

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz (00:00.342)

AJ, this may be the best tech setup we've had yet for remote. Like the audio sounds good, the video's good.

What's your favorite season?

AJ Harper (00:13.838)

Spring.

Mike Michalowicz (00:16.11)

Mines fall. There's something about the air, the condition of the air where it's those super cool mornings and then the days can be nice and warm. There's something about the smell. It's a i the the leaves. It's very appealing to go in the woods in the fall for me. Why is spring your favorite?

AJ Harper (00:35.55)

well I was born in the spring. Nice. And I like the n the newness of it. I like it coming out of a you know, I'm from Minnesota, so when it's spring it's like woo hoo.

Mike Michalowicz (00:47.756)

Yeah. It's it's the birth of the butterfly kind of situation. The flowers in spring are just remarkable. I'm very much into flowers. And I'm trying to in our garden find a balance of flowers that bloom at different times. So you have early spring bloomers, then you have kind of the the summer stuff, which summer is pretty hard midsummer 'cause it gets so hot, and then you have the the fall flowers.

But I wanna get all perennials 'cause the the annuals you gotta replace every single year. So I'm I'm trying to figure out native perennial and then a sorting sorting in a way that's constantly blooming.

AJ Harper (01:30.22)

I was I was half listening to that.

Mike Michalowicz (01:32.974)

Yeah. I know you gotta lock up.

AJ Harper (01:36.802)

No, no, when people start talking about growing things, I'm just it's like there's a little voice in my head that or a little song da da da da da da da da you know, just like a little song plays. That's awesome. Yeah, I tune out completely. I don't remember everything you just said.

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Mike Michalowicz (01:48.77)

That's awesome.

Mike Michalowicz (01:54.51)

It's so funny. When my wife starts talking about Disneyland, that's her like ultimate passion. She loves Disneyland so much. Same thing. And it's not a Disney tune either. So you you're still in the island right now. How much I how much longer do you plan to be out there?

AJ Harper (02:08.706)

Just a couple days. We actually we had meant we meant to leave earlier, but we had some complications. So hopefully we'll be on the road in a couple days.

Mike Michalowicz (02:18.488)

Great. And it's it's the first day of October we're recording this on October first. W what's it like on Madeline Island October first versus midsummer? Is it empty already?

AJ Harper (02:30.102)

yeah, I mean it's well, this weekend in Bayfield, which is the mainland, there is Apple Fest where there's about twenty thousand people come. It's a very big deal. So it's very quiet on the island, but it's about to get super busy. but it's beautiful. It's just it's not too cold yet and the the leaves are gorgeous. So we had planned to leave two weeks ago. And then we yeah.

So we're two weeks late. but we are headed home and I'm so excited because when we get home, it's almost Halloween and that is the perfect time to be in the Lower Hudson Valley because everybody is obsessed with Halloween and my town is just decked out like some sort of like Martha Stewart catalog, and but also weird, also quirky and weird. And so I'm excited to be home for that.

Mike Michalowicz (03:26.226)

I I've never come to Nyack for for the Halloween festivities. Did you

AJ Harper (03:31.672)

Now that we have the so you know about the Halloween parade in the West Village, right? In New York. I do. Mm-hmm. So ours is the second largest in New York. Our Halloween parade. Yeah, it's so good. Yeah. I have so many fond memories of it. And even though our son is gonna be twenty two, I will still be at that Halloween parade.

Mike Michalowicz (03:50.542)

Does it happen on Halloween day? Mm-mm.

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AJ Harper (03:53.454)

Mm, it's always the Saturday before.

Mike Michalowicz (03:56.146)

I'm all right. I may may knock on your door 'cause y Krista and I are looking to s do fun things and that

AJ Harper (04:04.222)

that is a super fun thing to do.

Mike Michalowicz (04:06.782)

okay. How parking must be miserable though, 'cause you're it's so hard.

AJ Harper (04:10.71)

Miserable for sure. Parking is miserable, but I have you know, I have tips.

Mike Michalowicz (04:14.734)

That's okay. I'm I may take your tips or I may maybe I'll even Uber in for that. so today's episode we're gonna talk about what to do if your book launch fails. And you put quotes around fails because that's very subjective. the fact you launched a book is a miracle, I think, for for most people and and they have such high expectations and we don't comply with it. But you have some interesting stories that we're gonna be exploring. Before we kick into that, I want to introduce you. This is AJ Harper. Yeah.

Yeah. So today we're gonna talk about what to do if your book launch fails and you put quotes around fails. I think it's very subjective, right?

AJ Harper (04:54.54)

Yeah, but the reason I put quotes around fails is because that's what people think. They think I failed. And so it's you know, that's what we want to talk about today.

Mike Michalowicz (05:04.716)

Yeah, good. Cause I it's very subjective. And I think people set an expectation that's unfair for themselves and they then miss the long term opportunity. But before we dig into all that, I want to welcome you to our virtual studio. I know the next recording I think we're doing after these sc groups or the session that we're doing together, I think we're gonna do it in studio in person again. But this is this is AJ Harper. She is the authority.

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On writing must read books. In fact, her book is called Write a Must Read. Coincidence or psychic phenomena. And I'm telling you, folks, I consistently hear from fans of this show that when they've read the book, they have found it to be the most game changing book in their journey as an author. So please do yourself a favor, get a copy of it. AJ, what I admire about you is y you've been through trials and tribulations that no human I know would come out.

of the other side still surviving mentally, emotionally, physically, but you do all of it. So I just wanna acknowledge you're a tr a freaking trooper. Like I don't know how you sustain through some of the life experiences that you've had thrust in front of you and just very impressed by that. Thanks. And hope you're okay when you know in the circumstances of every

AJ Harper (06:25.944)

I am you know what, what I feel like lucky to be Gen X because I feel like we were raised to just sort of suck it up and I'm glad that I have those skills. and I tr I try to always count blessings and I tried as that sounds. And then I just, you know, rest on things like really helpful things. Right now is a new season of British Bake Off.

