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Episode 141:

“After the Book Launch Blues”

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:

I do wanna start off by bragging about you, Matt. Um, we are just talking during that break about this studio. Um, Matt has spent an extraordinary amount of time setting up this space, and what Matt does is all this research on how to manage sound, how to make it look, this, this is a bedroom. We're in former bedroom, but when you watch on video, the perception is just a big space. Um, there's a brick wall behind us. It's not real brick <laugh>, and there's all these things going on. Matt, um, was, I'm gonna use the word maniacal about sound, perfection, and he says it's not there yet. It's just not there yet. So one of the things he discovered is this brick wall. So that's a, a cloth material. And the reason it's cloth material is we can change it if we want to have a different setup. It could be a green screen, it could be different material, whatever we want. So we wanted to have brick for now, and he's like, this is acting like a drum. So behind there is a Murphy bed. One of the requirements my wife had is whatever room we dedicate to a function, it needs to convert to a guest room when all the family from Hawaii comes in and all over the place and stays here for a month. So this room converts back into a bedroom very quickly. Do you quickly, did you know that?

AJ Harper:

I did. I did. I recall now, but I, I have to admit, I don't,

Mike Michalowicz:

Can't see it and

AJ Harper:

I can't see

Mike Michalowicz:

It. Dude, genius man over there figured it out. So that's on casters. It rolls over there. You can store everything in this little storage area where the cameras are to give it depth. And, and Murphy Bay comes down. So Matt is like, look at this rolling brick wall here. And he goes, it's acting like a drum. He goes, the audio's not good enough. And I'm like, what do you need to do?

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He is like, we need to put this felt material. We need to sheet rocket, and so forth. And I'm like, okay, I gotta find a contractor. Well, as I'm looking for Martin to do it, Matt's like, Hey, I'm coming by. It's tomorrow morning. He said, okay. I'm like, yeah, he's sheet rocking it. He's putting his material in it. And then he is like, oh, I can put sound baffles in the ceiling.

Mike Michalowicz:

And he's cutting. He's doing his seamstress work, and he creates his room and the audio for the neophyte. I don't notice an improvement. I thought it's been excellent from day one. But for the pro, he's like, it went from 90% Good to now 99%. All right. And, uh, I hope our audience is seeing it in the video quality when they check this out on YouTube. And when we're listening in the podcast, I hope there's a noticeable uptick for them that the content and the quality of the content remains the same, but the quality of the audio now is juiced up. So I, I just hope anyone listening in right now, please rate and review and comment how well you like the quality. That'd be a nice accolade to Matt. Okey doke. Okay. That was my preamble. Now you, you come up with all the, now here's a shout to you. You come up with 90% of topics. Sometimes I'll text you, say, Hey, I got an idea. We should do this or that. And, and then you'll take it or, or riff off of it. But this one I never even considered. You wanted to talk about the blues after a book launch?

AJ Harper:

The After the book Launch Blues.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. <laugh> sounds like a song. Banana Nana.

AJ Harper:

Be.

Mike Michalowicz:

It should I woke up this morning exhausted from writing, um, and launching What inspired this?

AJ Harper:

Well, initially it's, and she's not having these blues, so let me be really clear. But Kathy Oneto, she's an alum of my workshop, and she wrote this amazing book, which is multi-award winner called Sustainable Ambition. And, um, we were just having a conversation and she was thinking, you know, she was asking, I wanna keep the book alive. 'cause I'm always saying, please don't give up on marketing your book. This is the long game. But she also feels this call to what she, she says, I wanna have the experience, the wonder of a new project. And so she's not having the blues. I think she's just trying to figure out how do I keep sustainable ambition alive and also be excited about something new, which is sort of, kind of interesting because of the, what her book is about, which is how do you have ambition for, for different things at the same time and at

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different times of your life. So it's, it's apropos that she would ask me that question, but it got me thinking there's this sort of let down too that happens after. So I thought we could kind of combine the two topics and two one, which is, you know, what do you do when you have this post-launch feelings? And then how do you sort of keep things going after that?

Mike Michalowicz:

I, I'm really looking for this conversation. 'cause I, I didn't call it the blues, but I definitely experienced that emotion,

AJ Harper:

Like a little bit of a letdown.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. Yeah. So for our audience, you're listening to, don't write that book. Uh, thanks for listening. And this is our hundred and 41st episode. Yeah. I mean, we are cranking through these, not

AJ Harper:

Including the bonus.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, yeah, that's right. This, that was

AJ Harper:

Because we didn't number that one.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. And we're thinking about doing more bonuses. I, I've

AJ Harper:

Got one coming.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, good, good. And even we were talking about doing some short little ones, like a 10 or 15 minute episode one, if

AJ Harper:

People have ideas. We love ideas,

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Mike Michalowicz:

We love them. Yeah. And I still wanna do a live, uh, episode that I haven't forgotten, that I use droning on about that a lot. And it, it's kind of coming back to me, uh, of how we can do it in a real unique, fun way. But we'll talk about that some future Point Jordan Studio with **AJ Harper**, the author of Write a Must Read, um, and the, the creator of this extraordinary journey on the top three books, like Have a Must Read book and make sure it's one of the top three books in its category.

AJ Harper:

Strive for it.

Mike Michalowicz:

Strive for it. What I admire about you, aj, is that you guide authors, not just through the writing authorship journey. You guide 'em through the emotional journey. I mean, that's what we're talking about today. But I actually have noticed that, that you, you encourage and inspire authors, but something even greater, you listen. You listen, and it's very cathartic. I've had times like, this is, we're doing the worst thing. This is not gonna work. And, and you just let me let it out. Yeah. That's remarkable.

