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Episode 149: “Is Prescriptive Nonfiction Dead?”

Mike Michalowicz (00:01.282)

Welcome back to the Don't Write That Book Podcast, where you can learn how to write your best seller 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 McAllowitz, and AJ Harper.

Is prescriptive nonfiction dead? AJ, you come up with the best, most click-baitable titles. It's not dead.

AJ Harper (00:28.396)

It's not clickbait. No, is it? Is that the definition of clickbait?

Mike Michalowicz (00:29.752)

That's not clickbait.

Mike Michalowicz (00:34.134)

I think so. Is prescriptive nonfiction dead?

AJ Harper (00:38.606)

Well it's the the qu-- okay. Maybe it's I guess I don't know the full definition of clickbait. Because I think clickbait it's okay, it's what's the difference between having a hook and having a big clickbait?

Mike Michalowicz (00:52.085)

I think they run in parallel. I I don't know if there's a significant difference. That's a good point.

AJ Harper (00:56.534)

Is clickbait where you don't you don't actually deliver then? Like it's just provocative, but it doesn't actually

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Mike Michalowicz (01:02.816)

Yeah, I think clickbait overstates or over suggests the outcome, like is it dead? As opposed to I think is prescriptive nonfiction on a decline? i it's not as salacious, but I think it's more of the consideration

AJ Harper (01:18.602)

Well, it's based on that. I mean, the topic today is the Tim Ferris article and you know what his title was. Has quickly has AI already killed how to fiction? Yeah. so I'm just I'm sort of like riffing off.

Mike Michalowicz (01:25.752)

Yeah, I know.

Mike Michalowicz (01:30.594)

Yeah, exactly. it's gonna be a fascinating conversation. I I know you have some perspectives, you have a lot of data behind it with your own clientele. We have some exciting news to also share in just a second. But before we dig into it, thank you for connecting in from Madeline Island. Have you spent the entire or the majority of the summer at your vacation home?

AJ Harper (01:52.238)

Yeah, I mean I had two speaking engagements and so I was gone. One was with me. With you in Nashville. Yeah. And then yeah, but pretty much been here.

Mike Michalowicz (02:05.932)

You sent a picture and you said almost home via text and you were getting on the ferry. And now it's so great experiencing that only one time so far, but experiencing that I can see the psychological I experienced it, the psychological shift once you're on the ferry. There's something that just clicks and it's like, Okay, I've arrived. How's the home repairs going? I know you had the flooding

AJ Harper (02:28.63)

I'm in exactly the same spot I was when I got here this summer.

Mike Michalowicz (02:31.864)

Really? Island time.

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AJ Harper (02:35.756)

Or something. we're gonna leave early because we would like them to finish. Okay. So we're just gonna vacate and hopefully they'll finish.

Mike Michalowicz (02:48.292)

Oh my gosh. Well I wish--

AJ Harper (02:50.038)

You know, what can you you can't come you can't you can't get upset because there's a lot of suffering in the world and being upset about you really can't I can't anyway. I can't get upset because this is not our primary residence. Yeah. And yes, we worked very hard for it for twenty-nine years and all of that, but it's the lake is still there, it's still beautiful, the house is still there, knock on wood. Yeah.

And a lot of people don't have homes, you know, so I'm not I'm just not gonna I'm just not gonna think about it like that.

Mike Michalowicz (03:24.366)

That's a great perspective. My cousins, we had the Michala-Cousins reunion at our house. Disco themed. So for the we're recording this right after the Labor Day weekend and we did our big reveal with the disco ball in the house and so forth. And it was just it was an amazing experience. Well, my two Michala-Cousins who are in Spokane, Washington, were sharing the devastation of the recent fire that went through there. Mm. Seven hundred homes lost.

Both of their homes were threatened. They had to evacuate. my one cousin, the house two houses over, burned to the ground. So th th they were fortunate themselves. But just to your point, there there's events going on in the world that are just like nothing compared to, my flooring needs to be replaced. yours is more severe than that. But I that's something I admire about you, is you have that perspective and you come to every circumstance that we've worked together with a cool calmness regardless of what's going on and spinning around you and the world. So I appreciate that.

AJ Harper (04:30.966)

I'm glad I'm projecting that no matter what's in my brain.