Mike Michalowicz (06:49.612)

Yes.

AJ Harper (06:50.978)

That calms me down, it makes me happy. I know it's just like little things that if you're wondering how I'm making it through things, it is bake off.

Mike Michalowicz (06:59.01)

That's so great that you found your outlet.

AJ Harper (07:02.072)

It's whatever. I mean, there might be something else. You know, I played a lot of mahjong this summer. That was super fun. Is your is anybody in your family playing it yet?

Mike Michalowicz (07:10.574)

not yet. My mother, there's a mahjong group and sh she doesn't participate 'cause she doesn't play and she's like, I really want to play with them. Like, why don't we learn mahjong together? And she's like, I don't want to.

AJ Harper (07:20.952)

Well if you want I'll come over and teach your mom.

Mike Michalowicz (07:23.786)

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I I'm in for it. Maybe we can have yeah. Well, no, the problem is if you teach my mom, then she'll want you to be her friend and come every week.

AJ Harper (07:29.706)

I will come are you kidding me? That's like a life dream.

Mike Michalowicz (07:33.89)

To play mahjong with a ninety one year old.

AJ Harper (07:36.283)

Your mom? Yes. I you think I wouldn't drive there and do it? I would have like a weekly date with your mom.

Mike Michalowicz (07:37.902)

She'd be so intimate.

Mike Michalowicz (07:44.928)

Okay. Well, we may just create something here. She would pine for that.

AJ Harper (07:49.754)

Mike, I I admire that you are the kind of person who puts family first so that when I am having challenges, you're just supportive and there's not a question.

Mike Michalowicz (08:01.8)

thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Yeah, I wish we had a chance to talk. I know we're texting and and yeah, my my my heart's with you. Yeah. We're gonna have to hug it out. Yeah. this podcast is supported by Simplified. They're a non paying sponsor. We it's funny. I've been listening to some of our historical episodes. they're a love sponsor. They love the show. We love them. So thanks, page two. The imprint with page two is called Simplified.

AJ Harper (08:09.014)

We're gonna see each other soon.

AJ Harper (08:25.944)

Them.

Mike Michalowicz (08:30.814)

If you're an author in the entrepreneurial space, gosh, page two simplified. We would love to have a conversation with you. How do you find it? Well, just do a quick Google. Type in page two simplified. You will find the page and you can apply to become an author. hey, w just before

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we dig into the rest of today's episode, what is I I think you have a Mastercraft left. You're doing one more, is that true?

AJ Harper (08:57.166)

So I normally wouldn't do one in December, but I had so many of my students ask me to do this and I decided to open it to the public. So a mastercraft is when I do a deep dive, usually two to four hours. It's a workshop on on a really tight subject, just one subject. And we we don't just I don't just teach it, you actually build it, work on it. And this time we're gonna do one on bulk buys. how to how to design those bulk buy incentives for your launch, but also beyond, because a lot of people

Don't continue with that once the launch is over. And so a lot of people had questions about it. You know, all those things where it seems simple to you. You you think it's simple, but then people keep get confused. It I I thought, what's difficult about this? But I had so many I know. But I had so many questions. I thought, okay, let's just go, let's just do one. So that's on December third. And if and it is open to the public if if anybody wants to join, or it's free to my members.

And you can go to Aj Harper dot com to learn more about it. And if for any reason you have trouble finding anything there, you can always you can always email email us and we will we'll find the information for you.

Mike Michalowicz (10:13.432)

That's amazing. So it's free for members. It's available for the public to invest in and and be there on December third. you know, that's right before I go on my now five week vacation. I to started to s yeah. You're adding a week? Yeah, yeah. I'm going to January eighteenth. So December

AJ Harper (10:33.432)

The reason behind that.

Mike Michalowicz (10:36.014)

because I wanted to do a quick trip out to see my son in Salt Lake City and do some snowboarding with him. And the later you do it, the better. So he's like, Why don't you come out in January? I also think there's a auto show. I had no idea. It it's so funny. I I was going through pictures, like historical pictures with myself and Jake, and we went to the New York Auto Show when he was like six years old, and I showed him some pictures. I'm like, remember this? It was fun. He's like, Remember that? That's the best day of my life. I'm like, what?

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He's like, yeah, I love auto shows. I'm like, you do? Like, we're not really car people at our house. I mean, whatever. I I enjoy a nice sports car or something, but he I didn't know he had any interest. He's like, I love that. So then I saw there was an auto show in Salt Lake City. So I'm like, let's go to an auto show and and snowboard. He's like, yeah, dad.

AJ Harper (11:26.399)

my gosh, how fun is that? And how great is it that he thinks it's this thing you took him to do is the best day of his life? Right. Come on.

Mike Michalowicz (11:28.27)

So next year week.

Mike Michalowicz (11:35.086)

Who knew he I had no no idea he he had any interest. So, okay. who's who inspired today's episode on what to do if your book launch fails?

AJ Harper (11:46.092)

So it's because of something that happened yesterday. Yesterday the USA Today bestseller list came out. Yeah. And everyone in my community was assuming that one of our authors, Roseanne Kapana Hajj, who we're going to interview.