AJ Harper:

Thank you. I don't, I'm not, you know, having written many books, uh, self helpy type and motivational books, as a ghost writer, I sort of have an aversion to toxic po positivity. I am fundamentally optimistic. And I, I am excited about opportunities, but I'm also super practical. So I think it's a good combo. Yeah. I appreciate that.

Mike Michalowicz:

I'm, you, you, well, good. I, I,

AJ Harper:

The thing I admire about you is that you walk your talk.

Mike Michalowicz:

Thank you.

AJ Harper:

So, you know, whether it's Profit First or taking your four week vacation, like in Clockwork or whatever, you're doing it, you're, you're doing the thing that you ask other people to do.

Mike Michalowicz:

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Thank you. That's what I like about writing books. Like it holds you accountable to it. So I started an investment group, this is now about three years ago, but we're really coming into Stride now. It's called Prosper Group. And we used all of the books that we've done together, you and I, all of the systems in our work. And so fix this Next is, it was always intended to be the foundational hub of all the other books has become the foundational hub for our organization. And it's, um,

AJ Harper:

The diagnostic.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. It's, yeah, it's the diagnostic. It's, it's come full circle. So

AJ Harper:

Can we just have a moment with that though? Yeah. Because you remember when I met you, you were coming off of, you were sort of still in the dark time. But you had done all that angel investing that we write about it in Profit First and the Money Habit. And you thought you had the modest touch. I, yeah, I did. And you just throwing money at stuff. Yeah. Right. Yeah. Because you're a golden, golden guy and you can get this done. Yeah. I find it poetic that that nearly bankrupted you.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh yeah.

AJ Harper:

But from the Ashes, you wrote a body of work, really a body of work. So we've talked about how we're really just missing the sales book.

Mike Michalowicz:

Correct. And I have an idea for it

AJ Harper:

Now. So you have a body of work that then allowed you to do what you intended to do back then, and now you're doing it with Prosper Group. Yeah. But it's based on not just you've some sort of po you know, mojo you have, it's based on tested, proven strategies and techniques. Yeah. It's based on your intellectual property. This, it has, um, a special significance. I think, to me, this is full circle.

Mike Michalowicz:

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It really is a full circle moment. Yeah. 20 years. And, uh, it's interesting talking, woo, they talk about manifestation and, and stuff like this in that when you think of something, it happens. It can happen right away. It's just, are you ready to receive it? It's interesting when looking back in time, everything feels like it's right away. So it's only looking in the future that things seem so distant. So distant. So if something takes 20 years to manifest, in retrospect, it took a second.

AJ Harper:

I feel that. Yeah. I feel that. And I think that's also something interesting for us to, I didn't see the connection, but I, at first, but now I do, you know, when people like Kathy are wanting new projects, but they have this other book, I think we need to start looking at the whole picture of what we're doing, as opposed to, I have this project now I'm doing this, now I'm doing this, now I'm doing that. And think instead about how it's all linked.

Mike Michalowicz:

I was talking to a fellow, um, who created a, I'll just say term that is very popular. Like, you use it, you probably use it. Say, I used it. He's the creator of this term. I just don't wanna reveal his name. And he's looking at publishing a new book. And he gave me a call and said, you've done all three of the platforms, the traditional, self. And, uh, hybrid, which one do you recommend? And I said, hands down hybrid for me. And it's not just like, a little bit better, it's been a multitude better. And I don't know if it's 'cause hybrid or if it's because of page two specifically. They're just switching hard. It's because of page two. I I think so. I, you,

AJ Harper:

I, trust

Mike Michalowicz:

Me, I haven't experienced any other hybrid. Okay. I do trust you. There

AJ Harper:

Are, there are some other good ones, but they're, to me, they're the

Mike Michalowicz:

Best. They are the best. And page two simplified. That's the imprint that I've partnered with them on, is the sponsor of this episode. So thank you to page two. Kathy is the one who inspired us. So can you gimme some more details? Uh, about, she's the author of Sustainable Ambition,

AJ Harper:

Sustainable Ambition, which is a multi award-winning book. Um, but what she's feeling now is pressure probably from me, because I'm always telling, I don't want it to feel like pressure, but

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I'm trying to inspire my authors not to give up on their books and to keep Yeah. Trying to sell it. Yeah. To keep trying to get it into the hands of readers is what I'm hoping they'll do. But she's feeling the pull of trying to create a new project. She called it the Wonder of a New Project. So how do you balance those two things? Um, but I also feel like that does, you know, that after the book release Blues situation makes us feel like we want a new project. Yeah. You know,

Mike Michalowicz:

I remember Write a Must Read coming out. I remember the cover design, and it wasn't, it's over your head. I don't know if it's on the camera, but, uh, the cover design was different.

AJ Harper:

Totally Different.

Mike Michalowicz:

I loved it. It had all these like, sticky notes effectively.

AJ Harper:

That wasn't it. That was just one comp.

Mike Michalowicz:

Okay. Well, that's the comp.

AJ Harper:

You're obsessed with that one

Mike Michalowicz:

Because I, it was effing great in my opinion.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. They said the sales team thought it looked too much like a children's book because of the Post-It colors.

Mike Michalowicz:

Well, please don't call Michael Port. What was his like, uh, the, the, about speaking the stage? It was like a Dr. Zeus design. Dr. Zeus, I can't remember which book it was.

AJ Harper:

I can't remember.