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Mike Michalowicz (04:34.414)

Yeah. I also you know, I also want to do an admiration shout out to Matt. Matt showing up also under extraordinary life circumstances that happened. Just shows up, no problem. He's here getting the job done. thanks Matt for coming on Labor Day itself to reconfigure this room. We had to make this room into a guest room, and I'm not technically savvy enough, and I shouldn't be, to to work any of these cameras. so Matt was willing to come and and spend

AJ Harper (05:00.04)

So that was converted for the Michala-Cousins and now it's back to being a studio?

Mike Michalowicz (05:04.716)

Yeah. It's unbelievable. You like you came in here and it looked like a little micro hotel room. Like there was a little chair to sit in, there was the bed, they had the TV going, like the whole thing. And now it's back to a a full functioning studio. So much so that we had our first offer to rent the studio space. There was a camera crew that came in here and said they were so impressed they wanted to rent it. Krista shot down. She's like, We're not having anyone else here 'cause it's our house.

AJ Harper (05:29.174)

I mean, yeah, she's she she she gives a lot of allowances.

Mike Michalowicz (05:33.584)

She gives a lot of allowances. I get it. Yeah. Yeah.

AJ Harper (05:37.102)

You're gonna have like an Airbnb for certain sections of your home, but just just just this room or that room, not the whole house.

Mike Michalowicz (05:44.98)

Exactly. Exactly. You ready to kick into this, I want to welcome our guest,

AJ Harper (05:49.41)

Yeah, do you... Your guests?

Mike Michalowicz (05:51.106)

Yes. I mean our our listeners. That's what I mean by guests.

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AJ Harper (05:54.654)

But do you wanna say what program this is?

Mike Michalowicz (05:58.21)

I'm gonna do the whole thing. That's what I'm I meant. So Okay. Shall let me try to quasi kick it off now that we did our banter. Thank you for joining us. You are listening to the episode on is prescriptive nonfiction dead? And this was triggered by a article that Tim Ferris wrote a little ways back. this is sponsored by Simplified. That is an imprint with page two. Just a massive shout out to them. Simplified launched its first author. I was the first author to publish through Simplified.

But our first non-Michalowicz author was John Briggs. And John Briggs launched a book called *Take Breaks, Work Better*. USA Today Best Seller.

AJ Harper (06:37.808)

USA Today, baby.

Mike Michalowicz (06:40.94)

My gosh, our first author achieves a USAA Today, best seller. I think he's already sold, don't quote me on this, it's definitely over fifteen thousand books.

AJ Harper (06:53.582)

So we're gonna wait for the list tomorrow. See if he's on the other list. Can you imagine? But you just for the listener's sake, he's also an alumni of my workshop. three he's still part of my col-author collective. He's still he's still in live edit for his workbook. Yeah, I'm very proud to have him in my community.

Mike Michalowicz (06:56.108)

Yeah, and then there's a thing my gosh, I am I will lose my gourd. I will lose my

AJ Harper (07:07.086)

That's right.

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Mike Michalowicz (07:18.114)

Yeah, it's amazing. he he's an amazing fella and he's devoting his life, his next chapter in his life to a full-time author career. So it's just so exciting. So I'm doing keynote already. he's just got it going now. You have an announcement about the writing sprint marathon.

AJ Harper (07:36.562)

Yeah, we do it twice a year. You've done it a couple of times, I think. Yes, I have. so we only do it twice a year, and the next one is coming up real quick on October 17th. A writing sprint marathon is an all-day event on a Saturday, and it's free, completely free to attend. We write all day, and also I do extended QA's and we give prizes. It's a total blast.

You will get way more done than if you were just trying to write on your own that day. It's just like a giant writing party. And you can come from any ability, any genre, any project you want to work on. Doesn't have to be a book, could be your marketing emails, could be anything you want to do. If you're brand new to publishing, it's also a great way for you to connect with people. Or even if you're not brand new, and we usually have a lot of published authors there just sitting with everybody else writing. So you can go to ajharper.com.

And there'll be information about the marathon and it's again it's totally free.

Mike Michalowicz (08:35.746)

Amazing. I just put on my phone. I will be on a flight I I will be on a flight from San Francisco to Brisbane, Australia. So maybe the first time I'm joining a writing sprint from somewhere internationally in the air. yeah. But the thing is I I'll be on a plane, so if I can catch connect the internet, that's the best writing time for me. So I'm looking forward to it. All right. how'd this episode come about? Give me some deets.

