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Episode 147:

“Get Pre-orders Way Before Your Pub Date”

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:

Isn't that nice when someone says something?

AJ Harper:

Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

I've been, I've been at like a restaurant in a conversation and someone has like lipstick on their tooth or they have a bat in the cave and no one says anything. I'm like, that's the most uncomfortable thing in the world. So I'll always say something. I'll say, oh, you know, excuse me, you have something there just to acknowledge. That's, that's nice to show the egg on the face.

AJ Harper:

Yes. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

But here's what I wanted to acknowledge about you.

AJ Harper:

My Crocs?

Mike Michalowicz:

I wanna acknowledge the Crocs. Because, and I'm, I'm wearing flip-flops right now. I think footwear selection is absolutely critical. And -

AJ Harper:

Oh

Mike Michalowicz:

And the reason I know this, so I have what's called neuroma. Have you ever heard of this? No.

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Okay. So neuroma is a foot problem where usually with runners, so I'm a runner, where, um, if you take your hand and you look at your individual fingers like they are toes, between each finger is a nerve ending. So same thing on your feet. And when you run over time, the rubbing, uh, can cause calluses inside your tendons and starts pinching the nerves and it is ex - can be excruciating. It sounds horrible. Horrible. Uh, so I have that in both feet. So what's really important is most shoe wear pushes your feet together.

AJ Harper:

Yes.

Mike Michalowicz:

And it aggravates that. Yeah. Except for Crocs. They have a wide open and same thing. These are Croc flip-flops. Okay. The same thing. They're designed for a wider open, which is a natural foot. If you have a neuroma, at least for me, it's been massive relief. Now there's other things there's these orthotics that kind of lift the metatarsal, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. But footwear is critical.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. I mean, I'm usually wearing Chucks.

Mike Michalowicz:

I love Chucks. Yeah. High top. I assume Chuck high tops. Or do

AJ Harper:

You - No. Oh, look, love tops. But did you know now for us oldies - Yeah. That, you know, it's hard to wear Chucks when you're older because they're just flat and you, and your feet start to hurt. They have Chucks now that actually have the cushion.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, that's smart.

AJ Harper:

Uh-huh. Those are the best. So I

Mike Michalowicz:

Have classic Chucks, but I have, I put an insert into it toe properly.

AJ Harper:

But you can get, um, proper Chucks. It look, they're, you don't even know. That's great. Yes, it's great. That's great.

Mike Michalowicz:

Chucks are kind of a narrow shoe. Those neuroma guys know that

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AJ Harper:

And you can - That's my preferred footwear. Is a Chuck. I'll even wear it if I'm at an networking event or speaking or anything. I don't care. I'll wear my Chucks.

Mike Michalowicz:

There was a, we're gonna talk a little more about footwear. Michael Jordan, famous for the Air Jordan. Yes. It was made by Nike. There's actually a movie about the shoe. Like that's how famous the shoe

AJ Harper:

Is. Okay.

Mike Michalowicz:

He agreed to wear the Air Jordans, um, the retro ones during a certain game. So it was designed specifically for it. He says his feet by halftime were in such excruciating pain, but he wasn't taking the GD things off so that he could wear them. And then I think at halftime he, he took them off. Uh, live footwear looks good. Doesn't fit so well.

AJ Harper:

Are we on footwear podcasts now?

Mike Michalowicz:

I think so.

AJ Harper:

Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

<laugh> Now what we're gonna talk about today is, uh, how to get pre-orders well before pub date. What I admire about you is your footwear. Um, I'm joined in studio by **AJ Harper**. Uh, she is the author of Write A Must Read. And if you don't have that book yet, a copy now I say, I, I'm sure there's not an episode at least in recent years.

AJ Harper:

I think you're on a streak. Yeah. You're on a streak of mentioning it every single episode.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. And it's time for me to revisit it. I, I read the book, the, no, the book reading it, reading it. Okay. No, no. We're not, not pitching it.

AJ Harper:

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And again. And again.

Mike Michalowicz:

Um, I've probably read it three times now. I, I wanna read it again right before I start writing. That's the optimal time, I think, but, but maybe, maybe reading it when I'm not writing, I'll absorb more.

AJ Harper:

I'm thinking about doing a workbook.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, that's, that would be huge, AJ.

AJ Harper:

I mean, I tell my people to do it. I just haven't felt the need. But I've refined some things. Like for example, I've refined how do you think about chapter one? So I, I think about it the exact same way, but I communicate it differently now. And I think I communicate it better now. I would love that. I have a five point, um, five point structure. Okay. Or chapter one that's ki - it's in the book, but it's not, I don't articulate it the way I need. I've been kind of testing it for a while. So there's pro - there's some things I think that I could do to kind of - I would love that. Update. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

'Cause I think of some of the core tenants of your book, like Core Message, for example.

AJ Harper:

That takes some, some - Iterations,

Mike Michalowicz:

Right?

AJ Harper:

Yeah. And, and you do need a person. I mean, I'm not gonna pretend like you're gonna nail core message. Yeah. People consistently get the same, have the same issues with core message. They bring them to me because a little known fact is you could actually bring your core message to me in, if you were in my sprint community and say, "Can I run this by you?" And I'll tell you. Huh. I know. It's, it's so silly not to be in there, but, um, most people kind of still get it wrong.

Mike Michalowicz:

So in the sprint community, you have a little time to have some dialogue

AJ Harper:

Too? Briefly, yeah. Okay. I'm there on Fridays. People, I can, I always know when that my, my

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Q&As last long, my time to, to chat lasts longer than it does the re - you know, other times during the week. Yeah, okay. Because I think people are, they know I'm there Fridays.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah, and they queued up their questions - Yeah. From the week. That's awesome. So you can go to AJHarper.com.

AJ Harper:

But, but I think that, um, I still could, even though you do need some feedback, get people through a process of iteration in a workbook.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah, I agree. Yeah. I agree. Yeah. Uh, I want you to thank our sponsor, which is Simplify that's the imprint with page two. As you pointed out, they're a non-paying sponsor. It's simply a kind gesture.

AJ Harper:

I like to say it because I, for me, it's important because I actually recommend them to so many of my students. Yeah, yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

You want to show

AJ Harper:

The. And I send people there all the time and I do not, I am not compensated for that. I'm not compensated for talking lovingly about them, you know?

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. I wonder if the word's not sponsored, but the, they recognize the show. So, um, Adayla was talking, I think with Trina and just so we, so Jesse, Trina, Leslie, um, the team there listens to the show with some frequency and they say they love it. Yeah. We, we wanna acknowledge that.