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Mike Michalowicz:

Um, and it was Poke Yourself Solid. No, no, no, no. That one had a picture. Steal the show. Steal the show, steal the show. Yeah. It looked like a Dr. Seuss and what a great design. And did very well at launch. Yeah. So whatever, I, I remember your book coming out right around that time period. So the covers are selected and so forth, and it comes out. What did you feel moments before the launch and moments after the launch? And did the blues set in for you?

AJ Harper:

I think for context, it was a rough personal time.

Mike Michalowicz:

Okay.

AJ Harper:

I think 20, 20 through 25 were probably my worst five years ever. Okay. Okay. Yeah. And just, you know, things happened and, um, I, I am, we're all still here and, and we're all doing great. But it was, that was 2022. That was how it

Mike Michalowicz:

Seems so much longer ago.

AJ Harper:

It, I know, four years. And I think I was trying to just keep my head above water. Okay. Um, for me, there, for me, there wasn't a letdown right away because, um, I am a person who's like next, you know, and I just kind of do the next thing. But I think the letdown came when I realized that, um, I needed to do more to support it. I think that that felt like maybe what Kathy's feeling, you know, I wanna do other things. Yeah. But I have to keep this going.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. Yeah. And, you know, that's expected and required.

AJ Harper:

I Know. I tell everybody to do it.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. Yeah. But when it hits, when the reality hits, it's like, oh my God. Yeah. That's true for me too.

AJ Harper:

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Especially true for you, dude, because you are on you next. I always want the next a relentless schedule.

Mike Michalowicz:

I wanna do the next thing. But here's what's interesting, uh, with the money habit, just yesterday, we, we designed a new marketing method that we've never done before. Yeah. And we're testing it. Yeah. So it's, it's, I won't reveal all the details, but effectively it's going to secondary markets that are gathering for another reason. But a financial component is part of the story. It's not the talked about story, but it's part of the story and getting to those markets. Nice.

AJ Harper:

I love

Mike Michalowicz:

That. Yeah. So we just wrote the campaign, um, literally last week. And we're gonna start I love that. Start testing it. Yeah. Um, my balloons happens probably right when the first book is sold is like, I start going. Really? Yeah. Yeah. So launch day is coming, there's all this preparation. So it's interesting. There's no, um, relief because as it gets closer to launch day, for me, there's more and more momentum, more preparation, you know, and we're getting to it. Then there's the execution of the launch. This year we did a 12 hour, uh, webinar, effectively, but there's always some kind of big push. And during the other campaigns, I'm reaching out to individual authors, thanking them for their supporters. All this momentum. Yeah. Then there's a moment that happens. It's, it's usually at the end of the day, this time is about eight o'clock or nine o'clock at night. It's like, okay, now I can sit down and I'll log on to, it's usually Amazon. 'cause they're reporting most frequently on the sales. Yeah. See how the trend is going. And then I'm like, huh, this is, this, is it <laugh>? And I'm all, and then I get disappointed in myself, like, oh, the sales could be better and stuff. And I'm like, ah, is this like, like it's anti matic every time. The money habit, I think, launched during the launch period, which I is basically a two week, two

AJ Harper:

Weeks,

Mike Michalowicz:

8,000 something units, which is our best launch, you know, print, print copies. But

AJ Harper:

To be clear, a bunch of those units were actually pre-sold before the two weeks.

Mike Michalowicz:

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Yeah, yeah, yeah. We, we moved over to 5,000 bulk. Amazing. And bulk could be an order of two or three, uh, a couple large orders. We just got an order for a thousand that just came in. Yay. Yeah. It was just nice. Um, and that's gonna be shipping out next month. But nonetheless, it feels anti-climatic. And it's like, because what,

AJ Harper:

Because what would've felt climactic would've felt like, yes, this, this result is an alignment with effort.

Mike Michalowicz:

I think it's gotta be so absurdly big, like the earthquake, uh, the whole world shakes and on the news they break this book is moving so many book, this book is so successful that the world is actually shaken. And that probably still would be, I'm on now. That's what it feels like to get that kind of emotion outta me.

AJ Harper:

You think so?

Mike Michalowicz:

I feel that way. 'cause, because I, I can't think of a single book that I've been like, that was amazing. I feel like I'm almost, I've always What? Yeah. Even private first in retrospect, power First has been extraordinary. And I know the numbers. It's a top point. 1.000001% of book performances. Yeah. Of all time. I get it. I was in, I was at the airport. So there's little moments that I'm like, okay. I was at the airport, I don't know if I told you this is, uh, I'm in Chicago and I'm going down an escalator getting onto like the tram to go to the next thing. And there's a dude coming up, and he looks at me, and then he passes. So I catch him catching my eye, and I, I could look forward. Yeah. And I hear, Hey, Mike. So I'm like, I'm not gonna respond to that 'cause there's a million mics, and I know he's likely talking to me. And so then goes a little further and you go, he goes, Hey, Mike Mitz. Right? So I turn around and I, I wave up. He's like, I'm a fan of your books. And now we're like, really far apart, and because there's hundreds of people waiting for the tram, and on this escalator, everyone's now looking at me. Yeah. Looking at him. And he looks, and he goes, that dude, he's very important

AJ Harper:

<laugh>. Oh, no.

Mike Michalowicz:

I'm like, so I blush. I go, thank you. And I go down, and now people are kind of staring at me. Oh, no. I put my head down. So in that moment, I feel rewarded and I feel the kind gesture. I'm also embarrassed. And I'm back to the, there's almost like this, this angel in one shoulder, and

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there's this devil in the other saying, yeah, dude, you're, you're f'ing ego. Settle down. Okay. Okay. Not a big deal. Okay. And so maybe, maybe that's just kind of,

AJ Harper:

Is that why you're feeling that you feel like, um, you wanna just, you feel a let down because you don't actually want,

Mike Michalowicz:

Maybe that's it, to get

AJ Harper:

To believe your own hype.