AJ Harper (08:49.122)

You sh totally should.

AJ Harper (09:03.512)

Well, I texted you.

Mike Michalowicz (09:05.186)

No, I I know, I know. But that you were the first to discover the article. I didn't know about it.

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AJ Harper (09:10.21)

Well, yeah. I mean what I the episode though, I I wrote about it and then I thought, mm, there was such a response to what I wrote. So Tim Ferris wrote a book or wrote a wrote a book. He wrote some books. He wrote an article in June and basically doing you know, he does these deep dive articles and brought the data about his own decline in sales. And I read the article, and then honestly within maybe a day, I was getting emails from my students.

Did you see this? Did you see this? And they were freaking out. So anytime my students are freaking out and thinking that maybe they shouldn't keep going, I want to do something about it. So I wrote a Substack article because there was something really missing from Ferris's article. He, as thorough as he usually is, he missed an important data point. And I didn't want my

students or other authors who listen to me or on my newsletter or things like that to get discouraged. That's why I wrote the kind of rebuttal. And what I wrote on Substack, my title was Tim Ferris's Coal Mine is not your coal mine. And that's because in his article he says that, you know, is AI the canary in the coal mine. And he's like basically, yeah, it's it's all like it's it's done kind of situation. And I was like, that's bogus. And

He's got a myopic view of things and he's not considering some important data points. So I wanted to get that article out. And the reason I texted you to do this, I didn't think we would even do a podcast about it. but then we had such a response from it. Yes, that I thought, mm, we should probably do a little podcast. So by now everybody's weighed in on it, but I think it's good for us to have a chat.

Mike Michalowicz (10:56.022)

A hundred percent. So let's start off with what he argued. Like he did share some data to substantiate his argument that prescriptive nonfiction is on decline. So can you set that up for us?

AJ Harper (11:08.428)

Yeah, so you can, you know, you can I'm not gonna run through his whole article, but his his book sales have declined, I think it's over fifty percent. And that's a significant that's a significant decline compared to the average of nonfiction sales, which have been also been in decline, but in single digit numbers, not those double digit numbers. so he did an assessment of that and then attributed it to AI because he's suggesting that.

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that how to vote books, so prescriptive nonfiction, that AI can easily just summarize that how to. And that's what people are choosing instead of reading a book and purchasing a book. And so he's suggesting that that type of book is gonna die or is already dead with AI.

Mike Michalowicz (11:58.574)

You know, when you texted me, you said, Hey, how are your books doing? So I did first a surface level check and said, we're holding steady. Like like book sales haven't haven't increased substantially, but they've they've been okay. but then I dug deeper. I I looked so quickly without looking at the data behind it, then I realized, we are on a decline. So how how can I confuse the two? With the launch of the money habit, the

Collective of my books, now 10 titles, was on a slight increase. But the individual book sales, profit first being the most significant, is on a decline over a two-year period, but it was offset by additional launches. So I wasn't seeing that. I I do an observation, but I want to hear your you had some really poignant stuff to share that that kind of countered his argument. And I have an observation too that I wanna point out.

But tell me first about your own book sales, 'cause you're writing prescriptive nonfiction too.

AJ Harper (13:02.156)

Well, yeah, I wrote one write a I wrote a lot for other people, but I wrote one write a must read. And my sales are not declining.

Mike Michalowicz (13:04.611)

Hmm.

Mike Michalowicz (13:15.374)

So are they increasing increasing or they're they're holding their own? Like what's the context here?

AJ Harper (13:20.12)

So I don't have the sales you have. I I also don't have the marketing machine that you have, but it's pretty much just staying the same unless I do something, you know, if I'm doing some sort of promo or yeah.

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Mike Michalowicz (13:32.898)

Yeah. I mean the argument I guess is from Tim's vantage point is if I want to write a must read book, I technically could go to some AI generated script and it'll give me bullet points. and if you want to run profit first, because we know people regularly do this, they go into AI and say how to run profit first. Mm-hmm. The most recent iteration, and we did this

We've been testing stuff out pretty regularly. So I think we did it maybe three, four weeks ago with Profit First specifically. I I just did it with another guy named Jason, but I did it and I looked and said, how do I do profit first? And it it taught the script wrong. Well it th it taught the process incorrectly. It had I would say eighty percent right, even ninety percent right. But there was a certain elements like, my gosh, why is AI saying this? My conclusion is AI is collecting all of the content out there.