AJ Harper:

Why wouldn't they love it? We're just like a, we're listening.

Mike Michalowicz:

We're always promoting them.

AJ Harper:

We're like a fan club.

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Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. It's, yeah. So a dual admiration and so maybe they're not sponsored. They're just acknowledging. We can

AJ Harper:

Say sponsor. Yeah, okay. We can

Mike Michalowicz:

Say - But there's an implied -

AJ Harper:

Page two. Simplified is our unpaid sponsor of this episode. Oh,

Mike Michalowicz:

Unpaid sponsor. Yeah. Let's, uh, let's, let's

AJ Harper:

Add it. Let's do that. It's all weird.

Mike Michalowicz:

The unpaid friendly sponsor. Yep. Okay. So today we're gonna talk about -

AJ Harper:

We could just call them our BFF. <laugh>

Mike Michalowicz:

Today we're gonna talk about... <laugh> That's good. Pre-orders getting way before your pub day. What inspired this episode?

AJ Harper:

Uh, Natalie, who is the author of The Quest for Truth, which is coming out this fall. She asked how do you get them way in advance? So I think I wrote on the outline W-A-Y-Y-Y-Y-Y. Way -

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah, you did actually.

AJ Harper:

Maybe that needed to be W-A-A-A-A-Y-Y-Y. Regardless, super freaking early. Yeah. And so she wanted to, some strategies for that to just talk that out. Um, so let's, I th - I thought we, we've done pre-orders. We had a whole pre-order debate.

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Mike Michalowicz:

We

AJ Harper:

Did. Um, that's an earlier episode. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

Which, which actually transformed the way I promoted the money habit and resulted in far more book sales.

AJ Harper:

Se- selfishly speaking. Yeah. I'm so glad. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

Well, I'm glad you won the debate.

AJ Harper:

'Cause that does benefit me, by the way. So...

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah, it benefits all of us. Yes. Um, so Natalie's book, The Quest for Truth, is that a fiction or Non-fiction book?

AJ Harper:

Nonfiction.

Mike Michalowicz:

Okay. Yeah. Does that change your vantage point on pre-orders?

AJ Harper:

No.

Mike Michalowicz:

Any, any, any genre?

AJ Harper:

Yes.

Mike Michalowicz:

Okay.

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AJ Harper:

Sell it. Get it. Sell it now. Yes. I'm also, uh, there's a number of reasons, but I wish people would remember that if you are talking about your book, if somebody else is talking about your book, and someone wants to remember it, they don't just wanna write it down. They would like to purchase it. Mm. You know what I'm saying? I agree. I agree. So you are gonna lose a sale. No one's gonna remember.

Mike Michalowicz:

So when is way early in your opinion?

AJ Harper:

So I am thinking of it... I think you should start pre-orders as soon as you get, at a minimum, as soon as you have a pre-order link. Meaning a link to purchase through major retailers. Okay. But let's... I crafted this episode so it's even before you have a pre-order link. I like

Mike Michalowicz:

That.

AJ Harper:

Because I think that's what Natalie meant was how am I supposed to get these orders before I even have a way for people to just click a link? Okay. And there are ways.

Mike Michalowicz:

It's like bookshop.org, uh, at least their pages are very clean if, if I recall this properly and there'll be a button that says pre-order. Yeah. Um, the advantage of having that pre-order link is there's usually a book cover displayed. Sometimes I've seen people not have a book cover. So there's some SEO value, I think, that's being acquired at that point. And you're saying you can do this even prior to that stuff happening.

AJ Harper:

So if you think about that, that's the general public clicking on these - Yes. Different, their preferred retailer. That's right. It also syncs up with indie booksellers. So if it's available at bookshop.org, or it also syncs up with Barnes & Noble, the, the in - the in - person stores. But, um, you c - you can go in and or - pre-order in person too. Um, little known fact, you can also go to... Most indie bookstores have their own retail system and most of them are using bookshop.org for their retail system. But if you go to your indie bookstore in your neighborhood, you don't have to walk in, although I encourage you to, because you wanna get to know the owner. Yeah, sure. Yeah. But you can if for, if for convenience, go to their website and order it there and then when you, you can also choose in - store pickup and then talk to the owner if you want.

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AJ Harper:

Yeah. Um, but I'm just saying, once you have that pre-order link, it's everywhere. Um, you can, you can purchase from wherever you like. But before that, you still have an opportunity to get pre-orders, especially bulk orders, um, privately if you want, or you can do a campaign for it before there's any retail link. Okay.

Mike Michalowicz:

So I have a question on how early is way early, but before I ask you that, I gotta give you a reveal you probably don't know about. What? Do you know Seth Norris? He's a CPA for authors. Um, I don't think he's written any books. I don't

AJ Harper:

Think I know him.

Mike Michalowicz:

'Cause he's part of the Profit First Professionals community. And one thing we encourage accountants and bookkeepers to do once they're certified in Profit First is to serve another community, niche specialization. His wife's an author. So he's like, "I, I love what she's doing. I see the impact she's having, so I'm gonna start serving." He is now working with some of the marquee authors on this planet. Oh,

AJ Harper:

Interesting.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. As a CPA. He's been doing this for multiple years. And there are specific strategies specific to authors that you can take advantage of. He opened a bookstore last week.

AJ Harper:

He did? Yeah. Where?

Mike Michalowicz:

Uh, in Texas. I don't remember the... He said it's a small town. Um, and one thing he wants to do is feature all the authors that he's serving as a CPA.

AJ Harper:

How cool is that? Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

And these... So here's what's interesting too, and it's a little bit shameful, uh, of, of authors. He goes, the local authors all come to his door and say, "I should be represented here. Your

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bookstore should carry me because I'm a local person and my book is great. And, uh, my book is gonna, you know, has an MSRP of 24.95. You gotta pay me 23 bucks." And he's like, "Yourself popped, right?" And he's like, "I, I love the charitable aspect here, but I can't do it. " Conversely, these marquee authors, and again, I, I can't share their names. Uh, he's, uh, he's made me aware of a few because they gave permission, um, are willing to donate their books. So imagine, you know, pick a super famous book.

AJ Harper:

Donate.

Mike Michalowicz:

Donate. Donate. I, I'll donate.

AJ Harper:

To his bookstore? Yeah. Why, why?

Mike Michalowicz:

Because they love him.

AJ Harper:

But why wouldn't they just do the standard bookstore deal like 45%?

Mike Michalowicz:

They could ultimately. But to get him start, he's opening a bookstore.