Mike Michalowicz:

I, I definitely wanna believe my own hype. I, yeah. Ooh. It gives me the ex someone, someone I was on a call and I interview and they go, you know, I just want you to know you are the guru for finance. I'm like, Ooh. Ooh. I said, don't say the G word. Yeah. I said, please don't say that. And I, I, I say, I gotta stop the podcast for a second. Um, and, and if you wanna record this, fine. But please don't call me that. 'cause I'm not, I said, what I really believe is you and I and every human are on an infinite path of experience. Yeah. And we have different experiences, but no one is better than anybody. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. Ooh, it tied me out. Yeah. So maybe that's part

AJ Harper:

Of it. Maybe because listen, I'm still bugging you to do a party.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. I feel, yeah, I know,

AJ Harper:

But I still, I'm gonna make my case. I think you need to because there's so many people that are a part of it.

Mike Michalowicz:

I want, you know what I mean? I do wanna acknowledge.

AJ Harper:

And I think if you could see it like that. Yeah. But there is, you might, it might not be as much of a letdown if you said, let's celebrate, let's celebrate all we did to get to this. 'cause it's years. And

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that's part of it is part of the letdown is it's years of grind, grind, grind, stops. And the last part is such a dead run. It just stops. And then it just go to b. Done. And also, you know what else happens? If you're traditionally published, you're yesterday's news.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. It's true.

AJ Harper:

Because all that matters is front list.

Mike Michalowicz:

I remember a moment in my life, it was, it was in college. I had, uh, been in a relationship with this girl for, for many years. She was an extraordinary human. But we decided to end relationship. And it's now graduation day. And that's what kind of like, when we broke up and, um, my parents came down, they do the graduation ceremony. Now my parents were going back to the hotel for something, and then I was gonna meet them a few hours later. And I'm walking around campus, I see all these friends, high fiving, hugging, and I'm like, I don't have any friends. Like from college. I did. Oh man. But I didn't have anyone to celebrate with.

AJ Harper:

Because you had spent a lot of time with this girl.

Mike Michalowicz:

Exactly. Exactly. And I would never trade that for the world. And at the same time, I was like, oh, that's kind of what I've experienced in the book. Like, when it's over, it's just over. And it's just, I felt this kind of dead space. I'm like, what? Now?

AJ Harper:

You know what? I wonder if, one of the reasons I didn't feel so much a letdown is because I actually extended my launch. Because I had so many challenges just trying to balance personal things. I, I took it easy on myself and I said, I'm actually gonna make this. 'cause it, the book came out in May, so I just decided to make it a summer launch. So I spaced some things out.

Mike Michalowicz:

What have you noticed is the trigger of Let Downs or the Blues

AJ Harper:

For Oh, the biggest thing is, um, sales numbers.

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Mike Michalowicz:

What do you mean?

AJ Harper:

Because people get in their head that this is how much they're gonna sell. And they get in their head a what number means something. And then it's, it's almost never that.

Mike Michalowicz:

What's the number you hear?

AJ Harper:

I hear them all. It's, it's a joke. It's like, I, I have a little game. I play with people sometimes where I say, what's your, what's your pie in the sky number? What's your, I feel good about number and what's your, I must must at least sell this many books. Or I'll be humiliated. Oh.

Mike Michalowicz:

Or I'll be humiliated. So you'll gimme,

AJ Harper:

I asked him to gimme three and I don't tell them why. And the first time I did it was at Heroic. And everybody looked at me and said, how do we decide? And I said, I'm not telling, just write your three numbers down. And then I asked the room in, okay, now everybody gimme your hold up your pie in the sky. A hundred thousand million, 10,000. Like, those are big differences. But then here's the thing, reasonable number a hundred thousand 10. Right? Yeah. Wow. And then your bottom number 10, you know, like some of the same numbers.

Mike Michalowicz:

Interesting. So you

AJ Harper:

Don't, you don't know. And so you're not gonna be Right.

Mike Michalowicz:

Is that lifetime of the book or the launch period?

AJ Harper:

This was lifetime. Yeah. But if you ask people about launch, they'll still say some bonkers number. Yeah. You know, and you know, I've been working on this sales number thing for a while, and I've firmly believe I have this figured out. But I think that that let down is, it's hard to

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get over because it's how we measure the success of something. Yeah. And then did you make a list if you were trying to go for it? The let, the let down man, I've had, I've had students who made it and didn't expect to make it. I had students, like last year I had so many students make a national list. And I had one student, Dr. Kerry Burnight, who made the New York Times and didn't expect to. Um, I also had a couple people make the USA today list. And they were like, what the heck? Yeah. They didn't even know. Yeah.

AJ Harper:

I also had a student make it after the fact. So usually people make it in the first week and then they're off, you know? Because they have the pre-orders. I had a student make it six weeks after publication, but not the first week. Which is really actually exciting because that means people are talking about it. So those people feel excited. But if you've been working to get on it, you know, if your goal is I need to be on the list. And you put a lot of heart into it. I've had students who were crushed when they didn't make it. And I, that that really, I've, I've seen people actually go into a deep depression over it.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. I see more people frustrated. They don't make a list than they don't hit a sales number. And to me, a sales number, but

AJ Harper:

They're, they go hand in hand.

