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Episode 133:

“Why Your Book Probably Needs a Test Drive”

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:

You said so much easier doing this at home in your pajamas.

AJ Harper:

Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

Um, what is your preferred work? Attire?

AJ Harper:

Pajamas. Really? Yeah. So just a little hint. You can go to Land's End. This is for the ladies or people who want to wear this attire. You can go to Land's End and you can get a long sleeved or short sleeved nightgown that's just plain color that looks no different, uh, from the Zoom, uh, than any other professional work top.

Mike Michalowicz:

It's so smart.

AJ Harper:

It has like a really nice neck that makes it look like you wore a nice top today, and you just get 'em in solid colors. And during the pandemic, I had about four or five. I would just keep on rotation. I wore other things too.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AJ Harper:

But I just, you know, there are many days that I get out of pajamas and into new pajamas.

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Mike Michalowicz:

What do you think about people?

AJ Harper:

It's like sleep pajamas, work pajamas.

Mike Michalowicz:

I love it. What do you think about people traveling through an airport wearing their pajamas?

AJ Harper:

Okay. I mean, I think I'm, I think I'm old school. Dress up a little bit. It gives me pause.

Mike Michalowicz:

Me too.

AJ Harper:

Now, we aren't from the era where you would dress up, dress up where it was fancy, but we were not allowed to wear our pajamas. You know what, one time I was, I did wear pajamas. Um, we flew to Cairo, Egypt. It's a long flight. First we had to fly to Paris, and then we had to fly to Cairo. And so I was a little girl, so I definitely got, I think I might had to change into them on the plane. You know, 'cause it was a long flight. But I'm gonna tell you, please don't wear pajamas. I just, I don't know. It's, it's not, it looks scruffy now. I sound like my grandma. You look scruffy.

Mike Michalowicz:

<laugh>. But there's intentionality behind people are doing their, they wear the slippers, the whole thing.

AJ Harper:

I thi I've seen some very elegant lounge. Clearly this is airport lounge wear. That's fine.

Mike Michalowicz:

No, I've seen people in pajamas.

AJ Harper:

No, I know. It's like the, the flannel.

Mike Michalowicz:

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The flannel, yeah. It's not even a flannel. It's that kind of material. But it has like, characters all over it. Yeah. It has the big buttons coming down here. <laugh>. It's like, are you wearing under,

AJ Harper:

Why are pajama buttons so big?

Mike Michalowicz:

That's a good question.

AJ Harper:

Why are they so big anyway? I love a pajama. I could just, it's all I want. It's what I love. For Christmas. I want to get new pajamas.

Mike Michalowicz:

Really?

AJ Harper:

Yes.

Mike Michalowicz:

Huh.

AJ Harper:

I love, I have probably more pajamas than I have regular clothes.

Mike Michalowicz:

Really?

AJ Harper:

Yes.

Mike Michalowicz:

I, I don't have, I do have pajamas. I don't wear 'em. I wear, uh, uh, boxer shorts when I go to sleep. And a t-shirt. That's my thing.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. I mean, okay. I also have a granny robe. I'm really getting old.

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Mike Michalowicz:

Nice. I do have a new robe. I, I spoke at, uh, TSP. It's a Lamar to, uh, Lamar Tyler runs this event. It was an extraordinary event. And as a gift, they sent me this awesome robe. So I don't wear robes, but now I wear this robe. I feel, I feel like money wearing this robe. It's just a,

AJ Harper:

I have a lot of robes. I have robes and pajamas. Oh. Mm hmm.

Mike Michalowicz:

For writers. Uh, before we get into the topic of du jour, should you be wearing your favorite attire? Or do you change your attire to be in, in mode.

AJ Harper:

Oh gosh, Come on.

Mike Michalowicz:

To stay in the pajama.

AJ Harper:

You should be able to write anywhere doing anything. Mm.

Mike Michalowicz:

But I know, I like to have certain things, certain accessories. I get more in the mode. So, uh, there's my writing mug. I like it to one of my, one of my two mugs.

AJ Harper:

You know what, I'm not precious about any of this. (Okay.) You go ahead though. You could have writing. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

You do your way

AJ Harper:

Right. You do. You <laugh>.