And a lot of people have written about profit first and blogs and and press releases and stuff, reviews on Amazon, and they actually state some fundamental facts wrong. Like some people even write the formula wrong. They write profit first is sales minus expenses equals profit. No, it's not. But it's actually out there. Now the AI did did not mess up on that one. But there was these little nuance components. It's like, that is wrong. One example was it said when running profit first, which is sales minus profit.

equals expenses. If you don't have enough money in your expenses to current to cover your active bills, the solution is to cut costs. A solution may be to cut costs, but we've identified, I think, consistently 15 variables, but usually about 20 variables that you could deploy. Increase your pricing, reset your margins, focus on efficiency, reconsider staff positions, like reorganize your staff to be optimized around what people do. So AI still gets it wrong.

But I think in Tim's article he was saying, Well, AI can write was he suggesting that AI can write books that are just as compelling as a book authored by

AJ Harper (15:39.252)

No, no. He's not it's not that. He's saying that people can just get the how to steps from AI, not writing books that are just as compelling. He wasn't arguing that. Okay.

Mike Michalowicz (15:50.024)

I did read the article but it was a little ways back now and I I forgot the exact details. So w you said he's missing a major component. What's what's he missing in that article?

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AJ Harper (15:57.976)

Himself. Him himself. Like what does that mean? Wow. You're you're staring at this, you've given us all this data and you're staring at it right in the face, but you're not considering the fact that your breakout book, the your big ATM machine, which is the four-hour work week, was written nineteen years ago. Right. And you have not updated it. Nor have you released a book.

In nearly ten years.

Mike Michalowicz (16:29.26)

So I--

AJ Harper (16:30.666)

So you so you're not factoring in the decline of your sales. Cause I know, Mike, that your your sales have not declined 50 plus percent. Right. I know that because I get royalty checks. Yeah. It's not it was good for me. It's been good. Seems pretty much in a range that I see. Maybe it's your stuff you're seeing things that I'm not seeing yet because you know it's like eight months. Yeah, yeah, yeah. You're seeing more current things than the royalty show because the royalties are

Mike Michalowicz (16:41.934)

Yeah, right, exactly.

AJ Harper (17:00.278)

Yeah. So far behind. But yeah, I know that you would have you would have been in a panic if you were seeing fifty plus, right? So what's the difference between you and Ferris? You are actually still publishing books.

Mike Michalowicz (17:15.68)

That's one difference and I I have more for you.

AJ Harper (17:18.167)

Yeah, but that I that was my main argument was dude, you are not considering it's staring at you right in the face, and you need to acknowledge the fact that that you you have not updated these books, so people are not buying them. But I will also I want to make one more point, and that is I called my article Tim Ferris's coal mine is not your coal mine because of that factor. But also for a lot of the authors out there.

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He so he's a lightning in the bottle author. And so people want to be like him, but most people won't. But they could still actually sell a lot of books, just not that many. So I went and did some math about how many books he's selling, and he's still selling a lot of books. It's just not selling as many as he's used to selling. That's why I'm saying perspective, right? Is that a person would be happy to be selling as many books as he's selling. Does that make sense?

Mike Michalowicz (18:14.519)

It does.

AJ Harper (18:15.564)

So I don't want people to freak because they need perspective and also he needs to realize he's the common denominator.

Mike Michalowicz (18:23.254)

I'll add to this, I think he also I think there's something bigger going on. not only is that book nineteen years old and his last title ten years old, he also at a certain point was no longer an author. Now let me qualify that. Cause people of course he's an author. He was an author. What I'm saying is he's no longer a career author. Tim Ferris is an investor, he is a personality, but his books are not his

Primary lead focus. I don't see Tim doing the circuit because he doesn't, quote, need to, but he doesn't seem to want to. And I think when you leave career authorship, that means that your books are not your primary focus. So that's another part of it. I I compare him to s Steven Pressfield, who's I I actually am reading the the golf book I just started, the V Vagor Vagger Vag.

AJ Harper (19:21.182)

The Legend of Bagger Vance.