Mike Michalowicz (12:02.432)

Yes, and her name's come up frequently on the show in the past too.

AJ Harper (12:06.062)

She we were all sure she would hit the USA Today bestseller list, and she didn't. What? And yeah, and she sold quite a few. She sold thousand over 5,000 books, and which would normally get you on the list. And I'll explain what happened. what in my estimation, what I think happened. But what was interesting was how it what came up from other authors in our community. And

It just got me thinking, we need to talk about this when you have set a specific goal for your launch or you have an expectation for your launch and you feel like it failed. There's also a lot of screw ups that happen with launches. Some other things happened yesterday to other authors. And so I thought, hey, this is a really good topic for us to discuss.

Mike Michalowicz (12:52.834)

I love this topic. May I read her message? I can do the reading of it.

AJ Harper (12:57.982)

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yeah, but let's give people some sense of who she is. So her book is *The Dysregulated Kid*. This is not her first book. She wrote this book in my workshop and she's a member of my community. She published with page two and the book is phenomenal. And it is about you know, nervous system regulation.

In children, but also how important it is for parents to co-regulate. So it's very simple, practical, powerful book that is a real game changer for parents and families. And she has that she is an expert in this. She has one of the top podcasts on this. And she worked tirelessly. I mean, she really, like I said, it wasn't her first book, but she wanted to learn a better way to connect with readers. And so she just

went for it and this book is phenomenal. So I wanna give that context.

Mike Michalowicz (13:59.49)

That helps. So it says from Roseanne says, I know you're gonna say I still sold thousands of books, and the most important part is people are messaging me about the impact. You know, we did talk about buying my own books, the ninety nine cent Kindle, all that other stuff, and I just didn't want to do it because nobody was gonna read those books. The whole point is to get the book in people's hands. There's a little typo there.

So they talk about your book and that spreads and I see that happening. I'm really glad I didn't do that because now we're getting contacted for speaking. People are telling me that they're starting book clubs and all that stuff. This is just phase one. So the nice thing is she logically gets that this is phase one. How was her emotion, especially for your community, expecting her to have such a great success with the USA Today listing?

AJ Harper (14:55.288)

Well, let me just explain what she meant by that. That was just a text that she sent me because this morning I texted her and I said, Hey, can I talk about what happened yesterday on the podcast? Are you cool with it? And she said, sure. And then she sent me that long text that she wanted to make sure. what she meant by she didn't want to be a person who bought her own books to get on the list. She didn't want to do the ninety-nine cent Kindle thing to try and get some sort of

momentary bestseller. That's what she was. So if anybody was wondering what she meant by that. Yes. So she just honestly was pure hustle. She just she just hustled. So she's also working with Pierre Janti. So that actually that also Yeah. So I had introduced her to him. If anybody's wondering who he is, he helps is it he's at Janti Digital and he helps authors with direct sales. and he's sort of wizard at

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Mike Michalowicz (15:35.166)
Great.

AJ Harper (15:50.252)

You know, TikTok shop. Well, not so much TikTok shop right now, but Facebook, the meta sort of Instagram and Facebook ads and how that connects to the direct sales. And she saw huge bumps in the organic sales outside of the direct sales with actual retailers, which helped. So there's a big lessons to be learned. I think ultimately she wanted to start a lot of stuff earlier than she did. but

I think the reason that she didn't make the list, because we've had authors make the list selling fewer books than she did. If you look at this week's list, there's so many big books on that list that just came out. One of them being Protocols by Huberman. There's a brand there's brand new fiction out that's huge. so you can't control what, you know, what are those books gonna be. And so on another week, she might have hit it.

That's the thing, is she probably would have on another week. But this was just that this one week. so

Mike Michalowicz (16:52.014)

Colleen's Colleen Hoover's book Verity is boosting again because it became a movie.

AJ Harper (16:57.378)

That's way high on the list now. And if you actually look the book the books that are always in the top twenty, like Atomic Habits and Let Them, the let them theory, they're way at the bottom. So that should tell you how big those new books are or the resurgence like Verity. so she just it was just a bad it was just a tough week.

Mike Michalowicz (17:19.85)

Yeah. So the the first lesson here is that your launch week and your ranking on USA Today does not in any way reflect the impact your book had in that week or will have going forward. There is competition and you don't know who's going to bring what on that week. but you've seen some people, AJ, launch and you you've experienced the reactions from folks.

AJ Harper (17:47.342)

Well, what was interesting about Roseanne is she's a very, you know, like I said, she's a member of my author community and very active and supportive of all the authors and people have been watching her hustle. And so they were all anticipating it as well. Like, she's totally gonna hit it. She's totally gonna hit it. So, you know, it's normal for me and my team to get up

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early on Wednesday and look at the lists and see if our people hit them. But we had T three top three book workshop. This was a my community.

We had T3 community people getting up early to look because they were so invested in Roseanne. And so I think they were emotional about it. I think they also, you know, one of the things that happened yesterday is I called Roseanne when she didn't hit it. And I was just like, just to have a little chat with her. And she said, What I don't want is for the community to feel defeated on because it they see how hard I hustled. Mm-hmm.

And then I don't want them to think they can't do it because they can. And it was just a week. That's all it was. It just a fluke of a week. Yeah. The problem is you get you get so invested in that specific outcome that you you get really sad. Really sad. You know? She's she's look, she is a true New Yorker. She's a to she's also Gen X, badass. She's like, you know what? I feel bad, but

I'm I'm gonna right away turn right around and keep it moving, you know, because the last thing you want is to be feel so sad that you stop moving, you stop pushing the book. And she talked about all the cool things that have happened because she sold so many books, the opportunities, the contacts, the and then that what she's hearing from readers, everything's blowing up for her. She already in the same day that she had didn't get USA Today bestseller, she

also got major media reaching out to her. So you know, so it's like just let let's not fixate.