AJ Harper:

Oh, just to, oh, to help him get it off the ground. Yeah. Seth

Mike Michalowicz:

Has been so, so extraordinary. I understand. I said, Seth, let, let me send you hundred copies of Profit First. Let me send you, ideally, the Money Habit. I'll send you a thousand copies of The Money Habit because, uh, I can do that more, much more easily. He's like, "You would be willing to do that? " I'm like, "Yeah, dude. To support you. And selfishly, when a new bookstore opens, it's gonna get in the local press and stuff. I want my book, you know, front and center then." So he's reaching out these authors. So I just thought it was interesting. It's the established authors who he is charging a lot of money to do his great services and they are great who are willing to do something extraordinary for him. And it's, it's the, the small author who's struggling, who's putting these massive expectations on him.

Mike Michalowicz:

It's just kind of this weird thing. That's a little bit of a divergence. So I just want to acknowledge Seth Norris is the accountant for - Interesting. For authors. And he got so into he opened a bookstore. The question is, you can use bookstores and other ve- vehicles to get these pre-orders

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prior to the pre-order link. When, when is -

AJ Harper:

Well, no. No. You'd have to have a really good relationship. Like, no. Okay. No, no. They - So you can't

Mike Michalowicz:

Do it that

AJ Harper:

Way. Okay. So you could, if you had, say, a really good friend like Seth Norris - Yeah, okay. Who's willing, willing to work with you on that. Okay. But if, but a typical bookstore needs your book to be in the system where they can order it from the distributor. Okay. So I'm talking about -

Mike Michalowicz:

Managing yourself.

AJ Harper:

Maybe you're gonna manage it yourself, collect the money yourself, and then it will be delivered later on pub date.

Mike Michalowicz:

So when the way, way, way too early. Like, if I

AJ Harper:

Just - I'm talking way before even pre-order link. So that would be a year out maybe because if you're with trad - if you have trade distribution, your pre-order link could be up six, eight, nine months in advance.

Mike Michalowicz:

I'm trying to figure out though, like, when is it too premature? We're going way early, but if I'm just thinking of a book idea, I probably shouldn't do... I don't even know what the title is or the concept, that's way -

AJ Harper:

Oh, are you talking about where in your process?

Mike Michalowicz:

Correct.

AJ Harper:

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Hmm. I think you have to know that it's going to be a book and it's going to get done.

Mike Michalowicz:

Do you have to know the concept of the book even? Well,

AJ Harper:

Yes. You have to know the fundamentals. You should ideally have a cover. Most people don't want to buy something that they can't see. You know, you, people don't really understand what it takes to get a book done. Yeah. And it doesn't seem real to them until they can hold it, see it. They know, is that a book? What do you mean? What are you doing? Okay. So yeah, I think you need to have that some things on block. Okay. Title, cover, fundamentals. I would also love for you to have, be so far along in the process that, you know, yes, I'm finishing this. Yes, this is the book I'm writing. Yeah. You know, you don't want to be in the development phase when you're, maybe it's gonna change a lot.

Mike Michalowicz:

I think that presupposes that you also have community. And I think that's a critical part. Like, you gotta have some people that are already engaged, or maybe not.

AJ Harper:

I think you could, but I think you could also identify people who care about the same thing you care about. Mm. Solve the problem you're trying to solve with the book that serve the same people you're trying to serve through those readers. You could reach out to them as long as you, but you will need something. It's harder for people who don't know you to understand what you're talking about if you don't have something they can hold. Okay. So you can make up your own galleys. It's not that difficult. Okay. Um, this is really critical because think about this.

AJ Harper:

Your, this is one of the, one of the things that I teach people in my membership program and my, and in my workshops to understand what is happening behind the scenes if you're a front list author and you have trade distribution whether through a top tier hybrid or a traditional publisher. What the decision making that's happening is this, is this, does this book have legs? What does the first print run? How are we making these choices? Most authors have no idea what's happening behind the scenes when people are making these decisions and they don't know that they can influence it. And even if they figure that out, it's probably too late. So if you're doing a bunch of pre-orders super early and you're getting bulk sales and other things, that's contributing to then when the sales team comes back and says, "Okay, we recommend you, you, we're gonna do a 4,000 print run.

AJ Harper:

We're gonna do a 20,00 print run." It depends on how much effort you've actually put in, in that, in those early days. And most authors are, don't even have a concept that they need to be doing it. In fact, they're mostly focused on the production of the book and it's hard for them to think,

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"Wait, I'm supposed to be... I, I need to finish my proofread. I need to finish my copy edit. I'm doing my audio book. How can I sell this? " You have to, you have to sell it.

Mike Michalowicz:

I've seen, I can't think of a specific name, but I've, it's been in the ethos of authorship that someone received pre-orders before the book was even written, before the cover was designed. But there was a value exchange even back then. So they said, "I'm gonna be writing the book and if you pre-order it now, you're gonna get behind the scenes content." Yeah.

AJ Harper:

You can do that. That's, and people do that with Kickstarter all the time.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh yeah, that's a great point. Yeah. What, is that the platform you would use to get pre-orders if this is before it's gonna be in retail markets?

AJ Harper:

You could. I think you could just have your own buy link. It doesn't have to -

Mike Michalowicz:

Have you seen anyone do it on Kickstarter?

AJ Harper:

Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

And, okay. Yeah. I remember Seth Godin famously used Kickstarter for a book launcher too.

AJ Harper:

Kickstarters, people often use it all the time. It's very popular in also the fiction space. Okay.

Mike Michalowicz:

But I think there has to be a value exchange. What, what would you see? Is that true? Meaning someone has to receive, I should say, immediate value of some sort when making a Quarter.

AJ Harper:

No. I don't think people expect immediate value on Kickstarter.

Mike Michalowicz:

Really?

AJ Harper:

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No, they don't.

Mike Michalowicz:

So they're willing to - They're gonna

AJ Harper:

Wait.

Mike Michalowicz:

Be satiated maybe a year later or two.

AJ Harper:

You could. You could give them immediate value. Maybe you have checklists or tools or exercises or, or something else that's not another intellectual property product. Um, yes, you could give them behind the scenes of, of your process. Sure, you can do all that. There's a lot of things you can do, but I do believe that the culture of Kickstarter is you're gonna wait until it ships. Okay.

Mike Michalowicz:

But do you have to then give additional value over ordering it when it's publicly available? So that's

AJ Harper:

The deal is you - Okay. There's something cool you get because you participated in the Kickstarter. And for the Kickstarter, you do need community. Versus say if you were gonna reach out for bulk buys. Okay. I

Mike Michalowicz:

Th, so it's funny. I, because I don't know Kickstarter that well. I though Kickstarter brings community.