Mike Michalowicz (19:22.56)

Bagger Vance to start at that. It's about this epic golf game that's going down at the at a resort that's collapsing and he's trying to restore the owner's trying to restore the the resort to prominence by putting on this event. But Stephen Pressfield's also written prescriptive nonfiction on on writing skills themselves and so forth. And the resistance. And he, to me, is a career author. he still is actively writing and promoting his books. It it's it's who he is. And I don't know because I didn't do the research on his books. I don't I did. d is his in decline? There you go.

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AJ Harper (20:03.552)

Nope. Neither is I went to just for grins. I went I put I put this in the article. By the way, if you want to see the data, you can go to my sub stack and I have I have the data there. But I went and checked The Artist Way by Julia Cameron as well. I went and did two two of the biggest books that are in appeal to writers and are often referred. one is The War of Art and one is The Artist Way. The Artist Way is I think forty, more than forty years old.

It's in like, you know, that maybe it's like number f like under under a thousand BSR all the time. All the time. Thirty years old.

Mike Michalowicz (20:45.57)

Yeah, that's and forty years old, under a thousand BSR, best-selling ranking. I I wonder where that translates into book sales. Profit first right nowadays is running around seventeen hundred. And its best heyday was running around eight hundred BSR. But at seventeen hundred, we're still moving I wanna say a thousand a week, or somewhere in that. So and it's not a linear translation, meaning if if you're

BSR is ten, maybe you're moving, say, ten thousand a week, but if your BSR is one, you may be moving like a hundred thousand. It's not a linear and I'm not saying that's--

AJ Harper (21:24.974)

But Julia Cameron wrote that book bajillion years ago. She doesn't even really do a hardly ever do an appearance anymore, once in a blue moon. Yeah. The book is just like again, like a they just print money.

Mike Michalowicz (21:39.468)

Yeah. So I so so we have reasons why Tim Ferris' data seems to be biased. His book's his Bellcourt book's nineteen years old. He hasn't done a book in ten years. Second

AJ Harper (21:51.736)

Second Bell cap. Good. I love that. You use, I love good, good language, good vocabulary.

Mike Michalowicz (21:58.178)

Thanks. Okay. Second thank you. Second is he is no longer positioned himself as a career author, and I would say that goes back over ten years. But I'll give you a third reason. and I think this is

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actually the biggest reason. This is the natural course of books. And here's the extreme example. Go to your book barn in your neighborhood or something and get books that are fifty to a hundred years old. They're out there. I I I bought books from the nineteen fifties 'cause I just find them comical the way they write. Like these are when I had the seventies party here with my cousins, I got always books from the seventies on relationships between men and women. It was so bad. It was so but was what I found interesting is as I went through all those titles at this book barn and they have thousands of books kind of piled away, mildew covered and everything.

There was not a single book that I could identify that was still selling on Amazon was still selling today at any level. So books they have a life. It's a cycle. And I hate to say it for my own work, but Profit First will not live forever. I I my biggest wildest dream is a hundred years from now, Profit First is still selling. But it's it's so unrealistic. It there's a natural decline. And perhaps Tim

AJ Harper (23:06.881)

Yeah, it's a cycle.

Mike Michalowicz (23:25.0)

It's a human too and maybe his books are living the natural trajectory that books go through.

AJ Harper (23:31.438)

I mean, yeah, that's and publishing is cyclical. So we're seeing this downturn in nonfiction. It will not stay that way. This is the other thing, is that doesn't mean that it's over. It just means it's it's gonna shift. And I I really think that if you look at most how to so you know what I teach is I teach people that it to follow this reader first methodology that I created, that we use to write your books, et cetera.

There's a distinct difference in those books. Those are books where there's care for the reader on every single page. You're taking them through a through it, kind of walking them by the hand in your own way, in using your own style, but it's not just information. And I think what he's talking about is these books that are just information or a new theory or a set of steps aren't going to continue to do well. And he may be right about that.

But the books where the reader feels completely seen by the author and connected to the author, and the author is thinking about how to relay the information in a way that keeps the reader on the page, keeps them engaged, keeps them doing the things we ask them to do. When you're

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carefully considering that, those books will stay because that's like having a relationship with an author. Yes. And you can't, you're not going to get that from Chat GPT.