Mike Michalowicz (19:47.223)
Interesting.

Mike Michalowicz (19:51.746)
Yeah. Yeah, and and that's frustrates me so much that so many authors fixate on a ranking. I gotta be a New York Times bestseller or I gotta be USA Today. Wall Street Journal now is gone. And I I see such there is value to it. I admit that. I see such I little value. I have no interest in it. And it confounds my publishers. When I was working with Penguin, they're like, you know, we're hoping you get w the Wall Street Journal and or whatever it was. And I'm like, I I don't care. And when I got it.

Like, congratulations. I'm like, for what? Like, didn't you see? I'm like, No, I really don't I really don't care.

AJ Harper (20:26.956)

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And this is a little bone I have to pick with you because I think we hit lists that you didn't tell me about.

Mike Michalowicz (20:32.27)

Seriously. Yes. Yeah, we know.

AJ Harper (20:35.163)

USA today more times than you realize because you weren't paying attention.

Mike Michalowicz (20:40.0)

Yeah, probably. And listen, there is value to it 'cause it's a credibility marker, but I think it's a credibility marker internally. I mean, I feel it when it happens naturally. Since I've never pushed for it, when it happens, it's like, hey, it's achieved something without a deliberate intent to make that happen. And to me that's more valuable. But you've seen people and you've witnessed some kind of launch disappointments. I just want to set the stage. What what have those been?

AJ Harper (21:09.556)

In the same day yesterday. Okay. So when I called Roseanne before that, I had seen a person on Instagram. I'm not gonna name this person, it's pretty well known person, crying about not hitting USA today on a video.

Mike Michalowicz (21:25.186)

Was was was a Huberman he didn't rank high enough.

AJ Harper (21:27.918)

interesting thing about Huberman, I just read a thing about how he didn't nobody was allowed to review it in advance. That they actually Yeah. That they actually kept people kept requesting it and they didn't send it out to the usual channels and that P they weren't giving the book. They only got the book maybe just a few days in advance, which is not typical. Yeah. Isn't that interesting?

Mike Michalowicz (21:53.102)

I would love to explore that strategy as if we can get any insider info on that.

AJ Harper (21:59.136)

I would bet, I would bet it's because they didn't they knew they were gonna sell like gangbusters because of his following. Yeah. So they didn't want any criticism in advance.

Mike Michalowicz (22:11.636)

okay. That's one angle. I another angle is secrecy builds intrigue.

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AJ Harper (22:18.444)

I think because it's all about science and different theories. Yeah, it's good. I think if people would have been poking holes left and right and I think they probably strategically said, Let's not do that.

Mike Michalowicz (22:30.316)

I did purchase the book, so I'm interested in reading it. Okay.

AJ Harper (22:33.294)

Okay. back so there was a person who was anticipating making USA Today, who's a known person and had hit lists before, which is weird to me that they would be upset about it. Anyway, they and so when I talked to Roseanne, I said, you know what, you're not crying, you're not crying on Instagram. And look, I understand. Have your feelings, do your thing. I'm just this is not my style to have a

Like have a cry, have a cry. It's not my style of film it. I just I don't know, man. But anyway, it was we had a laugh over that. But that was a person. So I just want to give context. That was a person who had major media. That was a person who who had major podcasts, like I'm talking the big ones. Yeah. Huge push. Didn't make the list either. That's because it was a bad week. Mm-hmm. Probably would have made the list a different week.

Mike Michalowicz (23:07.018)

Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz (23:32.834)

What are some of the other things that have happened that have

AJ Harper (23:36.406)

The same day yesterday, can I just say this is the same day. I I another big fiction author was super disappointed because their book didn't make it to the store on Launched. What? And it's a major publisher, lit and is little brown.

Mike Michalowicz (23:54.084)

A major publisher didn't have the book at retail stores on launch day?

AJ Harper (23:59.374)

Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz (24:01.96)

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Did COVID happen again yesterday? Like

AJ Harper (24:04.374)

Or it was Tuesday. Yeah. So, like I'm telling you, so this is all just happened. And I wanted to share the scope of that. That this is, you know, this is publishing. It's just there's stuff like this happens. It doesn't mean the won't go well eventually, but what you want, what people expect is publishing's gonna work like a well-oiled machine. Not

And people expect that if they put in this hustle, all these things will work out. Not because there's too many variables. Publishing is just total mayhem. And you just have to do your best and then keep moving. But you can't take any of these things as a sign of anything.

Mike Michalowicz (24:49.644)

You referred to your Gen X and you still used the classic Gen X line with the word not at the end. You're like, your book launch will be amazing. Not. my worst book launch ever, hands down, was the toilet paper entrepreneur, because I had no idea how to launch it. On launch day, it was not available on Amazon. We didn't set the links properly, only direct sales. And we didn't have our shopping cart set up right.

AJ Harper (24:59.277)

Ha ha.

Mike Michalowicz (25:19.054)

Patty Zanelli was my colleague at the time helping me. And this is the panic that ensued. Launch day was effectively zero books, literally zero sold. And the joke I say is that means my my own mom didn't buy a book that day because she couldn't. And so we we we pushed a launch back and we got those links going. Then we pushed again. But the first official launch day was zero books sold. And I called, I can't remember who the author was, and I said,

The launch was horrible. I sold nothing. And I'll never forget his line. He said, no, don't worry. He goes, That's simply the quiet before the quiet. And then he hangs up and he hangs up the phone. And I'm like, it was stunning. But that's the truth. I think so many authors put everything into this one flash moment, but a book lives on effectively into perpetuity, and we have to market accordingly.