Mike Michalowicz:

Today's topic is why your book probably need to test drive. And you did put that in parentheses. Why'd you put Probably,

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AJ Harper:

Uh, because some people know their stuff works. Yeah. Some people are really good about it. You know, I didn't need a test drive for write. I must read, because I've been teaching the class for years and years. And before that, I was using the, the methodology that I created for myself. So I had deep experience and proof that it worked. And, uh, yeah. So it wasn't, wasn't really an issue for me. But had I not taught the class and I was trying to make the leap from using the methodology myself as a ghost writer to writing about it without teaching it first, it would not have been the same book.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, that's interesting. Okay. So effectively you've been test driving it mm-hmm <affirmative>. For the entirety of your life. Uh, I'm joined in studio. This is Don't Write that Book with AJ Harper. Uh, depending on where you are. Coming in, listening to our sequences, this is our brand new studio. Tell us what you think about the audio. Uh, Matt has spent a lot, he's our producer for the show. Understanding Happiness is his book. And, um, did a lot of work over the weekends here at the studio, um, for I think four or five consecutive or near consecutive weekends. This was a lot of work. And he's a perfectionist. So tell us what you think of the audio.

AJ Harper:

I wanna say it's like gold star audio. The best I ever heard, but I just don't know. I'm not a connoisseur. Yeah. I'm sure. It's just, just amazing.

Mike Michalowicz:

Well, what we had to do is, in our prior episodes, you're recording from either Madeline Island or your house in New York. I'm recording from my office in Boonton or here. And, um, we had to ai ze our audio because it's echoey and it's very amateurish. This is,

AJ Harper:

Well, we weren't in the boat, in studio, which is where we used

Mike Michalowicz:

To. That was actually pretty good. That was very good. That was pretty good. Yeah. This is next level stuff. So I'm really curious.

AJ Harper:

So now I have this whole studio up at the island.

Mike Michalowicz:

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Yeah. Yeah. We may have to get mad up there to do like this kind of level stuff. Just saying, just saying if the budget permits. Okay. Um, what I admire about you is that you produce or write every one of our episodes. You're the script-er behind that.

AJ Harper:

I mean, it's an outline, but thank you. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

But you're, you're putting research in. You come in prepared. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. We have a methodology. This show is its level of quality because of everything you do.

AJ Harper:

Thank you. An outline is a good thing.

Mike Michalowicz:

It's a great thing. Yeah. So I admire that about you.

AJ Harper:

Oh, thanks. You know, um, I wanted to make sure that I told you that I really admire, this is a totally personal thing, completely different than that. I admire how devoted you are to your, uh, wife.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, thank

AJ Harper:

You. You know, have we, we have a lot of friends who have been splitting up.

Mike Michalowicz:

I know.

AJ Harper:

We're the age. Do you have that mm-hmm <affirmative>. And look, I'm not gonna speak to, you know, there's betrayals and then there's people who just have, feel differently now and I get that mm-hmm <affirmative>. But I also feel like you're a person who works on things, you know?

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. That, that's the, the breakups that stink ,is the slow dissolution into,

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AJ Harper:

It's hard to see. There's so many friends who are splitting. We have two dear friends who are splitting that are part of our super close center circle. So,

Mike Michalowicz:

And then people pick sides. Then it's like, well, who are you the closer friends with? If you're gonna sustain a friendship, it's hard to maintain both.

AJ Harper:

I will say these are two women, so they handle, they're handling it a lot better.

Mike Michalowicz:

Okay.

AJ Harper:

But it's heartbreaking for everybody actually. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. The breakups I see is it's like, well, who is the original friend? Or there's a choice that's made. Yeah.

AJ Harper:

If it's, if for some of our friends, my wife is just like, come down with the hammer. Mm. Because if there's like fidelity or any of those things, or if the guy sort of initiated it in a way that wasn't nice. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. She, she's like, this is her exact language: Done with you. And then she says, you're a damn fool. Yeah. She says this all the time, you're a damn fool. Every time there's a dude who leaves. Yeah. Yeah. Or does some dumb thing. Yeah. We've unfortunately, most of our friends, except for our close friends who are two women, uh, married to each other, um, most of the other ones, there's been, you know, gross things. Oh, yeah. But I wanted to not talk about that. I just wanted to say, I know you work on stuff and being also, I think we're a year behind you in our marriage anniversary. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It's so, it's a lot of work.