AJ Harper:

It does, but you still have to do your own campaign. It's like its own campaign. I see.

Mike Michalowicz:

So you still have to spark it in some - Yeah.

AJ Harper:

Okay. You, you still have to do it.

Mike Michalowicz:

Okay. That makes sense. Um, is there other platforms besides Kickstarters? I

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AJ Harper:

Mean, I've, I've participated in Kickstarters and I waited -

Mike Michalowicz:

Like for, for books? For books? Yeah. Oh, okay. In, in those cases, do you recall, did they offer additional value or immediate value in some way to inspire that? No. Oh, that's fascinating.

AJ Harper:

No. Regular updates and by regular I mean probably quarterly. Okay.

Mike Michalowicz:

Well that, that is actually a form of value too. There's communication.

AJ Harper:

It's just an email. Here's what's going on. <laugh> It's, I'm- I'm still writing. It's still happening. Yeah. Listening to,

Mike Michalowicz:

Uh, listening to Don' Write Book and discovered I'm doing this completely wrong.

AJ Harper:

There's this graphic no- novel series called Check Please, Okay. About a fictional hockey, college hockey team. And, um, it's ve - it became very popular. And she did the, all of it on Kickstarter. So it's graphic novels. So she's, you know, this is a beautiful multicolor book, right? But she's, that's expensive to print. So she did Kickstarters for all of them and she blew it out. And then she had all these bonuses, um, and then different tiers, which is what happens on Kickstarter. So you can actually make even way more money, um, not just for the book.

Mike Michalowicz:

I, I'm just, I'm enamored by this Check, Please. Uh-huh. I gotta say why. Um, the Profit First Professional, um, licensee for Australia, it's Katie, uh, Marshall Crimsel or Katie Krimsel Marshall. Her daughter read an, a hockey book, a fiction and fell in love with hockey as a result. Uh-huh. So much so that they've been flying to the US to watch the New Jersey Devils play. And I'm like, "I gotta now call back Katie and see if it was check please that triggered this whole thing."

AJ Harper:

There's a lot of hockey books going around. Yeah.

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Mike Michalowicz:

It's like, yeah. That's the big in thing.

AJ Harper:

The next time they come, have them go see because, um, we have the, um, the, um, hockey league that is the women's team. Most of the players that won the -

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, the Olympics?

AJ Harper:

Olympics. Um, there's, um, a team out here on the East Coast. Oh, I love you. I think there's only eight teams, but one of them is out here. So the next time they come - Oh. See if you can get her to go to that.

Mike Michalowicz:

That would be great.

AJ Harper:

Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

Um, i- is there -

AJ Harper:

I think they're called The Sirens.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh. I could be wrong. The mythical story of the Siren? Like who w- who sings you in to the box? That I,

AJ Harper:

That I don't know.

Mike Michalowicz:

Um, so when it comes to platforms, we talked about Kickstarter. Um, can an author promote just through their own platform? Maybe they have a Shopify site for themselves.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. I mean, you could do... It could literally be a PayPal link. Like, we don't have to make it that complicated. Okay. Shopify, yes. Book funnel's another way to do it. There's a lot of

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options. Okay. Don't let technology or platforms keep you from taking orders.

Mike Michalowicz:

What would you communicate to your audience for a way early pre-order?

AJ Harper:

So it depends. If you're going for bulk orders, then you're having these conversations. I just got a text from one of my authors, Roseann Copana Hodge, and she's trying to sell the heck and she's doing what I told her. She texted me last night. I just got two orders for 500 each.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, hot dog. So

AJ Harper:

She keeps texting me every time. I just got one for a thousand, she told me.

Mike Michalowicz:

Last week. This is, uh, this is all pre-order she's doing right? It's

AJ Harper:

For her book is The Dysregulated Kid. Okay. And, um - When's that

Mike Michalowicz:

Book coming out? Do you know?

AJ Harper:

It's this fall. Oh, this fall. And it's a page two

Mike Michalowicz:

Title. Okay. So as of this recording date, we're still five to six months away

AJ Harper:

Perhaps. Yeah. So she's, she's the foremost authority on this.

Mike Michalowicz:

Okay. I don't know what that- That's okay. Something dropped. That's okay.

AJ Harper:

She's the foremost authority and the book this is Dysregulated Kid - Kit is amazing. And, um, she's also published by Page two. Oh, great. And she's going for it. She's just, you know... And I

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told her, pre-orders, pre-orders, pre-orders, pre-orders, pre-orders. Yeah. So she's busting right now.

Mike Michalowicz:

And so a pre-order in bulk of 500. So -

AJ Harper:

That's different situation. Those are the bulk pre-orders. Those are relationships, but they still matter.

Mike Michalowicz:

Of course they matter, yeah.

AJ Harper:

You know, because even if you're, you know, you've, you've gotta think about it as how am I gonna my pre-orders for one-off readers? Yeah. And how am I gonna do my pre-orders for bulk sales? And those are different situations.

Mike Michalowicz:

Well, let's talk about the individual then. Um, if I wanna get way order, way early pre-orders for individuals, how do I handle that? I

AJ Harper:

Would do it from your own store. Okay. Or a Kickstarter. Okay. Um, and then you're basically collecting the money and then later you're gonna have to decide how you're distributing it. Okay. So, you know, you can go, you can go purchase it through retailers if you want. You can... But what my advice was, if you know, oh, I collected 1,000 pre-orders - Yeah. Or 500 pre-orders from individuals, then, um, you know that you can add that to your print run. There, there's a benefit to this, by the way, because then, oh, I'm adding up these bulk sales. I'm adding up these indie sales and now I'm gonna get a better deal on my print run. Mm. Um, this is if you're hybrid or self-published. If you're traditionally published, they're just gonna add the print run. I mean, they're just gonna be the ones doing it. So - Um, but if it's individual sales and you have a traditional deal - Yes.

AJ Harper:

You are going to have to figure out how to get those shipped. So my suggestion would be to take your offer from the, from the traditional publisher where you get a percentage off. You can buy the books yourself from your publisher. It's usually what, like 40, 50% somewhere in there? With my experience, yeah. So you just need to do the maths to make sure that you're not gonna go in the red on it. Mm-hmm. I wouldn't charge a discounted rate. Mm-hmm. Because, but maybe you wouldn't charge shipping then or something to make up the difference.