AJ Harper (26:14.862)

There are other things that happen at launch that I've seen. I've seen authors with books that shipped way early. I'm talking weeks early. Okay. So here they're w and anticipating and then people are showing up on social media with their book way early. That also impacted their ability

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to get on on lists. So usually if Yeah. So if you're self publishing and then you there can be an issue when you do the on sale date versus it's a whole technical snafu.

And then Amazon just sends it out. And so it's out. Then that throws that throws off your plans. People get stressed about that. I've also seen it where there aren't enough books. So you run out, it's ten o'clock ten o'clock in the morning, sold out. And then now all you you got all the you're driving all these people to buy books and there's nothing there. I've seen people who had books come out, but it was missing pages, wonky things with the actual physical book. That's really depressing.

so you know, this is all stuff that I've seen. I've also seen people have readings and no one comes. I'm sure you laugh. But you know, like it's stuff that stuff's happened to me for sure. So or there's one person, you know.

Mike Michalowicz (27:27.324)
yeah.

Mike Michalowicz (27:30.774)
It's the worst reading ever. And and I've had those. Dude, I had that for the money habit. So the money habit we launch and page two is so helpful beyond any other publisher I've ever worked with. They're securing speaking engagements, media, and so forth. And they send me a note and say, Hey, really good news. A bookstore local to you is interested in having you speak at the store. And my experience with bookstores, I've only had one that was a great experience.

Otherwise, it's a low turnout, it's not well marketed. And how my list is is it's not geographical, it's it's demographical. So it's hard for me to bring audience. So I get this like

AJ Harper (28:11.99)
Wait, you're s wait a minute, wait a minute. You're saying you can't even just get your like poker buddies to come?

Mike Michalowicz (28:17.486)
Could yeah, I could, but that's embarrassing. Hey guys, you wanna listen to me just talk and and pay money? yeah. So so they get this and just inside of me cringes a little bit, like, no, no. So we we do share with a few people. The bookstore makes an announcement. I get there, there's a there's a sign in the window. This is in Mendem, New Jersey. It's a bookstore in a strip mall. I get there and there's a little like eight and a half by eleven piece of paper.

Saying local author Mike McAllowitz spelled wrong. the mic was spelled wrong, M-I-I-K-E. McAllowitz, Michalowicz was spelled wrong, here to speak about the money system. So I'm like,

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here we go. So I go in and they have like 25 copies of the book that that they purchased. So now I feel bad for the bookstore. They've taken a risk. This is expensive for them. And you know, five minutes before speaking, one minute left.

In walks Kim Logsen. She is a Money Habit mentor. She supported this book. And God bless Kim Logson. She brought three of her clients to come. That is the entire audience. So there's four people in the room, and it's Kim who brought everybody. I'm so attuned to keynoting. Like it's very hard for me to speak with a small group. It's it should be much more dynamic, but I just go into kind of keynote mode. And I just

I feel bad for them and I'm like, just make this a thirty minute keynote. And as I'm going, I'm like, make this fifteen minutes. And then

AJ Harper (29:53.474)

It's just a conversation. You went into keynote mode?

Mike Michalowicz (29:56.414)

Well, yeah, I said, Let me explain what the book is. And I just that's my default. So I explained it and I said, Hey, is there any questions? And then there's that obligatory, like, I gotta make up a question for Mike. It's so bad. So when everyone bought a book, which was kind. And I said, Hey, s help help support the bookstore. My ask here, this I thought was a kind of a good recovery. I said, I invite you to buy a book, not the money habit, any book here that you think you'd enjoy reading, because it's really about this bookstore.

And I said, and don't worry, they've sold every one of the Money Habit books. And I went in there and I paid five hundred books, five hundred bucks for my own books. Yay. yeah. Any bookstore that will invite me, I will buy all the books in stock. That's my little thing. And then I don't take them. I say, listen, I'm gifting these back to the store to gift to customers that want them. So that's what I did. But

AJ Harper (30:31.18)

You did not.

AJ Harper (30:46.37)

What did they say? I'm so curious.

Mike Michalowicz (30:48.856)

They were blown away. I got a thank you note later on. I I've done this to three other bookstores. There was one in the the beach area, or as we say, the shore here in Jersey. And yeah, yeah, yeah. Same thing. I bought the books and I I do it with the owners and they're they're stunned.

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They're stunned. And I say, Listen, I'm paying full retail price. thank you for having me. And you know, if you want to frame it in a way, because it maybe not everyone's in a position to afford that. Yeah. If if I had to rent a space

AJ Harper (31:01.058)

Beach area.

Mike Michalowicz (31:18.974)

it will cost more than 500 bucks. And they provide coffee and sometimes some treats. They're providing the space. Like it would cost you more than 500 bucks. So I see it that way. Okay. that's what I did. So the money happened, like, listen, not everything's going to work in your launch process. There is going to be defeating moments, but I do appreciate the humbleness it brings about. We're just we ain't a big deal. We're not a movie celebrity. We're we're just authors. We're just authors.

AJ Harper (31:46.99)

We're just authors. so but I thought we should talk about, you know, you when Fix This Next came out, that was you were really pushing hard. So Fix This Next was set to come out in April of twenty twenty. So probably probably y'all can figure out where this is going. Yep. But you should have context in that you were pushing so hard. You hired a book launch coordinator.