Mike Michalowicz:

It's a lot. That's the biggest thing. Very

AJ Harper:

Gratifying.

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Mike Michalowicz:

It's a lot

AJ Harper:

Of work. Very, very gratifying.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. Lots of challenge. But, but if you work as a team, it can be remarkable.

AJ Harper:

It can be remarkable. You can't have that level of closeness with anyone else. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

A hundred percent. I, we won't go with many, but

AJ Harper:

I just wanted to say, I really, uh, apprec- Love that about you.

Mike Michalowicz:

Thank you. Yeah. Um, so today we're gonna be talking about why your book probably needs a test drive. You, you had a story about the assumptions you were making.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. So, you know, I'm writing right now.

Mike Michalowicz:

Two books. Yeah. But in sequence, not, not at the same time. Well,

AJ Harper:

This part that's the same time is I'm developing one while I'm actively finishing up one. So.

Mike Michalowicz:

Okay. I'm, I see.

AJ Harper:

Not writing words for both. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Okay. So I've had this, I've developed this book for a couple of years and, um, feel very confident about the outline. And as I tell my students, the outline can change. And as I was going through it, I realized, oh my gosh, I have to

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get this whole, this whole other chapter in here that it never even occurred to me. And the reason I realized it is I continued to test this part of this material. I've been testing it for a number of years. I just did a big test on it. And, um, the questions that the people were asking me were so surprising to me because it's so easy for me.

AJ Harper:

So the things they were wondering about, I was like, why are you worried about that? That's what you're worried about. And you're, in my mind, I was like, I can't imagine worrying about that because it's easy for me. So what they were worried about, were coming up with ideas for creating value-based propositions for people who can help them sell their books. And they were worried about, um, well, how do you ask those questions? And what do you write and what do you put there? And how do you do that? And it all, to me, that seems like, well that's, that part's easy. This other part seems hard to me. And so that's why we have to test. I, if I hadn't have done that, I would've missed, I probably, right now, I have an extra chapter set aside for it. And I might have to do a companion workbook or resources and materials way more than I thought I was gonna have to do. And way more examples than I thought I was gonna have to do, because I really didn't think people were gonna have such a hard time with that.

Mike Michalowicz:

Is that a common trap? That your expertise are so strong?

AJ Harper:

Yes.

Mike Michalowicz:

So you can't even see it? Um, is, is that the main reason authors need a test drive, or is there other common..?

AJ Harper:

I think the, well, it's, the whole reason for doing it is does it work and is, have you, is this doable for them?

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. I, I would consider, is it accessible?

AJ Harper:

Yeah. Well, even more than that though, not just, not just accessible to me means you can understand it, but what's actually gonna get them up and doing it. Mm. Is this the goal? Because if you're writing anything transformational, the doing is part of that equation. And a lot of

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authors leave that part out. My students are probably gonna turn off this. They're gonna be like, oh, she's talking about doability again. But when people say, well, why is, why is Profit First so successful? One of the main reasons is Doability. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. It really is. It's because people are actually doing it. <laugh>,

Mike Michalowicz:

What many people don't know about Profit First is the copy. The reading is the revised and expanded edition, even though it says it right on the book, there was a prior version and we had an advanced level and a basic level Yeah. In the first version. And the reason I suggested that was because I thought that it would be difficult for people to climb to the advanced level, even though that's the life I was using. And so we needed to get this kind of bridge, but it became clunky. And so the, in the revising expanded edition, as we were working on it, you were driving back. It's gotta be one system. It's gotta be one simple system. And it forced me to unwind that expertise, which kind of greases the gears for myself. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. I'm like, I can just bridge this myself. I, I know what to do, but you have to start explaining it. The other thing I think for Doability is front loading is that, can you get a core concept across that people can feel momentum, but may, maybe that's not doability, maybe that's testing something out. What's your thought about front loading and it's--

AJ Harper:

Well, that's a strategy for writing the book so that people will stay engaged in the book and start the transformation. That that's, that's why you'd front load. Okay. But task driving is okay, number one, does it work? (Yeah.) Number two, does it work for other people besides me? And, um, how can I make it as simple as possible? So they're more likely to do it. But then there's this other factor of when you do a test drive, you can see how people react. You can see where people are nervous, where they wanna give up on it, where, um, they shut it down completely. Where they might need more examples, more explanation. And if you don't do the test drive, you won't know. You know? So like, I didn't need to do a test drive on write a must read, because I know every day from teaching every day where people are get stuck, where people have a problem, you have to get your reader unstuck.