Mike Michalowicz:

Well, a sales number to me translates to impact. 'cause that's actually people buying it. Yeah. Uh, a list. It's, it's just for a blip of time. A certain volume of books sold. Yes. And I'm more intrigued by, so I think two of my books have made a list of some sort.

AJ Harper:

I no more.

Mike Michalowicz:

Okay. It could be, I, I wanna say I don't care. I must care. 'cause I do know a couple of the lists, so I do care to some degree, but Yeah. But, uh, the Money Habit got on USA today USA today. And so they call, they the publisher calls, and it's like, congratulations on USA Today. Yeah. And I, I, I feel almost no emotion toward it. Like, eh, eh, they're like, we're gonna put an emblem on it. And I know the impact. It, it helps with libraries. It, it helps a lot. I totally get it. But it is so outta alignment with my mission. Conversely, if, if we sold 2000 books for the launch, I would've been in deep pain.

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AJ Harper:

Pain Yeah. In

Mike Michalowicz:

Pain. Because the goals you set the goals I set, I set my, we really deliver. If we had 10,000 books for the launch period, uh, the minimum was 5,000 books. And so the fact that we came in at 8,000 something Yeah. It, it, it fell in. I'm not like hyped up. Like this was amazing. But even if we did 10,000, even if we did 50,000, all of a sudden my settings of my expectations get elevated to the new setting. Right. And I go into the blues

AJ Harper:

Recalibrate, I

Mike Michalowicz:

Recalibrate, and I like, yeah, I suck. They suck. That's all I did. Yeah. There's never enough in my mindset of, of book sales, because that's impact profit first. Uh, I think we calculated 1.5 to 1.6 million units sold. Now this is international translations, which actually is a much larger volume than that thought. Um, and, and two versions. All the formats. All the formats and so forth. And I'm like, if, and some of those people are buying triplicate of the book. Yeah. So, but if everyone was an individual sale, there's a 350 million small business on this planet. I'm like, that sucks. 1.5, 1.6 B.

AJ Harper:

Right. It's and it, however, however you frame it, however you

Mike Michalowicz:

Frame it. And then my mind goes into the, uh, blues. And now I'm like in mind being a martyr. Like, what value is this? Oh my

AJ Harper:

God. We all need therapy. We need a therapist, post-launch therapist. That'll be a specialty. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

I'm actually, yeah. I have a

AJ Harper:

Therapy. I kind show, I wanna make sure we're addressing everything I wanted to talk about. Hang on.

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Mike Michalowicz:

Um, well, we're talking about the blue. So we, we put here, we, we shared our stories. We talked about the outcome is not what you expected. Um, but people talking about, uh, people move on to talk about the new subject. And you already mentioned this, but why does the world move on so quickly from a book?

AJ Harper:

Not the world, the publishing world?

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, okay. Tell me about that. Well,

AJ Harper:

When you're a front list author, everybody's focused on you. Yeah. Yeah. You're getting the book out. Everything is time dependent on this release date. Everybody's getting all their ducks in a row. It's exciting when a book comes out. Yeah. It's newsworthy when a book comes out, at least in the publishing industry. But then there's another one right behind you. Correct. Yeah. And so their efforts are focused on the front list title, which technically you're still front list for at least another year. But you feel it though. You feel like, and you're done. And

Mike Michalowicz:

In practice, like back with the penguin days, Noah would be calling like a week away or go, here's what we're doing. Yeah. There's a fi high frequency of calls. Yeah. On the launch day, all of a sudden there's, there's silence Dead. Like, like that moment. Bye <laugh>. I'm like, hello. And then about a week later just call like, Hey, here's the numbers you did. Yeah. And then,

AJ Harper:

And then it's, there's, yeah. And so that, that quiet Yeah. Is contributes to the feeling.

Mike Michalowicz:

And the other factor is, now you have to do the real work. You just put your entire soul into writing something is extraordinary and that wasn't enough.

AJ Harper:

And it's, and it's on you.

Mike Michalowicz:

It's not enough. You now you gotta market it. And

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AJ Harper:

Your publisher did the things they needed to do. Yeah. They did the j their job. Yeah. So, but in your mind, you feel like it's still their job, but it's actually not. Yeah. It's only you. Yes.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah.

AJ Harper:

That they'll be excited if something cool happens to you, like you win a big award, or, um, you sell, you reach a threshold or something, they'll be excited. They'll be thrilled. They'll amplify it. But it's, it's on you. It's on

Mike Michalowicz:

You. Yeah. So, so it looks like Kathy has some questions. Do we go through, um,

AJ Harper:

No, I mean that, this is my, these are my answers.

Mike Michalowicz:

<laugh>. Okay.

AJ Harper:

She, she answered, she asked her questions. So I think if you're, this is more to what, you know, how do you then once, whether you had the blues or you're in Kathy's situation where you may not necessarily have the blues, but you feel called to also do something else. And so you feel almost torn between supporting the book you published and working on a fun new project. And so these are some of my suggestions of just the obvious one is to set micro goals. So instead of feeling like, 'cause it's a long game, you need to look at your book as I, I like to say, five years set a five year plan that you like, you taught me, um, do your quarterly tacking. So are you, how are you set the five years, then do quarterly tacking and reconfigure as you need to go. But then at the end of the five years, re-up.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah.

AJ Harper:

For another five.