Mike Michalowicz (24:56.962)

The I would say the the keystone to human connection is storytelling. And there's us relaying information to each other, painting pictures in each other's minds, but there's also storytelling to yourself. That's called identity. I I read Four-Hour Work Week. I loved that book. I still love that book. But it did feel very much more it felt much more like a recipe. Mm-hmm. Like I bought a cookbook as opposed to a storybook. And

I think this is where authors can really, really excel now. is is to double down on the storytelling. Malcolm Gladwell, let's see how his books do. I I think he's an extraordinary storyteller. And while his books aren't necessarily prescriptives, they're more

AJ Harper (25:45.896)

Yeah, they're not pret-- the narrative not.

Mike Michalowicz (25:47.826)

Yeah, narrative. But gosh, his storytelling is extraordinary. And I wonder how those books will perform going forward. I I I'm optimistic about those.

AJ Harper (25:56.078)

Storytelling, yes, but again, I just really want to hit this home. I think a lot of people don't understand that if you are aware of the reader is here and you need to move them there, right? Where they are to this destination, which is the promise of your book, and that you're carefully considering how to do that so that the information unfolds in a way that is very attentive to them. It's more than just the story that you might share here and there. It's it's also aware of the transformation.

And the journey of that transformation on the in the pages of the book. And so that's why, for example, people don't just feel connected to you, Mike, because of your storytelling. They also feel connected because you're attending to them the whole way through, thinking about, well, how are they going to be able to handle this information? And what how can I simplify this? Or how can I even just acknowledge what they might be feeling right now? And we do that the whole way through.

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So a person feels as though they're in that relationship with you, but also they are moving toward the transformation. So I just I, you know, this is this the same stuff we've been saying. Write a better book that's attends to the reader and focuses on them.

Mike Michalowicz (27:14.092)

Yeah, there's a little bit of this teeter totter or level that we work with when when writing for a reader in that we need to push them to achieve what they intend, realizing they're gonna experience resistance of their own. And so the balance, the push with the understanding acceptance. Well, I noticed with AI, and I I know you've a really interesting perspective, but when it comes to AI, it feels like

the mentality that kicked around in the two thousands where it's like reward every kid for everything. The trophies. Yeah, the trophy. The trophy for everybody. And I remember my youngest son, Jake, the the first soccer game sorry, the the end of the soccer season when the the coach handed out trophies for our team as a participation award.

And they literally were the la the last team. They came in dead last in the league. And and you know, you gotta display this. I I see AI doing the exact same thing. Like you can you can state the most ridiculous thing and it's like, great idea, Mike. We should double down on that. It it's always affirming to the point where it's like it it's gross. It's gross.

AJ Harper (28:36.59)

I mean I don't use AI, but that would make me quit if I did because I I'm Gen X. Like we don't like my God, don't don't play. No platitudes. I mean, or don't placate me. It would affirm pat me on the head.

Mike Michalowicz (28:45.004)

Well, it would affirm that.

Mike Michalowicz (28:49.322)

Every feeling you're having right now, if you type down the AI, it's That's great. my god. I give up on you AI. That's amazing, AJ. But you think we're in a bubble.

AJ Harper (28:55.79)

Puke.

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AJ Harper (28:59.456)

I do. And, you know, I'm probably might be one of the few people who thinks it, but I think people are we're always gonna lean human and I there's there's too many mistakes, too many errors, too much danger, too much loss. I think people crave actual connection and so I think we're gonna realize that it's not quite taking over in the way that we thought it was going to, 'cause we're gonna reject it. And I don't, I don't know when that's coming, but it can come soon enough in my opinion.

Mike Michalowicz (29:32.566)

And I my perspective is I think AI is one of the most important tools of in history. and at the same time it doesn't replace the human, it just supplements things that we couldn't achieve. You know, I I I my understanding is we're on the verge of curing all disease. I think we're five years away from that, from everything I'm hearing because of AI. I don't know if you heard about a two, three weeks ago, a Moderna.

which is the medical company used AI to find or create a vax cancer vaccine that's now I think seventy percent seventy percent effective. Don't quote me in the numbers, but look it up. Their stock on Friday before Labor Day went up three hundred percent as the fastest climb in a stock in history because of AI.