AJ Harper:

They're also going to get stuck. And now they don't have the benefit of sitting with you where you say, okay, let me explain this a different way. Mm. Right. So you can look across, you've got a room full of people you can tell by scanning the crowd if they're getting it or not. And if you need to change course or one-on-one with someone, you especially can tell you don't have the ability to do that with the book. So you have to do these test drives and then anticipate, okay, this is where, this is where everybody starts to cry. <laugh>, Mike. Right. Right. Everybody gets upset. Yeah. Or after I teach this class, I have a really low attendance because most people are what? Overwhelmed need to take a break. Then what do you do in the book? This is usually where most people need to take a break.

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AJ Harper:

Mm-hmm <affirmative>. So I wanna tell you to take a three-day break, and then I want you to come back here and X, Y, Z and here's what to do during the break. What's gonna happen then in the book, A per the reader feels taken care of. They feel seen, and they're gonna follow your instructions and do, as you say. But if you just blow through everything, this is how I see it, this is my level of difficulty. Think of it like, okay, so if you're a skier and you're a black diamond skier, but you got a bunch of bunny slopers, they're just gonna be, have to be airlifted off the mountains, <laugh>. Do you know what I mean? Yeah. But they're just not even gonna wanna do it. Yeah. They're not even gonna wanna do it. You're off there doing all your things, they're gone. They're, you have, don't even know where they are. (Yeah.) So we need to do test drives to make sure our stuff works, to make it better, to make it easier, to make it more accessible, like you said, simpler. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. But also to acknowledge the experience of it. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. In the writing. Mm-hmm

Mike Michalowicz:

<affirmative>. You mentioned one-on-one test drives. Here's something I think can be a challenge is some people placate. So I'll say, are you understanding this? Like, yeah, I got it. Yes. Makes sense. And you realize they don't, it's just glazing over. I, I find larger groups is actually a better, oh,

AJ Harper:

I didn't say one-on-one test drives.

Mike Michalowicz:

I thought you said when you talk with one-on, one-on-one,

AJ Harper:

Because that... People have clients. Yeah. So when you already have clients, you think, I know this well enough. Yeah. All I'm saying is that's not enough.

Mike Michalowicz:

I gotcha

AJ Harper:

It because if you, you can talk to your client or your patient or whatever, whoever you're talking to and, um, get, solve all the little bumps and you're not even aware all the bumps you're solving,

Mike Michalowicz:

What's the consequence of not solving these bumps?

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AJ Harper:

It's just you are less connection with the reader and they're more apt to give up. And your whole goal is to get them to do the thing. If you're writing prescriptive nonfiction mm-hmm <affirmative>. The whole goal. And even if you're writing, um, narrative nonfiction, if you're writing memoirs or teaching memoir, I think it still matters. You still have to kind of be aware of where the reader might lose it or be upset or push back against you. And you're gonna have to just be conscious of it's being conscious of reader experience. And I would say almost no one really thinks about it that deeply. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Almost no one.

Mike Michalowicz:

This is somewhat associated with The Money Habit. I think I shared it when we were recording last week here. It's hit this, there's a noticeable tipping point. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. The first stage is hit.

AJ Harper:

People emailing you.

Mike Michalowicz:

People emailing me now consistently. I just got a text this morning from someone who read the book. Someone I, of course I know personally of my cell and, uh, sales, this is, I'm so in it right now. So this could just be me projecting a little bit. But sales have bumped forward a little bit on a residual basis. Now, this is only looking at for the last two weeks. Okay. So who knows? It could be, I could be, um, associated things that are not really connected, but it feels like mm-hmm <affirmative>. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. And I also attribute that to the test drive we did, which was with two large organizations or larger small businesses mm-hmm <affirmative>. That deployed it. I'm curious, what are the ways to test drive? Is that the way to do it? You, you, you go ask the people in the general market that could use your idea and play with that, or how do you do it?