Mike Michalowicz:

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Yeah. Right. Re-enlist. I agree. So here we're tacking is this, for our audience tacking is you set an objective, a long-term objective, the five year or 10 year objective. But then you ask yourself, what can you do for the next 90 days to move in that direction. Then after 90 days you reevaluate and say, what do I need to do now? Yeah. To get there. And it starts this zigzag pattern effectively.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. And so in that vein set, the five years, and it doesn't have to be a super detailed five year plan, it can be pretty basic. And then set micro goals. So this is what I'm gonna do this quarter to work on my book. And here's how it fits with everything else I'm doing. Which I think Kathy will be great at, because her book is all about how you balance all these different ambitions. Mm. Um, and then of course, time blocking. We don't have to do something for our book every day. You could just say, I'm gonna spend an hour on my book every Friday morning, or two hours on Saturdays, or whatever you feel, whatever you feel is relevant. And also, it could be fun things. Like, it doesn't have to be, I'm gonna beat the marketing drum. It could be, you know what? I'm gonna make sure every month I go to an event at my local bookstore mm-hmm <affirmative>. I'm gonna make sure I reach out to an, an author I wanna meet every week. Whatever you decide you want, want it to, it can, it can be anything.

Mike Michalowicz:

Well, I wanna lean into but time block. Time block. I would lean into that. I think the easiest and most effective way to build momentum for your book is immersing yourself in the community. Yeah. 'cause you're not self-promoting, you're just exposing yourself to the community. Yeah. And it's just natural over time that that will give you benefit. Yes.

AJ Harper:

And it will also help if you do have this other project you wanna do, it's gonna help you with that one as well. Um, I also think this one's huge, which is to tie the book that's out to the new project, and now you're doing tie it in some way, so you wanna work on something new. How does it connect to the thing you already published? So you're keeping both alive at the same time? Just

Mike Michalowicz:

Gimme some tactical strategies.

AJ Harper:

Well, I don't know what, um, I don't know what Kathy's new project is, but, um,

Mike Michalowicz:

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I think every time you're putting a promotion out, I'm writing a new book you say author of and you talk about your past book. Well, okay,

AJ Harper:

That's an obvious link, but I mean, in creation mode. Okay. I see. How do these things link? How does one serve the other? How can I build on that book? How, what's, what are the themes that I'm working on that are similar in sustainable ambition in Kathy's case and what I wanna do next mm-hmm <affirmative>. And to try and look for the links instead of seeing them as separate.

Mike Michalowicz:

I remember, this is not directly related, but it, it shocked me. I sent out a email, this is, I can't remember what book it was. Say this was Pumpkin Plans. This was way back saying, I love Emmy. And I talked nothing about any of, yeah. And, and I put a link to Emmy so you could check it out and so forth. And what I was so shocked to notice was the next day the Pumpkin Plan sold more books. I don't even know how people found it. I think I put the author of the Pumpkin Plan at the end. I don't think there was a link or anything by just talking about E-Myth. And more of my books sold. I'm sure more EMyth books sold, but more of my books sold. It's a weird phenomena. . And maybe it's just genuine contribution to the community. And the community gets it when you're being authentic and supporting the reader in some capacity, they wanna explore more about you because you're supporting the community.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. Yeah. I also think it's helpful to ask yourself, am I serving the same person with this new project? And hopefully you're serving the same group of people. And so again, those links become more evident. Um, and then I love it when people take the time to meet with readers. I think, yeah. We can feel disconnected from a project, from a book. 'cause we're not actually having conversations with our readers. And that can really juice you up and get you excited about continuing to, to keep it alive.

Mike Michalowicz:

So I'll give you my number one tip to defeating the blues is, is a couple steps. First, you have to know your love language. Mine is words of affirmation. Yours is quality time. Quality time. Yeah. Is quality's physical touch

AJ Harper:

Quality, time quality and physical touch.

Mike Michalowicz:

Okay. Okay. So once you know what your love language is, can you embed that somehow? And you have your sprint group. And so forth. You are finding ways to be immersed with your

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community. Yes. For me, I want to hear, um, words of affirmation. So what I do in every one of the books that we've done together is it says, please email me the author. With your commitment,

AJ Harper:

You put your love language into the book. Hundred percent. You would always get it. Yeah. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

I get dozens, dozens of emails every day. Um, mostly profit first, but there's been a, a title shift, the money habits starting to get more and more emails. And, uh, I just got one yesterday of someone committing to it. And it just, I can feel my heart just feel like Yes. And that crushes the blues. Yeah. Yeah. So building your love language in some way. I don't how you build.

AJ Harper:

I love that. I don't know, but that's

Mike Michalowicz:

Cool. Physical touch.

AJ Harper:

Well, let's not do it. Well,

Mike Michalowicz:

Physical touch doesn't mean, you know, <laugh> you, but you have, let's not do it, but you have to do it. So physical touch. Okay. In a business situation, is someone just patting you on the shoulder? Literal, yeah. So maybe it means you gotta get out to conferences where you can see

AJ Harper:

Oh, I see. It just means being in the room,

Mike Michalowicz:

Just being aware of it. Yeah.

AJ Harper:

But maybe not touching. No touching. Well,

Mike Michalowicz:

But because you're not physical touch, I'm saying someone's physical

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AJ Harper:

Touch. I'm saying you don't wanna go around touching readers.

Mike Michalowicz:

No, no. No <laugh>. No <laugh>.

AJ Harper:

Are you following me? No,

Mike Michalowicz:

I'm following you. Okay. I'm

AJ Harper:

Following you. I don't think you can build that into

Mike Michalowicz:

The but, but shaking hands or something that's appropriate. Okay. Okay. What else? To

AJ Harper:

Defeat the police. Um, and then I just, it's always helpful to just do some thinking about why are you hesitant to promote the book? Yeah. I if you dig a little deeper, it might be that it's not so much the new project, it's that you feel uncomfortable. Continuing to talk about something you made.