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Mike Michalowicz:

We may, I mean, this sounds absurdly, uh, niche. We may wanna do an episode on shipping books. Uh, it's so mismanaged when

AJ Harper:

You - It's so mismanaged and people lose so much money on it.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. So there's a thing called media mail that we use. We have this little shipping department and there's certain, they're called Jiffy Ridge shipper mailers. And you can get them at Uline and we use them. And we test it by dropping books from, uh, about eight feet high. Hold them, you know, as high as you can, drop them on the corners and then open up and make sure that the books weren't damaged in the corners and they weren't.

AJ Harper:

Oh, cool. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. We test them. But

AJ Harper:

You can't put a bunch of stuff in there if it's media mail. 100%.

Mike Michalowicz:

That's why I think we should do a whole thing. You, you're prohibited from doing that and they scan it. So I think we should do an episode on just how to ship

AJ Harper:

Books. The other thing is, the reason I was bugging Roseanne about the, the bulk orders is I was like, I want you to secure the bulk orders before the, before you have to give addresses to the printer.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh yeah, because -

AJ Harper:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. If you can give addresses for all the bulk orders, then you're skipping that middle per- person and you're not paying \$1.50 per book - Yeah. That the fulfillment house charges.

Mike Michalowicz:

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Yeah, that's a great point.

AJ Harper:

This is a huge amount of money. That's a great point. So instead, the printer is sending a bunch to you, a bunch to these bulk orders, and then to the fulfillment house. You're saving a fortune.

Mike Michalowicz:

One of our authors with the simplified imprint at page two is Brian Harriet. His book is called Time Freedom. Back, I would say in January, February of this year, uh, he started doing way early pre-orders because his book's not coming out until -

AJ Harper:

He's one of my students too.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, that's right. Oh, yes. He did his first keynote to our audience last week.

AJ Harper:

Oh, good.

Mike Michalowicz:

Um, and so, and we pre-order books, by the way. So one thing he did that I thought was fascinating, I'm curious on your insight on this, is he recorded the audiobook.

AJ Harper:

Mm-hmm. We've talked about that on this before.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, we did? Okay. Yeah, he's - But he did it way early because most audiobooks are read maybe two months before the book release. He did it like nine months before or six months before.

AJ Harper:

Yeah, I think that's great. And he's giving the audiobook to people, um - Uh, immediately. Who purchased the print book?

Mike Michalowicz:

Immediate value. Yeah. You get the audiobook. Now the risk, I'm thinking with an audiobook is he may still make edits to the book. I don't know.

AJ Harper:

He's done. It's a fall title.

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Mike Michalowicz:

With the money habit, I was, we're still making edits like, uh, I think a month or two before. We're still on past pages a month or two before print, before it went to the printer. And so there was minor changes.

AJ Harper:

Yeah, but it goes to the printer months before release and his book comes out in the fall.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. But it, just running the numbers here, I think it goes to the printer, at least with the money habit, it was about two months prior to release was when our book went to print. Mm-mm. For eight weeks before? Oh, for sure.

AJ Harper:

No, we were done with pass pages in the summer.

Mike Michalowicz:

But it went, it went to print for sure two months prior to print because there were still edits, errors I found when I was doing the audio. I was able to call it in. They made a couple checks and then a couple were too late. We were right on the fringe, because we did the recording of the audio two months ago.

AJ Harper:

But we were done with our work though in the summer. Understood.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. I'm just saying there's still changes that -

AJ Harper:

Whatever. Yeah. It's a little error here there.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah, that's the risky run. Yeah. So what I want to share as an insight to overcome that is in all my books I riff anyway. So I start the book saying this is an unbridged reading of the book with bonus content throughout. And so then an error kind of becomes bonus content. And the nice thing about audio is you can upload it, um, after the audio is produced and published. So you can upload it and, and change it. So you can, if you catch an error, you can correct

AJ Harper:

It after the fact. I wanna say a couple things. Um, Brian Harriet and Scott Todd and John Briggs, these are all alums of my workshop and they are all publishing - Around the same time. Well,

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Scott, well, no, Scott's not doing this fall. He's in 27, right? That,

Mike Michalowicz:

That's correct.

AJ Harper:

But John and Brian -

Mike Michalowicz:

Exact same day in September. I think it's September

AJ Harper:

17th. So this episode is very, gonna air very close to that. Oh, get their books. So I wanna encourage everybody to get their books, but I also wanna just do a shout out because they're also gonna be up for Monday night reading. So if you go to ajharper.com or you go to my LinkedIn, um, you can go see them read from these books that we're talking about right now because they'll be up for Monday night reading in the fall.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. So, um, John's book is Take Breaks Work Better. Brian's book is Time Freedom. Uh, what I love about tracking authors like them, any author also is I learn ways to market my own book. So I've learned some stuff in their process that I'm not gonna deploy in, in my next book. Yeah. Or subsequent. 'Cause once a book is out, you still market it too. So, okay. So what do you do when all these orders come in? What do you do with the money? So now, say you're collecting it yourself. Do you have a way to manage the cash?

AJ Harper:

Well, I personally would keep it in an escrow account in a separate account. Yeah. So that you're not touching it. Yeah. And that you're, you're using it to actually ship the books and manage all of that. That's

Mike Michalowicz:

Exactly what we do. Yeah. So we

AJ Harper:

Use the - So yeah, tell us how you do it.

Mike Michalowicz:

So we use the private first principle. We set up an account called book orders. And so we did way early pre-orders for the money habit and traditional... Pre-orders. Um, we had about \$100,000 of cash reserved. The power of that is we printed the statement. And we sent it to the publisher and said, "Here's demand coming in." They're like, "Whoa, no one's ever done that before." So page two was blown away. Yes. 'Cause it wasn't just a theory, "Oh, we think we'll

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move an additional, you know, 5,000 books this way," or whatever it was. We showed the cash and they're like, "Oh, this is real." And then the book order print demand went up.

AJ Harper:

Exactly.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. So, so an, so an escrow, it really wasn't an escrow account, it was just a standalone account. Yeah. It is important, but print the statements. You also have the discipline of not stealing from yourself. Yes. So we have a technique, uh, because even I, the guy who wrote this book on, on this process steals from himself. I, I, I break my own rules is we have for certain bank accounts with high dollars in it, Kelsey, our president will have the password or the username and I'll have the password. So it takes two people to access it. Yeah. Yeah. And in your weakest moment - Yeah. The stuff we do, right? So prevent yourself from

AJ Harper:

It. Yeah, especially when you have to deliver like that. Yeah. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. Have you ever seen any fails with these way too early pre-orders? No, I'm not even -

AJ Harper:

Or, or can you theorize them? They may have happened, but no. I think most people don't do it, to be honest. Like I just, I - Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

Very few do it.