AJ Harper (30:23.574)

So we're but we're talking about two different

Mike Michalowicz (30:25.728)

So I don't I when people say AI bubble, they're like I think the perspective is AI is gone. I I I don't think it's replacing humans in r in regards to connection and what we're talking about. I I a hundred percent agree. I just don't think AI is is a flash in the pan. And I'm I know you're not saying that, but I think some

AJ Harper (30:41.902)

I'm not saying it's a flash in the pan, I'm specifically talking about the AI that's ha- affecting the publishing.

Mike Michalowicz (30:46.75)

I under... exactly. Yeah. Exactly. you also said that Gen Zs are kind of digging the books.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper (30:53.826)

They love print books. They love all our they love all our old stuff.

Mike Michalowicz (30:59.148)

My son has vinyl records at his house.

AJ Harper (31:02.07)

Yeah. They love they love real things, tangible things, older things, and they read a lot of print books.

Mike Michalowicz (31:09.048)

So I was visiting my son in Salt Lake City, Jake, and he had a record player there and we had to get some more supplies for his house. So we're at the store, I start I went to the record section at the store and like, they had a Bob Marley's Greatest Hits, which is such a good album. They had Queen's News of the World, which was my favorite album of all time.

AJ Harper (31:30.744)

Favorite rock band of mine.

Mike Michalowicz (31:32.662)

So I I go back, I throw on News of the World and I can't remember what song it was, like Dragon Attack or something like a B side. And Jake is singing along. Like he knows the lyrics. I'm like, you know this stuff? He's like, Dad, this stuff is cool. Yeah. I love what's old comes new again. And I love when I when you mentioned this that Gen Z preferring print books. Mm-hmm I

I love to see that that it's being embraced again. and I

AJ Harper (32:05.59)

Yep. Indie book stores are doing well. Yep. Indie book stores. Yep. Big box aren't they might Barnes and Noble might not be doing as well, but the Indie... I don't have the latest numbers on Barnes and Noble or other big big stores, but the Indies are doing great.

Mike Michalowicz (32:21.23)

What if the newspaper's gonna come back?

AJ Harper (32:23.725)

don't write *that* book!

I don't think so.

Mike Michalowicz (32:24.92)

I don't know. But but phones seem to be going away with the younger generation. I see it being used less and less. I saw such addiction to it. I see in certain factions being used less and less and less. Definitely social media is going away with some of the younger generation. And there's even phones coming out that I think are just the the old flip phones. They're they're becoming popular again. Just you can make a call, but that's it.

W is there anything that our listeners can do to avoid the Tim Ferris situation for themselves?

AJ Harper (32:59.874)

Well, he even said in his article the importance of voice going forward, your your voice as an author and your perspective. And that's people are gonna want that. You're not gonna you can have Chat GPT imitate you, but ultimately, or whatever people are using, Claude, whatever. I don't use any of it, so I don't know, but you can not really replace a person's unique perspective.

So it's voice plus your unique perspective. I think that's going to be a distinguishing factor with books. And I think also I really need to stress doability. I mean, can you can this is this? I feel like I feel like I would need to write a whole book on doability because this is what people miss every time is we can tell people how to do things, but can they actually do them? And have we figured out a way to ensure that they can and will do them?

And I think if you can do that, if you can not just sh-- tell them what to do, but make it easy for them to get results and also somehow motivate them and convince that's what we do. And it's, you know, hundred percent. It's something it's it's actually not that complicated if you think about it.

Mike Michalowicz (34:17.75)

A subset of doability is I I call it pacing. What's interesting is AI can give you the full answer or the all the steps within one paragraph. But a book will take intentionally fifty to seventy thousand words to get you there. But what that does is triggers pacing. It moves you in small steps, gives you a story, gives you time to put the book down, contemplate, come back, and and I think you absorb it so much more.

don't write *that* book!

I'm right now I'm reading Abraham Lincoln's biography. And never was into history in the past. And I'll tell you, if I was reading on AI, I would maybe consume some facts. They would definitely wouldn't stick, but also I think I'd be bored. It's just the facts, man. But when I read George Washington's biography, which got me into history then, there's so much storytelling and there's a time between putting the book down and revisiting it for the next chapter or the next section.

That perspective kicks in and observations in the current world that cause reflection. So I think the the pacing that a book offers is something that a quick how to, even blog article if it's AI produced or author produced, can't do. It's too fast, too too soon. (Agreed.) You add perspective. What do you mean by that?