Mike Michalowicz (32:14.446)

Correct.

AJ Harper (32:15.03)

You had you were really going for it. And you had a whole bunch of speaking engagements lined up. You had a whole bunch of just so much. You were doing more for that book than you had for a lot of other books. So for so then COVID happened. Yep. And all your speaking dried up. Yeah. And a lot of the in all the in-person stuff was done. Plus there was a global crisis.

So nobody was gonna talk about this business book. And and at the time, many publishers were pushing back launches because of this to give people a chance. Pang and Random House did not push your book back.

Mike Michalowicz (33:00.054)

Well, yeah, I don't know if you know the full context. I I don't remember if you were on the call. Were you on the call with Adrian Zakheim? okay. So I gotta tell you, I don't know if I ever told you this story. So the backstory is I'm down at Don Miller's place. I put on the first year of the Authors to Authors event, which you are now a consummate speaker at the event. You'll be there next year, too. And you just you share such great topics, AJ. It's always a conversation.

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AJ Harper (33:06.072)

No.

AJ Harper (33:24.76)

I wanna do a craft talk next year though.

Mike Michalowicz (33:28.374)

gosh, that'd be badass. you're received so well. So thank you for volunteering your time to do that. And I hope the networking is is valuable to you. so we're at the first the inaugural year and I kick it off with with John Rulin who sadly has passed away and six other people the Chris Gallibo, James Clear, Don Miller, Ryan Holiday, John Gordon, myself, and and John Roland. That's the group.

To me, it's five other people. And I remember I meet John Gordon. He's the author of The Energy Bus, the coffee, I think it's called like the coffee club. I can't I can't remember his names, but they're very much motivational books. He's a very popular author. And I meet him for the first time at the hotel we're staying at, and we're heading over to Don's. And I get in the elevator, and he looks at me, he goes, you're you're you're the Mike dude, right? The guy who's lined this up. And I'm like, You're John Gordon. He's like, Yeah. And as he says that, and he's like, he's super cordial and nice to me.

He he gets a text on his phone, but it's like one of those ones like it goes bing, bing, bing, bing, bing, like three times in a row. Like, like so he instantly pulls it out and he goes, damn. I go, everything okay? He's like, just I just lost a speaking gig. And now listen, he's like a six-figure speaking gig guy. Like he's major, major. And a little part of me, the evil side of me, the devil kicks in, kind of snickers, like, what? Because he says, I lost it because of, because of this thing. COVID? What's COVID? This is in March. And I'm like,

That's crazy. And then we're still in the same elevator ride. That five seconds going down, bing, another one comes in. He goes, damn. He goes, I lost a second one. Now we're driving over to Don Miller's house. We arrive, and instantly people are like, what's this COVID thing? This is like serious, man. And and like three speakers. Ryan Holiday lost a gig. Chris Gallibo lost a gig. All of them there. I'm like, what? And I'm looking at my my phone and I'm not getting any anything. So I text my agent.

Li Hayes, company's called Go Leeward, and said, How are our gigs going? She's like, fine, nothing. And so I'm kind of like snickering, like, there's this weirdness going on for these guys, but it's overblown. I'm fine. And then we do our meeting for the day, and then I get the bing,

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bing, bing, bing, bing, and all of them are done. then one of the bings is Adrian Zackheim would like to talk to you. He is the publisher at the imprint portfolio at Penguin. I'm like, okay. So

AJ Harper (35:41.454)
no.

Mike Michalowicz (35:55.308)
We he's like, I'd like to talk to you and and the the launch that's coming up. So we get myself. I thought you were on the call. So it was myself and Kelsey then. And he goes, COVID's going on. He goes, We're thinking about shutting down the penguin offices because we don't want anyone to die. And me, me and Kel, that's his exact words. Me and Kelsey are like, this dude is so overblown. Like COVID is so overblown. People are losing their mind. The next day is the toilet paper crisis.

And he says it's our suggestion that we delay the launch. Well we so that what they they actually suggested delaying it. We said, We've put so much into this, we're so close. He goes, There's gonna be distribution problems, right? Are you crazy? No. The book goes on. So it was actually our decision.

AJ Harper (36:42.19)
I didn't know that. That's not I I had thought all this time I thought it was their decision.

Mike Michalowicz (36:48.258)
It was our decision. Our decision. It goes on. And he's like, Are you sure? And we're like, we're sure. Now fast forward, here's what played into our favor. Most people started delaying their launches. So we were going against anyone but like Al Huberman and all those folks. Like anyone that was launching a book was not launching a book. So the opportunity, not that we were pursuing it, but an opportunity to make a bigger splash presented itself.

The the launch for Fix This Next was our up to that point greatest launch. We subsequently have outlaunched it. but ironically, without a we had a book launch manager for that one. We've done all our launches without one and we've launched bigger. So just for our authors listening in thinking that you need someone to manage the launch, it helps. It's like a it's like a coordinator for a wedding. It definitely, definitely helps. And we can make recommendations. but you don't need one. And the book well, I think launch week for

That was seven thousand print copies of Fix This Next. It did get Wall Street Journal bestseller.

AJ Harper (37:53.024)
It probably also got USA today, but you weren't paying attention.

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Mike Michalowicz (37:56.258)

Didn't pay attention, didn't care. The week after launch, Adrian Zackheim, who never communicated with me, like that wasn't his thing, calls up and says, Holy cow, congratulations on Wall Street Journal bestseller. They even sent like this bobblehead gift, which was kind of associated with the launches of of that book because pr private first got more momentum during that period as a result. So yeah, it ended up being

Up to that point, our best launch that we've ever had.