AJ Harper:

Yeah, you do. I mean, I ideally would love it if people did it with folks who don't know about them. So they don't have a bias. Oh, that's the best. They're not, they're not your super fan. They, they're not your, they're not your cousin. They're not people doing you a favor. What you don't want is, you know, you see these things go up on social media. Would anybody be willing to test, come do my course? Sure. I'll help you out. You do not want the person who's gonna help you out. You want the person who wants to solve the exact problem that you're solving. And they have, they don't have an experience of you yet. Or maybe they only have an experience of you on social, but they've never taken a class from you or anything. That's, that's ideally who you want. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. No bias actually wants to solve the problem. That's key. You're not

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gonna get good data from somebody who's not really that interested in solving the problem. They're just gonna start critiquing you in a way that is not helpful to you.

Mike Michalowicz:

How can one of our listeners find people that don't know them, but are interested in the topic?

AJ Harper:

Two ways. One is on your preferred social media, where you think your ideal readers hang out. Um, and then to identify who does have that audience that you could maybe borrow it so you have a friend or something. And a lot of the people that you are writing for follow that person or are friends with the, or colleagues with that person. Ask them if they would post about it for you.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, That's a good idea.

AJ Harper:

If, if it's free, that's a no-brainer.

Mike Michalowicz:

I may be overthinking this. Should you do it anonymously? Here's a challenge that we have. When I say there's a new book coming out, there's a large enough community that's read all of the work that we've done, and they say, oh, Mike, I wanna read one of your books. Um, and they're coming from a bias of early access preview, not necessarily from being super critical and, but me, it's not the case. Well,

AJ Harper:

You're talking about that's for advance reader feedback. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. And that's a real problem when you have an author that you love mm-hmm <affirmative>. And, um, you know, finding somebody who hasn't read your other stuff. But that's, that's a different deal. Advanced reader feedback is different.

Mike Michalowicz:

So test drive is even before you've written the book.

AJ Harper:

Way before, it's before the book and while you're writing it. .

Mike Michalowicz:

Okay. So let's go into the ways you can test drive, uh, what, what are the different methodologies

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AJ Harper:

Or so many, okay. I mean, you could do any number of classes of any length. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. You could do just a tiny baby thing that you wanna, well, let's test this piece. You know, you don't have to do the whole book. So you maybe have one framework, or one step, or one series of steps. Let's just do this chunk. Right. And think about what tiny pro, tiny bit of progress can be promised from that small test drive versus trying to make yourself do the whole deal. Um, I think that that's, it's daunting for people. You don't have to create some sort of, you know, minus a 14-week course that I already had. But if it would've been ridiculous for me to create a 14-week course to test drive Write a Must-Read. Does that make sense? Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

So how, how are you doing through new books? I mean, I guess because you have ongoing courses available at ajharper.com in different work, you're constantly test driving in that environment. Yeah. Do you ever break outta that environment to find, 'cause those are super fans as listeners to the show that are doing this. Do you ever test drive your stuff somewhere else?

AJ Harper:

Well, um, yes. I mean, I have a lot of things that are open to multiple people. You know, um, this latest book, this stuff is, it's a small task I'm asking people to do. Um,

Mike Michalowicz:

And can you reveal that or no, it's not,

AJ Harper:

I'm not telling you.

New Speaker:

Yeah, no.

AJ Harper:

No. Okay. Mm-hmm. No.

Mike Michalowicz:

One day I'm gonna, one day I'm gonna Mickey your, uh, drink there, your coffee <laugh> roof, you and your back. Okay. Here's what I'm doing. <laugh>.

AJ Harper:

Um, you know, I'm not trying to be a super secretive, it's just, I don't wanna handle this book in the same way.

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Mike Michalowicz:

I think you're honoring yourself

AJ Harper:

For sure.

Mike Michalowicz:

I've never seen you so, uh, the word's not protective, but just, I'm gonna say protective in the process so that this book comes out the right way without, without kind of feeding the market any knowledge about it. I, I literally have no idea what you're writing.

AJ Harper:

I think some people would do know, have figured it out. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. If they pay close attention to me mm-hmm <affirmative>. But, you know, I'm also doing something different this time that mm-hmm <affirmative>. Uh, never done, as I gave my team a day that they're gonna get the manuscript from me, Laura and Sadé, to read before it goes anywhere else. I've never done that.

Mike Michalowicz:

Is that you, is that part of your test drive? Or is that advanced reader?