AJ Harper:

It, I don't know.

Mike Michalowicz:

I think a fail would be not delivering. I mean, obviously you take people's money and not deliver. That's a big fail. That's actually illegal.

AJ Harper:

That's a huge fail. Yeah. Yeah, that's

Mike Michalowicz:

A big deal. I'm sure that's happened.

AJ Harper:

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Yes. I can't, I can't, I don't know of anyone, but I'm sure it has.

Mike Michalowicz:

I think a mistake I've made too is when people pre-order the book and I've learned from this and I promise certain things for that pre-order, and then when the launch day comes out, I have additional promises. The people pre-ordered, if they don't get those additional promises, feel they got jipped.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. So you, so you have to do it so that everybody from the beginning gets everything. Cu

Mike Michalowicz:

Cumulatively, yeah. Yes. And I didn't do that. And people start gett upset. Why already ordered the book a year ago? Why am I not also getting this and that? Correct. 'Cause I'm not ordering it. Correct. What I was trying to inspire is, thanks for the pre-order, you got bonuses. Now there's another opportunity to get more bonuses by buying yet another book.

AJ Harper:

It just makes them angry.

Mike Michalowicz:

It frustrated people like

AJ Harper:

Crazy. But can I just say, I'm just such a frugal person. Yeah. We are underestimating the impact of let's say you got 10,000 pre-orders. Yeah. Even if most of them were bulk. Yeah. Then you also know you wanna get say another 5,000 copies to sell in the f - whatever, first six months, whatever your deal is. Maybe it's less, maybe it's more. Now you have a print run of 15,000, not a print run of 5,000. That's right. The, now the cost for a book is so dramatically different. It could be the difference between say \$3 a book to a dollar a book.

Mike Michalowicz:

It's

AJ Harper:

True. And now do the math. Uh, let's say it is. Let's say you save \$2 a book. You're saving \$30,000. So there's other, main reason is obviously because maybe you wanna get attention of your publisher so that they'll, they will light a fire under them and they'll see you're serious. Maybe you're trying to get on a list. Who knows what you're trying to do? But let's not sleep on the fact - Yeah. That you will be saving money per, per unit, which is - That is. That's how I think because I was a - Such a good point. I was a publisher. Such

Mike Michalowicz:

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A good point.

AJ Harper:

So I'm like, how can we get jack up this number that make the print rump bigger that's not gonna be sitting in a warehouse because you already accounted for most of them? And then this other number that you're gonna use for the next six months benefits because that's the unit price is so much lower.

Mike Michalowicz:

There's a big cost with warehousing books that people don't think about. If you print out a lot of books and save the cost in printing and it just sits there, you're getting whacked every month for taking space. So I gotta do a shout out. My brother-in-law who lives in Maui, um, works for a print shop. His name is Dylan Sanders and he, um, works one of these Heidelberg machines. He took me for a tour of the facility. It was fascinating. And he, he is the lead print manager. He knows how to work these machines, all the articulate components, and it is complex. And I asked him, I said, "Where is the cost in all this stuff? Is it the ink? Is it the - Binding. Yeah, like what is it? " He goes, "It's the setup, Mike. The, the, the, the skill is required to set this up." Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz:

And so that's why it drops, uh, like off of a cliff in pricing when you do high volume. Mm-hmm. Because the setup's done. And he goes, "Every time we gotta change a run, it's a whole redo of the whole line." "It's a pain in the arts." Yep. I think now I finally get it. Yeah. So, so it truly is that way. I don't know the cost for us printing the money habit, but it, we printed f - between 15 and 20,000, um, for the first run. And, um, the price per book was, it was all, you know, quote negligible. And you gotta be careful about saying that because every dollar is enough.

AJ Harper:

Every dollar matters, but -

Mike Michalowicz:

It was negligible. It then - Yeah. It then empowers you too. Now you have books that you can give away and that's why with Seth Norris, I wanna ship him. You know, thousand was, that's being a little bit e- exaggerating, but send him a large volume of books because it costs me nothing.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. A few, can I give a few other tips too - Yeah. About the shipping thing? Yeah. So let's say, uh, uh, for example, I'm still talking about Roseann, but she said, "How many books should I have sent to, sent to my house?" I said, "Well, figure out how many you're gonna need if you're gonna do giveaways, um, incentives, if you're gonna do, you want to bring some to speaking engagements and you don't have that organized prior, whatever." Um, if you, if you can store them in your house, then maybe grab a couple thousand books - mm-hmm. To put in your house. But have it delivered to a commercial location. So if you don't have a commercial location, get a

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buddy to accept it because the cost of having 2,000 books on a, what's it called? Pallet. Pallet come to your house is significantly more than if it was to a commercial location.

Mike Michalowicz:

Y - that's absolutely true.

AJ Harper:

So get a buddy - Yeah. Who's, who has a shop or a whatever. Any kind of commercial anything. And a lot of people do. And just have it delivered there and then throw it in the back of your truck.

Mike Michalowicz:

And make sure it's climate controlled. That's the biggest issue. So I heard of a story where someone put it into one of these, like, you see these storage places all on the highway. You know, quickie store or whatever. Oh,

AJ Harper:

Just like a st - like a storage faci - Storage unit. A warehouse. Everybody's little unit. Yeah, yeah. Has, like, the big garage door. Garage thing.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. Yeah. Wasn't climate controlled.

AJ Harper:

Oh, so it got moldy.

Mike Michalowicz:

It had to dispose all the books, of the books.

AJ Harper:

Oh my God, tragic.

Mike Michalowicz:

Isn't that absolutely tragic? So be very careful that's climate controlled. Uh, but a lot of people have a lot of space. And the nice thing about books is, yeah, they can come on pallets, but usually they're boxed in quantities, depends on the size of the book, of 10 to maybe 50 books in a box, depends on your, you know -

AJ Harper:

My God, that would be a heavy box.

Mike Michalowicz:

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Oh, that, I had one, toilet paper entrepreneur, I remember distinctly, 40 pounds per, 41 pounds per box. So each book was about a pound, a little bit shy. There was 40 books in there. I had the pallet delivered to my house because

AJ Harper:

I had to - I know, and you had to

Mike Michalowicz:

Load them all. All night. And, like, inside crying, um, my, I remember my knees, the pain after carrying all these, all day up and down the steps. I bring it down in a flight of steps. It had a whole room packed with them. My, I have a picture. It came up just ironically yesterday in my little kind of scrolling picture thing - mm-hmm. Of my son, Jake, who made, like, a king's throne out of these boxes. He's sitting on it. <laugh> Yeah. But, um, it was a climate controlled house and we had air conditioning running. All those books were good, even though it took me years to get through that supply - Yeah. Of an over order.