AJ Harper (38:29.11)

And you also, you know, you had to pivot and get creative about how you were gonna communicate. And that's when you started doing all of those webinars in different groups and so forth. And that's been a strategy that you've maintained and adapted over time. So I see it as a win win. But that's an example of, you know, stuff happens and we can't control it. It's how we react to it that matters.

Mike Michalowicz (38:51.308)

Yeah. Yeah. The other thing that also played out was distribution was a problem. trucks were not rolling. And that meant books weren't in certain locations. So we over it was interesting with with that book. We got into a situation where the book w outsold and wasn't available, specifically on Amazon. We depleted the inventory. What's interesting is we had to wait for that to be restocked there was like a two week period. It is really tough. You're launching a book.

Book sells out, which sounds amazing, and people can't get it. Book purchases, for some people, is a whimsical choice. Like, I'm gonna get it. Yeah. And they click. And if it's not available, they're like, I forgot I totally forgot about it. And they're on the next book that they buy and you're forgotten. So that was painful. and so that that really does happen. Stocking become an issue, it becomes an issue. Interestingly, with the launch of the money habit.

AJ Harper (39:35.735)

Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz (39:49.378)

we started to run out of stock. It was such a that was actually our best launch ever. And what happened was certain retailers, I think Amazon ran out, paid

AJ Harper (39:58.658)

Page two.

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Mike Michalowicz (40:00.984)

Bookshop right now. Page two did a redistribution. They pulled back inventory and they moved things around and they got us back on track within days. Where in our in our launch of Fix This Next, it took weeks. Now, Penguin was facing a COVID pandemic and dist and trucks were not rolling. So I'm not saying that's a Penguin versus Page Two thing, but you can realign inventory.

Wh what would you say not to do really from the emotional aspect? W what you know, what's the core problem here and what what can we fix?

AJ Harper (40:35.874)

The core problem is we're attaching happiness to the outcome.

We're only gonna feel good if we get this specific outcome. It's good to have I'm I love a big goal. I love a crazy ass goal. I I think that's wonderful, but I don't attach my happiness to whether or not it happens. I think it's fantastic to have a goal that is meaningful to you and and then to go put your heart and soul into it. But you need to realize that your happiness does not depend on it. Your success is not defined by it.

And I think that's when people do that, they end up so defeated that they they tend to either take a really big pause, which, you know, hurts your books. You need to keep momentum up once the book is out, not pause. Yeah. Or they take they just quit. Yeah. And and I don't want to see either of those things happen. So you you've got to stop attaching happiness to the outcome. I think setting a goal that makes sense for your book and for you.

is really good. So not picking some sort of arbitrary number, not being attached to vanity metrics. it's really, really important. And then just work your butt off and let go of the outcome.

Mike Michalowicz (41:54.646)

Yeah, yeah, because it really is arbitrary. Literally, if you whatever number of books you sell, you may get on the USA Today, you may get Wall Street Journal. well, it doesn't exist. New York Times or USA. Yeah, you may get one or the other, regardless of what you sell. So if you sell, say, 5,000 books and you get on, and you sell 5,000 books and you don't get on, we've sold still sold 5,000.

AJ Harper (42:17.474)

Still sold 5,000 books. And all of the things you did to get those 5,000 sold are usually things that are getting you in front of people, making people more aware of you. And that's really important because that's momentum.

Mike Michalowicz (42:33.41)

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You know, Profit First is now in its I wanna say fifteenth year, somewhere approaching that. we got a fat check that just came in.

AJ Harper (42:43.405)

good, I was gonna ask. It's that time of year. That's my favorite time of year.

Mike Michalowicz (42:47.702)

Yeah, we got hundred and forty grand.

AJ Harper (42:53.674)

By the way, did you notice that the two of us chose you said what's your favorite what's your favorite season? And I chose spring, which is a season where we get royalty checks and you chose fall, which is the other season where we get royalty checks. That's probably it.

Mike Michalowicz (43:07.512)

Maybe that's really Yeah, September thirtieth, which was yesterday, is is literally my favorite day. It's fantastic. Cause yeah, all the all the reports come in and and the checks come literally today the checks should be wired in and then Kelsey will be sending your portion. Profit First, overall sales are starting to decline on the bestseller ranking, but volume stayed effectively the same. we'll see how it is next.

AJ Harper (43:13.176)

Mm-hmm.

AJ Harper (43:33.74)

mean wait, clarify that. You're saying you the the book number of books sold stay the same, but it's not ranking where you want it to rank?

Mike Michalowicz (43:41.24)

Correct. That that looks like a I I didn't go into detail. Exactly. Who cares? Like the check was a nice big check. The check's the check, baby. and I haven't gotten the one from page two yet. I didn't

AJ Harper (43:46.434)

The check's the check.

AJ Harper (43:55.064)

But wait a minute. Did this is gonna be my big question that I was gonna ask you after we recorded. So it's up to you. Do you mind if I ask you right now while we're recording? No if we

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were gonna get one this time because I wasn't sure of the timing of it 'cause the book came out in January and so there's usually a big delay.

Mike Michalowicz (44:04.52)

Of course. We're we we have to help our own.

Mike Michalowicz (44:13.576)

I I haven't seen anything. Kelsey told me we're expecting it. So yeah, but I don't know if that's a misnomer.

AJ Harper (44:23.978)

I didn't know if it was this fall or if it was gonna be next quarter. my god. Well no, they do cour once it kicks off, page two is quarterly.

Mike Michalowicz (44:27.822)

Spring.