AJ Harper:

It's because they have been with me on all these test drives that (Mm.) they, I wanna see what they have to think what they think about it in terms of did I miss something? What do you know? Is there a component of, is this clear? But mostly, did I miss something within our community that maybe would be helpful for me to share because I'm drawing a lot from the experience of the authors in my community.

Mike Michalowicz:

Another test drive that you do or you suggest as challenges? What's that?

AJ Harper:

Yeah. Okay. So you can do any number of classes of any length. I'm talking, it could be an hour, it could be multi-week. You can do classes that are all prerecorded. You can do classes that are live, just, you can do them in person. There's myriad combinations. So there's classes, but then there's challenges. So you could do just a mini challenge to see how hard is this to do? How engaged do people stay? When do they drop off? Is this completely impossible? Does this get the results that I'm hoping it does? Um, do we need to make this a smaller challenge or a bigger challenge? These are the type of questions you should be looking for if you're doing any test

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drive. So a challenge works, a class works speaking also works, and that works more on concepts and do ideas land. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. You know, when you're out there testing something that you and I have been working on mm-hmm <affirmative>. It might be the way you say it or present it mm-hmm <affirmative>. But it's not really a doability factor there.

Mike Michalowicz:

Right. Yeah. I hear you that much. I hear you. I

AJ Harper:

Hear Yeah. A little bit maybe. Um, so you can, and you can also do, um, test drives that are focused around retreats or other, other things you're doing. You can combine them. Oops.

Mike Michalowicz:

That's all right. I hate, no, these microphones are designed for a good punch. You

AJ Harper:

Can combine them with, um, other things you're doing. You know, you don't have to create something brand new. So if you're already doing an event, you could do a test drive as part of the event. It can be short. It doesn't have to be a long deal.

Mike Michalowicz:

Did you do 23 and me? Are you part Italian the way your hand was moving there? I'm just,

AJ Harper:

I'm just a hand talker.

Mike Michalowicz:

You're a hand talker. Um, do you, and maybe this is obvious, but when you're doing these test drives, if a test doesn't go the way you want, do you change it?

AJ Harper:

Yes.

Mike Michalowicz:

For the next one? Or, or hear me out, or It, sometimes it's just a bummer test. I mean, and you might be getting feedback that

AJ Harper:

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If you have enough people, so if you only have a handful of people, it's pretty hard to see, to trust any data. Okay. So you gotta have, you gotta have the ability to have a majority. Okay. Do you know what I mean? Mm-hmm <affirmative>. So I would love it if people had at least 10 folks in their test drive. But not everybody can get 10. The more the better.

Mike Michalowicz:

H-how many times do you go through these iterations and changes before you know your,

AJ Harper:

Until you feel like your audience gets it? They understand it. They're not confused. That's number one. They actually stick with it. Hmm. And they get some sort of a result. Hmm.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. Do you do this through the work you do with your students?

AJ Harper:

Do I teach them how to do it? Test drives?

Mike Michalowicz:

Do you have workshops, round test drives or,

AJ Harper:

Yeah, I've done live workshops on that. I also have a program called Test Drive Your Content, which you can just, it's all evergreen. Um, that's very, very useful. And you can just kind of do it on your own. Everything's at ajharper.com and also in my membership. But you know, you can see test drives other people are doing. If you are wondering, how do I do a test drive, you can also just go take one. That's a good idea. Somebody's doing a little beta. Someone's always doing something. Someone's always wanting people to try something out.

Mike Michalowicz:

How do you help a student that's wants to skip this phase? 'cause this is can be very time in, uh, intensive. They know the material inside. Now they the expert, therefore they have the bias and believe everyone should know it. Have you had students come through your program like that and <laugh>, they wanna skip it. And how do you get 'em to stop skipping the,

AJ Harper:

They skip. I've not had anyone wanna skip a test drive.

Mike Michalowicz:

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Oh, Really? Okay.

AJ Harper:

I think people are nervous that the content isn't gonna work.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, That's interesting.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. I think, I think people are worried about it also. You know, I am pretty tough about it, you know, how do you know this works? You should be able to answer that question.

Mike Michalowicz:

That's the thing. You reiterate that over and over again as we're working on any book together. Mm-hmm. You say, how do you know this is gonna work? Yeah. Is this as simple as it can get and still be impactful? Yeah.

AJ Harper:

And some stuff's just gonna be hard. I think about Get Different.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah.