AJ Harper:

So it's just, I th - you need, you need, you need to just have, give this some though, is what I'm saying. Yeah. You know, you need some strategy and doing a way early pre-order actually is a huge advantage to you because you can sort this out. Yes. You can figure out, okay, how can I get a bigger order? Yeah. How can I get the attention of this sales team? How can I get my book into as many hands as possible? Yes. How can I get money from this? All those things require strategy way in advance. I,

Mike Michalowicz:

I did wanna touch on that money part, just one more element. If you go through a hybrid or self publishing, you're gonna incur costs during this process. And by getting way or early pre-orders, you can offset this cost. Now you better run the math. Mm-hmm. Because you have to fulfill the obligations of these orders. Mm-hmm. So you gotta make sure that you can fulfill the obligations and offset your cost.

AJ Harper:

You know what I wanna ask you is when you're doing the bulk orders with page two, what percentage are they getting of those?

Mike Michalowicz:

What, what do you mean? Like their, their take? Yeah. You know, I, I, I'm remiss. I think they get 10% of -

AJ Harper:

But it's different than when it's going through the, the distribution channels.

Mike Michalowicz:

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Oh, that's a great point.

AJ Harper:

I'm wondering. Yeah,

Mike Michalowicz:

I'm... I wish I knew the numbers off the top of my head. I actually don't.

AJ Harper:

I just got a contract from them. I'm gonna look.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah, look through it.

AJ Harper:

Yeah. 'Cause I think it's, if you're the, if, if it's a simple sale, like you're doing a bulk sale, you organize the bulk sale, you're handling everything. Yeah. I know that should be a different percentage than if it's going - I should

Mike Michalowicz:

Be.

AJ Harper:

Question. McMillan. I

Mike Michalowicz:

Got a question for you. Yeah. You just got a contract with them. Are you gonna do way or early pre-orders? Yeah. Okay. What, when do you anticipate your second book will be coming out?

AJ Harper:

I'm not saying.

Mike Michalowicz:

Okay. How early prior to this unsaid date are you gonna do your way or

AJ Harper:

Early? As soon as I have a cover.

Mike Michalowicz:

Okay. That's gonna be your trigger.

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AJ Harper:

Yeah, because like I said, it's pretty hard. It's pretty hard to get people on board when it doesn't look like a book. Because non-book people, they really can't conceive of, uh, an idea of something. I agree.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. So w - are you pushing them to have the book cover done early?

AJ Harper:

We ju - we're just at the, we're just at the start, so. Do

Mike Michalowicz:

You anticipate that though? You'll say, "Hey..." 'Cause they, they have their process, just like every publisher.

AJ Harper:

I will ask.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. Interesting. Yeah. Okay. Yeah. Anything else on this subject you wanted to talk about?

AJ Harper:

I mean, I guess you could do a dummy cover. If it was for bulk, not, you would never, ever, ever want a dummy cover that went out to the public.

Mike Michalowicz:

No, I agree.

AJ Harper:

Because that never, you can never get rid of it.

Mike Michalowicz:

You can't unwind it. It's all over.

AJ Harper:

Even if you think you can, especially if you put it into, um, distribution and you then wanna change the cover, nightmare. Never do it. But maybe privately you could actually do it.

Mike Michalowicz:

We do a private cover for many of our books because I wanna get on my website to get these way early pre-orders.

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AJ Harper:

Now you're making me think.

Mike Michalowicz:

So what we do with the dummy cover is we use... Remember, uh, when you and I were in school and you had, you got a book assigned by the school and you put it into a, a, a bag, uh, the -

AJ Harper:

Oh, the brown paper.

Mike Michalowicz:

Brown paper bag, yeah. Yeah. Yeah, you kinda wrap it. Yeah. And you draw over it. So we do the same thing. We will, when a new book's coming out, we will put a brown paper bag design around it with a little corner torn so you can get a little peek.

AJ Harper:

But that's not a cover.

Mike Michalowicz:

No, but we put, but people start buying it. So we do pre-orders that way because it looks like a gift and we put the title on it.

AJ Harper:

Okay. Yeah. Okay. So you, so then I, then I retract.

Mike Michalowicz:

We put, we - But you

AJ Harper:

Need something that makes people feel like - Tangible. This is a book.

Mike Michalowicz:

100%. Yeah. 100%. So we do that and we use like a, a stamp effect where it says, like, say clockwork, because we do it with clockwork. It has clockwork and red stamp on the brown paper

AJ Harper:

Bag. You know what? And it could actually be an incentive if you had a private cover.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, that's juicy.

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AJ Harper:

Which means you can have that and no one else is gonna get it.

Mike Michalowicz:

That is... Yeah, that goes back to the episode

AJ Harper:

We - Special edition. That we did.

Mike Michalowicz:

Special edition.

AJ Harper:

But you know what people don't do is they do the special edition after the fact. But what if you had just for a window in the pre-order phase? Like no one else can get this - Yeah. During pre order and it's a special cover that it's -

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah, the special edition thing is so fascinating. During our break, I'm gonna leave a message for Kelsey. I really wanna do it for the money habit. Um, and this is totally a tangential conversation, but we did talk about it in depth in that one episode. Yeah. I've had some design ideas of what a special edition of the money habit could look like.

AJ Harper:

Well, and the cool thing is, I think Paige two is a good partner for you on that because - 100%. Because their design team is unparalleled. 100%. So you could do some wacky, cool. I'll tell you what - Ooh, cursed it. Ah,

Mike Michalowicz:

Son of my god. Baby bit. Yeah, this is an R-rated episode. <laugh> Um, there's something I do here at the house, um, that I'll tell off air because it's, it's a secret little thing. I don't wanna reveal that. But, um, with books. And I wanna share with you because I'm like, oh, this could be a special edition. So I wanna get your feedback on that. Okay. This has been a really fun episode.

AJ Harper:

Unexpectedly so.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah, these have been juicy too back to backs. And y- you know, you have these great outlines. What I've been doing is going through the outlines as we're talking in the past. And the last two episodes, I'm like, you know what? I'm only gonna look at the outline toward the end to see if we

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already

AJ Harper:

Covered everything. Did we miss something?