Mike Michalowicz:

I also wanted to acknowledge that if you're feeling the blues, that's normal. Like I think of postpartum depression, like that happens for a lot of people. Yes. There's a creation of a new life, and there is a, in that case, likely a hormonal shift and other things, but it's also a shift in lifestyle. Uh, my wife's, um, sister-in-law just had a baby, and their life, this is their first child, is fundamentally changed. Yeah. That's happens when you, once you have a book out there, you're fundamentally a different person. Yeah. And I think you have to adjust to this new part of your life.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. I mean, also it's, it's some, it's looking at it as less like, I, I wrote a book and published it, and more like, this is my life as an author. Correct. That's what you're saying. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

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Yeah. And so that happened for me with the Pumpkin Plan was the realization. I, I didn't write a book, the Toilet Paper Entrepreneur, I'm an author. And once I accepted that, I lit up. So I was experiencing the blues for a long period of time, because I was You sure were, yeah. I was in this identity crisis.

AJ Harper:

Especially because you got, you purchased so many copies of Toilet Paper Entrepreneur. Yeah. It did not go well. You ended up having to move out of the fulfillment center and store thousands of books in my house. In your house.

Mike Michalowicz:

20,000

AJ Harper:

<laugh>. And it wasn't at all what you thought. IM still, I still remember the day that I sat in the meeting in your bunton office and you said you weren't sure if the 25,000 would be enough. Yeah. And I was like, what are you doing? Yeah, yeah, yeah. And I remember saying, can you stop that order? And you looked at me like I had two heads.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. I was like, but those will sell in two days. Like, I gotta sustain it. No. The when, when it clear in my head, when it clicked my head was absurd, is when the printing house called me. And I said, yeah. And he said, we're printing 20,000 books or 25,000 books. And I said, what? What's up? And he said, the president of the company has got one of these books for themselves. Because if you're ordering this many, there must be one of the most remarkable books of all time. <laugh>.

AJ Harper:

What? I don't remember the story. Yeah. I thought you were gonna say they warned you and wanted to make sure that no warned

Mike Michalowicz:

Order was correct. No, they, they were grateful for all these orders. But, but

AJ Harper:

What did he say? But the book,

Mike Michalowicz:

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He said he, he's, he's reading the book because this must be one of the most remarkable books of all time <laugh>. And I was like, <laugh>, is that embarrassing? Oh my God. And I'm like,

AJ Harper:

But did you buy, were you like,

Mike Michalowicz:

Um, that that was when it clicked, I was like, oh, golly. Oh God. Oh, golly. And, and we talked about this ad nauseum. I'm so grateful I did that because I burned the books. I, I struggled to find copies. I It's sold, it's well sold out. It's gone. Like the book is gone. And the printed ones, it's

AJ Harper:

Not printed on demand now. Right?

Mike Michalowicz:

It's, it's, yeah. Moved to the POD, but I, I struggled to find original hard copy covers that book. I have one. Oh, thank you.

AJ Harper:

You can't have it.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. I, I'm struggling to find them.

AJ Harper:

But listen, I'm glad you didn't end up letting that take you over. So you became a story that I tell about this dude who didn't listen to me and then end up having to burn 25,000 books, which is They do, they do. Well turn 'em into

Mike Michalowicz:

Pulp. Yeah. So I think there's two options. I could have gone into the blues where I, I got angry, angry at myself. Yeah. And I said, I gotta fix this. And I start pushing the book like relentlessly. I think that's partly who I am. But I had to Yeah. This had, and I'm so grateful for that because I, I wonder if I would've abandoned authorship and Oh, what a shame that

AJ Harper:

Would For sure. I've had too many people do that. But for Kathy and people like Ka you are a person who you do, you get your, you want the next thing. Yeah. And I'm seeing you temper yourself right now and try and pace yourself a bit. What are you, what are you doing now? Like

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how are you balancing? I've gotta, you don't wanna have to support one book. You have to support a bunch of books. Yeah. Plus think about new projects. How, how are you doing that?

Mike Michalowicz:

So purpose has been everything. So my life's purpose is to eradicate entrepreneurial poverty. And so I asked myself that constantly. And how can I, with the books that exist, make that a reality? The money habit. Um, what's inspired is this constant stream of what else can we do? So it happened in this recording session. The first episode we did today is like, oh, that special edition book, there's an option there. Or, or, or we were talking about making a photo album. So I already have a message to Kelsey. Yeah. For an idea. Ideation. So there's greater idea.

AJ Harper:

'cause you're driven by purpose.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. What's interesting, this has happened in the last four weeks. Profit First, which is the lead book, if you will, is selling at highest levels. It has sold in probably about a year and a half now. Yay. Because we're taking actions to, to push the back list. Um, including for the first time Amazon ads that seem to be paying for themselves. Oh dang. We're using Alex's company, um, I can't remember his last name. Rahe? Strathe. Oh yeah. Yeah. Um, he's coming down as a guest speaker to authors for authors. You're gonna be speaking there. I would

AJ Harper:

Love to talk with him. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

And freaking Chris Guillebeau is gonna guest speak Oh, nice. On events for neurodivergent consumers.

AJ Harper:

Oh yeah. I had a whole chat with him at the last event where he told me all about that.

Mike Michalowicz:

That's inspired this. So he's gonna be speaking. Oh, I love it is, we got such a lineup. Do you know what you're gonna be speaking on? No. Good. Good, good. I can't wait to be surprised by it <laugh>, because last one, it was one of the most inspirational conversations we've had there.

