like that. But it's in September, but today, April 2nd. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. You can get the book already and John Breaks is doing the same thing. You can get the audiobook, it's ingenious way to generate revenue now, um, where people are pre-ordering the book. You can buy it through his website. You can buy it online. So he is getting that movement. He's generating some revenue and people are getting the benefit of the book even before it comes out.

AJ Harper:

That's interesting. Well, first of all, you, that's the flexibility of the hybrid. Yes. Yeah. I wanna ask you though, why that's, that's cool. I like that because, you know, the audio book is taking away from your, it's, let's say you wanna get on a list. I don't know that either of them are trying to get on one. Maybe Brian is,

Mike Michalowicz:

I think John is.

AJ Harper:

John is, yeah. Okay. So the, you know, releasing the audio at the same time as the rest of the formats. I've always been an advocate of that, but it also does detract from people buying the print book initially for that first week when you're trying to get on the list. Interesting. So I wonder how this is gonna play out then having it in advance. Like, I love that. So are you getting it? He's delivering the audio versus Right. It's not available

Mike Michalowicz:

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Yet. Yeah. You go to his website,

AJ Harper:

You don't can't, you can't go to Amazon and get it.

Mike Michalowicz:

No, no, no. It's listed perhaps as pre-order, but you submit your receipt to Brian's website. Okay. And then, uh, one of his team members, or Brian himself, is emailing you the audio file so you can start listening right away.

AJ Harper:

I love that

Mike Michalowicz:

He shared it. That's the other benefit of a hybrid. As he notified the publisher in this case, page two, who then notified everyone in the imprint and said, Hey, look what Brian's doing. And, and he's encouraging us to replicate this. So it's become collaborative. And that's why John's like, I gotta do this too. Yeah. And I'm like, this is, I'm gonna use this on my next one. Totally. Where in traditional, you're much more siloed and you don't, you rarely are encouraged to collaborate.

Never in fact to collaborate with other authors. So I thought that was pretty cool. Any, um, desires or wishes you have for the traditional market or hybrids?

AJ Harper:

I think, um, I really want both of the, well, traditional is gonna be so slow about this. I want hybrid to be more focused on how they're gonna work with direct sales. Hmm. You know, so that they can be there for authors the way they need them. 'cause this is just going to continue to be a huge area. And I don't know that hybrid publishers are where they need to be in terms of making sure that this is still a good option for people who really wanna focus on direct sales. Mm. So that it makes sense financially

Mike Michalowicz:

And direct sales constitutes exactly what

AJ Harper:

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The author selling direct.

Mike Michalowicz: So on their website, on

AJ Harper:
Their website,

Mike Michalowicz: Back room, when they speak

AJ Harper:

The, those are the old school. I'm talking TikTok shop, Instagram shop, yes. Facebook Shop. Okay. Where people can buy directly from apps. Yeah. And, um, pop authors are telling a lot of books that way. And, and it's just gonna increase.

Mike Michalowicz:

And you, and your hope is that hybrid and traditional, I guess, absorbs that more, or at least is better prepared for that. Yeah.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. Because it's becoming, it's cost prohibitive. What with traditional, it's cost prohibitive because authors have to buy their own books to then send to TikTok shop. I think those things are changing now. I think they're, they're getting wise mm-hmm <affirmative>. You know mmhmm <affirmative>. It always takes traditional so long Yeah. To get around to figuring that out. Yeah. But I think direct sales is one of the main reasons why people should switch to hybrid because they're not gonna, they're gonna, you're gonna get a much bigger chunk of that. That's also one of the main reasons to do it. Yeah. Yes, yes. Hybrid is getting some of your royalties, but you are getting much higher royalties because you made the initial investment. So then let's do the math. If all of a sudden you're selling a hundred thousand more books because you're on TikTok shop, you are getting a lot more money for that than if it was through traditional. So I think it's, I think if hybrid can do it the right way, that that will be almost like the only choice in some cases because it's just gonna be increasing. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

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That's really good stuff. Uh, next week we were are thinking about a topic to talk about. So I'm not even gonna reveal what it is 'cause we have to discuss it afterwards. Uh, I had, I, I finished reading a book recently. I called you and said, Hey, I have an idea for a show. And you're like, let's see if the energy's there. So we'll discuss it if our, the energy's there for the next topic. Is that fair?

AJ Harper:

And if it's not that we're gonna talk about Substack,

Mike Michalowicz:

Right? <laugh>, right. So you may hear about Substack or not <laugh>. Yeah. Next week. Uh, this has been, don't write that book. Uh, my cohost is **AJ Harper**. She's the author of Write a Must Read. You must get this book. Go to **AJ Harper.com**. Do not pass, go skip the jail section. Just go right to that on your monopoly board and download all the free resources. It will be a game changer for you, I assure you. Also, I wanna remind you if you have questions, comments, ideas, suggestions for the show, you can email us at hello@dwtbpodcast.com. Brand new format. How do you like the audio, uh, on your favorite pod catcher? Is it the quality? Uh, have you seen the Step Up? We wanna know about that and we invite you to rate and review on your podcaster. And are you on our YouTube channel? I really want you to check it out because now we have this little studio, uh, formerly my son's room, <laugh>. And, uh, what do you think about our production values? We would love your comments there selfishly, that few minutes. It does. It requires you to fill that stuff out. Gives us great exposure and supports our show. I think we're done. Right? We're done. Okay. Remember don't write that book. Write the greatest book you can. I.