AJ Harper:

We, we work the heck outta that doability. But it's still really hard for folks. It, because it's, it's calling on a part of us that you can't do anything about that. Mike. I know. You can't do anything about the fear of embarrassment. Yeah. And the fear of rejection. It's really rough.

Mike Michalowicz:

So I just created a new, or have a new campaign idea I'll share with you off air. Um, I was flying out to see my son and, uh, I was just thinking about how to sell more books mm-hmm <affirmative>. And I was like, oh, I, I used the get different framework, went through it. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. I got something, I got something that's really cool and I'll support other authors in the process. I'll tell you about it after this. Um, but you're right. It's interesting. The people who do the test drive for get different, were willing to get different mm-hmm <affirmative>. They were willing to break out, but the vast majority of consumers mm-hmm <affirmative>. Are afraid to change. They say it's the weirdest thing. I wanna be noticed without being noticeable. That's the Yeah. Feedback I get. So how do you know

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AJ Harper:

You want the benefits of having been noticed?

Mike Michalowicz:

Right. That's even better.

AJ Harper:

They want the benefits of having been noticed without, but they don't actually want anyone to look at them. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yes. Oh, it's such a,

AJ Harper:

And I, it's just, it's just very hard to overcome.

Mike Michalowicz:

Very hard to overcome. And is that something that in test drives, you can at least identify or

AJ Harper:

You can identify it and you know, there's, you know, you can say, look, this is, you know, most people aren't gonna do this. You can say that stuff in the book, you know? Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

That's a great idea.

AJ Harper:

You can, I'm all about the managing of expectations with, with prescriptive nonfiction. Just lay it out. I don't know why people are standing, you know, on a, on authority like that. Why don't you just be vulnerable and say, look, only about half the people I work with ever do this.

Mike Michalowicz:

That's brilliant. Just, just managing expectations. Yeah. That's, we should do a whole

AJ Harper:

That's my jam man. That's my whole Write a Must-Read. Why do people like that? In part because the whole book, I'm saying this really hard. Yeah. You probably won't finish this. Yeah. This is gonna suck. Yeah. You know, why do we think we should paint a broer picture than it is

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you're just shooting yourself in the foot. Then now the reader says, oh, that didn't work. This book must not work for me. And actually what's worse is I'm not cut out for that. That would be worse. Yeah. So you have to say, this is really hard. Like, if it's gonna take them seven tries, just say, this probably can take you like at least seven tries. Yeah. So I, I don't know why, why do authors think they have to paint this pretty picture? Just say, this is really freaking hard and most of my people don't do it. But if you do it, boy your life's gonna be different. Why don't you say it?

Mike Michalowicz:

That's juicy. We should do an episode on expectations of managing them. Because I think there's expectations of managing 'em in the book, but I think there's post and pre also. Okay. All right. Um, how do you know when the testing has been adequate?

AJ Harper:

When they get it and they can do it and they don't quit. <laugh>, I mean, okay. You know, and they get some sort of result. I mean, you gotta have some consistency there. Okay. This is working. Also, there's some things that you might not be able to actually, you know, do with people might not be able to do on their own. And that's just something you're gonna have to include in the book. Some acknowledgement of that. You know, I can teach you how to do a core message for your book. It's hard to do it on your own. Hmm. I can walk you through the process. The best way though, to get at your core message is with feedback from someone like me who's asking you the questions and pushing you in that direction. So I have to be honest about it. You know, it's, I'm gonna, we'll give it a shot, but not everything is gonna translate to the book. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. It's just not.

Mike Michalowicz:

Beyond the doability accessibility components. There other reasons to do test drives or maybe secondary benefits.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. Because now think of it, you're building your mailing list as you go. Yeah. You might be earning some revenue if you decide to charge for it. Uh, you're building buzz in anticipation for the book.

Mike Michalowicz:

Build revenue in doing test drives, because I guess you're charging for the course, or

AJ Harper:

If you decide to,

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Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, that's interesting. Okay. So

AJ Harper:

You can just flat out say, I'm testing these concepts for my book and it's gonna be free. Or you can say, I'm testing this concept or this framework, it's \$25. It's just do a small fee, whatever you want. You can start raising the fee if you want. And then also you're building anticipation for the book. And the other cool thing is now you have the stories and anecdotes that you wanted to have in your book about people using your stuff. Exactly.