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. And this is more fun. I feel even more engaged. You gave me some great insights this episode. Thank you.

AJ Harper:

Yeah, good.

Mike Michalowicz:

I want our listeners to visit your website ajharper.com. We didn't talk too much about the sprints or maybe

AJ Harper:

We didn't. We, we've been talking about it.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah, maybe last week. Um, but do you have any more retreats coming up?

AJ Harper:

In 2027, because by the time - Ata Long Island? Yeah, by the time this airs, we'll be done with the season. So I only do them in the summer. Okay. Um, you definitely can get on the wait list and I usually have pretty decent incentives toward the end of the year for my 2027 stuff. So a little known thing is I often give really good bonuses in December - Yeah. For programs that are gonna be in 2027. So you might wanna get in on that.

Mike Michalowicz:

Last night I went out to dinner with my friend Chris Cartelli and his wife, Amy. And

AJ Harper:

He's a - I love Amy. You

Mike Michalowicz:

Know Amy? Oh, that's right. Smart office. Yeah. So Amy works our office. Yeah, of course

AJ Harper:

She does. I could, could, could not be a more loving... I -

Mike Michalowicz:

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The most remarkable human on the

AJ Harper:

Planet. I love

Mike Michalowicz:

Amy. I met Amy when I was 13 years old. Uh - You did? Yep. I thought she was the most

AJ Harper:

Remarkable person I've ever met. I love her. We've had some very deep conversations about our kids.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. Oh, she's extraordinary. And her and my wife have become extraordinary friends. And her husband, Chris, um, and I've become friends. And, uh, I just love him. He's kind of a standoffish guy and he's kind of warming up to me finally. Uh-huh.

AJ Harper:

So - Funny that he has a wife like Amy.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, it's polar

AJ Harper:

Opposite. She's, she's like the front, she's like the front person of the relationship.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. He wants to still get in fights and stuff. Really? Yeah, he's like, "Hey, come on, let's go. " So, so I've been needling enough. He's like, "I hate when people touch me. " Except my wife. Uh-oh.

AJ Harper:

So- So that makes you wanna touch him all the

Mike Michalowicz:

Time. Didn't stop touching him. I put my arm over him. Yeah. I gave him a purple nurple, and he started laughing. I finally broke it because he started laughing. So he goes, "Do you know what the most beautiful flower is on the planet?" I said, "Yeah, I know. "

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AJ Harper:

The tough guy said that. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

Oh, because he likes to garden. Yeah.

AJ Harper:

Chris Cartelli.

Mike Michalowicz:

Chris Cartelli, the gardener. And we both say at the same time, lupine.

AJ Harper:

Oh, yeah. Up on Mount Island Island Island.

Mike Michalowicz:

Yeah. And that's what I was thinking. So when people visit Madeleine Island, it's gotta be the right time of year. June. You, you will literally see the most beautiful - It's like a fairy land. Flowers on the plant. So go to ajharper.com. It,

AJ Harper:

Just as far as the eye can see. Yeah. And he - To the point where you almost have to pull over.

Mike Michalowicz:

I did.

AJ Harper:

I have. Because you're like, uh, how is this happening?

Mike Michalowicz:

It, it is, uh, it invokes massive emotion. It does. It really does. So sign up at ajharper.com, go to a retreat at Madaly Island, and if you can sneak in there in June in some capacity, you're, you will be further blown away by these lupine flowers.

AJ Harper:

I gotta, I have to tell you one quick thing. Sure. You know, I was there. We were there to check on the house in April, which I think is not for me. It's very muddy and very cold. Yeah. It's still, there was still snow on the ground. Yeah. So I don't know if you recall, but in my studio, I have my office and then there's a window to my left. Yes. And there's a tiny... I, I hesitate -

Mike Michalowicz:

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There's some evergreens there, if I remember right.

AJ Harper:

But I hesitate to use the term meadow, because to me, meadow is like a bigger thing. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz:

I know what you're

AJ Harper:

Talking about. But however, there's this flat space that's - Yeah. That's encircled by trees. Mm hmm. On the other side of my studio. And so there's never a person walking over there. So what out my window is so much... First of all, what made me, making me think of it is when the lupins come, they just shoot up right outside my window. Yeah, yeah. But I saw an entire family of deer. They don't see me in there. An entire family of deer. I've never seen six deer just walking gently through the meadow.

Mike Michalowicz:

Do they eat the lupine or lupine? I

AJ Harper:

Thought - Well, this was just in April, because there's no - Oh,

Mike Michalowicz:

Now you haven't shot up yet. Yeah.

AJ Harper:

I saw coyote. Wow. I

Mike Michalowicz:

Saw a- All there?

AJ Harper:

Wa - out my window while I was working. Wow. I have a picture of the coyote. I have a picture of the sand - a giant sandhill crane just standing there. Yeah. Um, because there's no... It's so quiet and they don't think there's a person there. And I'm just in my little office.

Mike Michalowicz:

I love that you -

AJ Harper:

It's, it's like this little, little pocket,

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz:

This little pocket. You've made your dream, your vision a reality. Yes. And what I love is it affirms that people can do it with a writing career.

AJ Harper:

Uh yeah. I did it.

Mike Michalowicz:

You did it. I've done it. This is all what we're experiencing now because of the writing, a writing career. And I, that can't be underlined enough times because I hear so many authors or aspiring authors say you can't make money being an author. Are you - F-ing crazy? Listen - You absolutely can.

AJ Harper:

I know we're at the end of the episode, but here's the problem with that. If you decide that, then you won't. And it's not like - That's right. If you believe you can't, you, you won't. Yeah. If you believe you can, you won't. It's not like that. It's, it's a mindset thing of accepting that as reality and so therefore not, not taking the steps that the rest of us are taking to actually make a living at it. It does require some creative thinking and it, you have to decide how, how is this gonna go for me? But I don't believe in the adage that artists need to suffer. Yeah. I think it's BS. I don't think we do our great work when we suffer. And I don't, and I think it's harmful when you say you can't make money as an author. Well, okay, then you're not going to.

AJ Harper:

I do.

Mike Michalowicz:

Preach, baby, preach. Preach. We comply with how we identify. Mm-hmm. Go to dwtbpodcast.com to get our free resources all prepared by AJ. Also, you can email us at hello@dwtbpodcast.com. We wanna hear your questions, comments. We'd love to get your show idea and suggestions. Yeah. We've done some kinda out of the blue kinda weird fringe stuff and it's been great. Yeah. It's been great. Uh, and remember this one. Don't write that book. Write the greatest book you can.