AJ Harper (35:42.254)

Well, we just talked about it. It's it's your how you see things. So you see things based on your own experience, your own education, what has happened to you in your life, the worldview that was handed down to you by your family, your peers, the where you live, like all the things that make you you, you're infusing that into the book. So your perspective is that slant. And I hope that you're sharing that in the book. And that's also what people like. I mean, I think if people read my stuff.

They're looking for a certain way. They they like how I see things. They like how I see things. That's my perspective. They also like the voice that I use to share my perspective. And these are the things that are unique to you as an author.

Mike Michalowicz (36:27.502)

I'm gonna ask you a really unfair question as we wrap things up here. because we're a hundred and fifty-ish episodes in, and every episode we touch on this, but I'm gonna ask you to summarize it. An author is ultimately an expression of self. You know, be you fully. So my question is, is this, how do you fully be yourself as an author?

AJ Harper (36:51.942)

well, first of all, it's a process. It's not like you press a button and or you just decide because we're too we're too worried about what other people think. We also have preconceived notions about what's appropriate with writing. So we have to let go of all of that. This happens a lot with people who are in certain industries where they have to write a certain way, corporate, academic. So they have to unlearn things and then also become more comfortable with being vulnerable.

don't write *that* book!

And so I think it's more of a process. It's an unfolding where you're willing to take chances. And so that's if you can approach the page each day with, I'm just gonna try it and see what happens and I'm gonna be my honest self, then you'll get there. But most people are self-censoring. They censor in the first draft, which is the worst that's the worst place to censor, not realizing you can edit that. So

You just you can always edit it, but you're censoring before you even lay a word down. And this is part of the problem. So I think starting with just allowing yourself to express your true self without worrying if it's right, without worrying what other people will think about it, knowing you can revise it later, actually is one of the greatest ways that you can bring your whole self to the page.

Mike Michalowicz (38:11.692)

I have one last Tim Ferris question before I do that. do you have any activities, events, classes coming up for our listening audience?

AJ Harper (38:20.014)

Well I have the writing sprint marathon and then we haven't announced it yet, but we always do a authorship planning in January. Okay. So yeah.

Mike Michalowicz (38:31.488)

And we're getting more emails and inquiries, I think, than ever before, suggested topics and so forth. So folks, keep sending it in. We're getting real traction. And someone said Mike suggested read Write a Must Read so many times that I I bought I finally bought the book. So apparently repetition I mean. Well, it's well deserved. So everyone listening in, get your copy of Write a Must Read.

AJ Harper (38:51.662)

It's little obnoxious, but I appreciate it.

Mike Michalowicz (38:58.434)

and if you haven't got a copy of The Money Habit, I'd be honored if you check that out too. So here's the last Tim Ferris question. he didn't he make a statement that he may come out with a new book or w what's the deal with his author?

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper (39:09.72)

Well, last year last year he said he his book was c a new book was coming out called tentatively titled The No Book. As an N O. N O. The the Nata book. The no now that would be nothing. The Hell No Book. Yeah. no. It's the no book. I looked it up. It's nowhere to be found. The last I heard about it, I went and looked on his blog. I think he's I don't know.

Mike Michalowicz (39:21.415)

A N O or N O

AJ Harper (39:39.638)

I think who knows what's going on with him. He's not happy with it current probably. Hm.

Mike Michalowicz (39:44.278)

Okay. Well, that triggered another topic idea. I'll share with you off the air to see if we want explore it. I want to thank everyone for joining us today. thank again for the thank you to Matt for setting this up remotely so we could keep delivering this content to you. if you haven't yet been to our website, this is opportunity to go. It's DWTB podcast.com. We have lots of free resources, all prepared by AJ. If you are serious about authorship, if you're in the exploratory stage about authorship,

No matter what it is, please check out that website. I think you'll get great content. And choose to become a subscriber, we'll keep you posted of all the new episodes coming out. And if you have a suggestion for our future episodes, you can email us like other folks are at hello at dwtbpodcast.com. And if you're interested in the imprint simplified, where John Briggs just published his book and I've published myself, and you're in the entrepreneurial space, just email us at the same email address, put simplified in the title, and we'll connect you with the right folks.

Thanks for joining us today. We'll see you next week. And as always, remember this. Please do not write that book. Write the greatest book you can.