Mike Michalowicz:

I mean,

AJ Harper:

You gotta have it. I

Mike Michalowicz:

Can't remember if we wrote a story about Jacob Limmer. He's with Cottonwood Coffee. I don't know if that name.

AJ Harper:

I think, you know, what's hard for me to remember is did, did things make it into the book?

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. I can't remember. I know we interviewed him. So he did a test drive for Fix This Next. I hosted a test drive at my office and I sent out to my community saying, if you're willing to fly out on your own dime, I'll teach you for a full day. Everything I know, but you have to gimme all this critical feedback out of that. Oh, here. Yeah. Out of that was, uh, Jacob Limmer, who I'm doing business with now, Darren Ami.

AJ Harper:

Yes, yes, yes.

Mike Michalowicz:

Who my phone calls Darren Romy. Sounds like he's like a raptor of some sort. <laugh>, but <laugh>, um, it's built long-term business relationships. Mm-hmm <affirmative>.

AJ Harper:

Yeah.

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Mike Michalowicz:

So much so that I'm now partnered with Jacob and Darren in helping at-risk businesses. We call it Prosper group, but it's a business that's struggling living check by check. Um, the owners overworked and so forth. Darren and Jacob deploy those techniques with me mm-hmm <affirmative>. In these businesses to, to fix them. It's unbelievable.

AJ Harper:

Right. And you couldn't have anticipated that. Never. I have one stu, one student who did test drives, not to test that it worked, but to get to know their reader better because this author was so far removed from where her reader is. Mm. That she just said, I don't think I remember what that feels like. Mm. I don't think I remember the chat, any of that. So we devised a test drive together when she was in workshop. That was years ago now. That's it. That test drive became, I think a thousand people. Started doing it within about six months. And now it's a huge business for her.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh my gosh.

AJ Harper:

From the test drive,

Mike Michalowicz:

Usually a great point is that we reflect on our own story when we go through this process. Again, looking at other people's stories.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. But I mean, your test drive could shock you and end up being a huge business for you.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. That's a nice little side. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Uh, do you have a workshop yourself specifically for this? I think you said you have a self guide. I

AJ Harper:

Do. Yeah. I have a, yeah, I have a test drive your content course. You can just buy it. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, that's cool.

AJ Harper:

Yeah, just go to ajharper.com. And

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Mike Michalowicz:

What a course like that. What, what happens, people just, it marches them through a few steps. A checklist.

AJ Harper:

It's several. It's seven videos and, um, yeah, it walks you through the whole thing, how to do it. Gives you the questions to ask whole shebang. Bang

Mike Michalowicz:

Aj harper.com. Yep. We also have an imprint. I have an imprint called Simplified. It's with Page Two. We are actively looking for authors. We just interviewed, uh, an author on Friday who I think may pass the mustard. So if you are a author or aspiring author, and you have a community in the entrepreneurial space that you're serving with a really unique to you approach that's serving them and it's simple. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. That's why we call it simplified. It's accessible. We are now looking for authors. Um, so you can reach out, I think, through dw tb podcast.com at the best. It's hello@dwtbpodcast.com. Um, anything else you wanna talk on this subject before we wrap it up?

AJ Harper:

No, I think we, we kept meaning to do a whole episode on this. So we've talked, we've touched on this subject in prior episodes, but not this deep. So I'm feeling good. I feel like this is a good, this was great. Good little deep dive.

Mike Michalowicz:

I love this. I learned so much every single time. I love that we're doing it in face-to-face too. I don't know, there's just deeper learning for me. Yeah. I hope our audience feels it too. Yeah. I hope so. Alright. Next week we're gonna talk about five years out bold predictions of publishing. I cannot wait to hear what you have to say about that. Okay. I wanna remind our audience, go to dw tb podcast.com. That's our website. AJ's prepared all the materials. There's tons of free downloadable stuff there. The big ask that AJ and I have for you is this, would you simply rate and review the show honestly and integrity by sas? You do it. I know it takes like 30 seconds of your time and your time is precious, but it'll help us get the word out. And any questions, any comments, uh, any show episodes you want us to talk about, email us at hello@dwtvbpodcast.com. My favorite thing to remind you is this. Don't write that book. Write the greatest book you can.