AJ Harper:

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Thank you. Um, I wanna just, um, I really wanna get back to Kathy. Yeah. Just because again, I don't think she's having the blues. I think she's having this torn, I just realized the best book for people who are trying to figure that out is her book.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, what's Okay.

AJ Harper:

Sustainable Ambition.

Mike Michalowicz:

And isn't ironic. Not is she, did she read a book she needs to learn from?

AJ Harper:

It's all, it's always it. That's always it. Yeah. So it doesn't help you, Kathy, if you're listening, because you already know. But I actually think if there's an author wrestling with how do I balance supporting a previous book and working on a new project, actually that book will help you figure it out.

Mike Michalowicz:

<laugh>, I think Pressfield's work too is like the resistance.

AJ Harper:

Um, yeah. I mean, I think the thing about him is he starts a new project the next day. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

But

AJ Harper:

He's still marketing

Mike Michalowicz:

For sure. Yeah. And he embeds his books and his other books. He has a

AJ Harper:

New book coming out, but I'm sure he,

Mike Michalowicz:

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I wonder if you could, if you have a close enough contact with him, if you could just say, do you experience the blues? I would love to. Maybe he has a quote or two that we could share on these episodes if he's would be willing to respond to, uh, reach out for

AJ Harper:

You. I, I will try and email him. And I know people who know him better than I certainly do. Yeah. I do not know him as a friend, but I know people who do. Um,

Mike Michalowicz:

Because I, I wonder for, for someone with that degree of success, does he even experience the blues?

AJ Harper:

It's in his books. I mean, yeah, he's pretty vocal about all of his trials.

Mike Michalowicz:

His, to me, most of his stuff is when in the writing process and the resistance that presents itself. I don't, I didn't interpret it, but maybe he says it is, once the book is out there, the resistance that presents itself. Okay.

AJ Harper:

That's a great question. I will, I will email. Yeah. Any, it's a new book out by the way, Arcadia. Oh. And that is, um, I think it's gonna be out. This is May that we're recording this. I think it's out end of May. So by the time you hear this, it's out. Definitely get it.

Mike Michalowicz:

Any other thoughts on this subject?

AJ Harper:

No. I feel like we've talked about it and I hope I'm I'll. I'll, after this comes out, I'll ask Kathy if I answered her question. But I think, I also hope that everyone here realizes that there's a, it's normal to feel this push pull. And if you are experiencing something different, which is the blues, that don't let it be permanent, you know, don't let it kill something.

Mike Michalowicz:

For one of our upcoming episodes, I think next week we're gonna talk about it. John Briggs, he's an author with Simplified the page two, uh, publisher. He asked, he's writing a new book that is a rewrite slash modification of an existing book. You wrote the 3.3 rule and he's writing a new book called Take Breaks Work Better. He asked a great question, should I de-list my book, his

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prior book. And you and I had some dialogue about it. I had some thoughts. You had some thoughts, and we're gonna explore that.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. What do you do when the actually Yeah, what do you do? We, you know, I actually have another example of this too, is when in my publishing house, we did a special edition of a book that was a very big book for us. And we had ran into all these issues because we were gonna have to take down the other one, but the other one was so well reviewed and loved and it was a huge issue. Yeah. So this will be a good conversation.

Mike Michalowicz:

It'll be a conversation. The cost of comments or, or reviews. Like, I had one book, uh, Clockwork. The first edition had over a thousand reviews. And, um, they didn't delist it. They, which you can shift over to a new version of the book and transfer the reviews. We decided to keep the original book, but then the new book didn't get those reviews. So the new book has 200 plus reviews and the original has over a thousand by, they're not combined. So there's lots of those considerations. Um, anything else you got?

AJ Harper:

No. So we'll talk about that next instead of the thing I put down there at the bottom.

Mike Michalowicz:

Okay. Okay. That, that's perfect. That's perfect. Okay. Um, the last thing I wanna ask is just about your community, because the blues, if you experience them alone, can be pretty tragic. They can, if you navigate it with a community that loves and supports you Yes. It can be actually empowering. It's just a transition point. Yeah. So how do people get in your community?

AJ Harper:

AJ Harper.com Start with the sprints. It's probably the, the nuttiest amount of hours of sprints that there you can find 10 hours a week, man of writing every twice a day, Monday through Friday, writing with others a brief conversation and some q and a. And through that there's a lot of building of community. And Monday through Thursday, Laura Stone, my Dean of students, runs it and she's just a master at, um, bringing people together. Yeah. And keeping motivation up. Um, so she's quite good at that. And on Fridays I'm there, so if people wanna ask me questions and um, get my input on things, I'm there on Fridays, man. It's pretty easy.

Mike Michalowicz:

And it's interesting, there's a mix of different genres, authors in different stages at the start of the book, at the end of the book. Everywhere in between.

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AJ Harper:

Yeah. Every, every level published.

Mike Michalowicz:

Someone's been writing for five years and someone's been writing for five minutes. It's like literally everything. Yeah. Yeah. Everybody's welcome. Okay. Go to **AJ Harper**.com. Thank you. Alright, my friends. And, uh, for you, go to dw tb podcast.com. That's where you can download our free resources, tons of material that we have for you, plus whatever pod system you listen on. Would you do us a favor and hit that subscribe button that helps us get the word out there because the algorithm promotes it to like listeners like you, and also gives us a rating review. An honest one. We'd appreciate that. Don't forget this. Don't write that book. Write the Grace book. You can.