Mike Michalowicz (44:32.26)

I didn't realize that.

AJ Harper (44:34.466)

But there's a big delay before the first one.

Mike Michalowicz (44:36.802)

Okay, okay, we'll find out. We're kinda hoping for it.

AJ Harper (44:40.472)

So you don't actually know? No. Okay, can you text her?

Mike Michalowicz (44:44.686)

Yeah, yeah. I'll text her during our break. Okay. So if w if that one comes in, because it's a hybrid model, we're expecting on for the print books, six fifty to seven dollars per book. yeah, and so we've moved we've definitely moved over ten thousand print books. So that's a big that's a big check. And then there's also

A f 90%, I think, of the royalty that we get from Audible and Kindle goes to us. We use their distribution arm. So it could it could be a significant piece of money coming in, I hope. Happy day. Happy day. Okay. So the the the lesson, the final lesson I want to share is the book launch is for the rest of your life, is really what boils down to. Is there's a launch period. Do not measure success via that.

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AJ Harper (45:22.741)
happy day.

Mike Michalowicz (45:40.202)
Stick with it. And some books have their greatest success months or years or even a decade or more after that that launch period that we're putting everything into. So stick with it. Great books need great marketing for life.

AJ, before we wrap it up, you have your community. I know we talked about your master class that's coming up, but is there other elements of your community that you want to share and people can check out?

AJ Harper (46:08.546)
Always, yeah. So we just we just released our retreat dates for twenty twenty seven and we already have quite a few of them sewn up. So if you were thinking of joining us on Madeline Island next summer for editing retreat to see if your book actually works and to see to get my personal feedback for have me as your editor for a week, that is next summer. And you can go to AJ Harper dot com to see if those dates work for you.

We only have at this point, so this is October first. It this will air

In late October, maybe. at this

Mike Michalowicz (46:48.546)
Yeah. This I know I think it may the fifteenth. I don't know.

AJ Harper (46:51.822)
At this point I think I have of the twenty four slots, I think I might have about sixteen left. But by the time this airs, it'll be fewer. So you definitely definitely wanna go check it out if you wanna get it on your calendar for next week.

Mike Michalowicz (47:04.526)
Do it. Freaking do it. Like it is so interesting when you devote yourself to a craft, what impact it has. I think too many people in the author space just say, I'll be an author and they they write a book and they put it out there. there's a few, a select few that devote themselves to the craft. That's a full time effort that they invest in the education, the community, they participate, whatever investment means. D but your time and and

And those people inevitably are that much better and they get a multiple better in results.

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AJ Harper (47:39.502)

Can I tell you just real quick, quick little story? I'd love it. So in we did our we all we do a retreat in June, one in July, and one in August. And so in August, there was a one author, she's also a page two author, coincidentally, but was not part of my community before this, Anne Roche. And her book is The Touchstone Process. And she could not come to retreat because of client work. She was in the

in substantive edit already. So she was already in that stage with her editor. wow. Had already given her feedback first round. Yeah. Yeah. And at the last minute she said, I have to I well actually she had a strategy call with me because she joined my membership. And when people pay for a full year, they can get a f a f a strategy call with me, which I don't actually take private clients. So it's one of the few ways people can get that call. And she said about a few days later she said

I got so much out of that call. I'm gonna move my clients. I'm gonna take that last spot for a retreat. So she moved Heaven and Earth and came out here in August with a book that had already been in edit. Wow. And you know what? She f totally found her voice again while she was here. We revamped her intro chapter one, like the baseline of it. But we've also so the killer now.

Mike Michalowicz (48:56.588)

I love him.

AJ Harper (49:05.402)

And she also really got to understand how she had kind of dampened her own voice. Now that book is just classic and it is in fact I just got to see a revised version of it. So that pe people can share what they did. And my gosh, she has just worked it heck out of that to the reader's benefit. And

I was so excited because you would think, what can I get done? when I'm already an edit, but so much. So much so that her editor was like, What what happened? because he noticed the difference in the in the chapter one and that she really showed up in her voice. And it it wasn't anyone's fault. It's just that in the editorial process, we sometimes quiet our own voice because we we try to make things work and we try to make ourselves more

relatable to more people and we we tone ourselves down and and she needed to connect that spark inside of her again.

Mike Michalowicz (50:16.418)

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That's a fantastic story. before we wrap things up, I want to give a couple shout-outs. John Briggs launched his book recently, Take Breaks Work Better. We're have an episode with him at some point. We're gonna try to get him on air, maybe a bonus episode. But if you're an author, taking breaks and working better is something you should read. Also, Brian Harriet, who worked very closely with you, John John Briggs did too, but Brian Harriet launched Time Freedom. That's out there now. And gosh, if you're an author, that's what you need. So there's two books to get: Take Breaks Work Better by John Briggs.

And Time Freedom by Brian Harriet. Also, Josh Spodick, he's a longtime listener of our show. We shouted him out a few episodes back. He's the guy down in New York who's running a solar system for off the grid. He's Josh, so I know you're listening in because you listen to every episode. Dude, thanks. we love getting your notes and the inspirational words that you have for us. All right, guys, that's it for today's episode. Next week, we're gonna talk about using Kickstarter to find.

AJ Harper (50:57.358)

He's off the grid in the West Village.

Mike Michalowicz (51:15.926)

Your book. To fund to fund your Yeah. I should wear my glasses. Using Kickstarter to fund

AJ Harper (51:20.92)

Readers. You need some readers.

Mike Michalowicz (51:22.902)

Cheaters to fund your book. As always, remember this: don't write that book. Write the greatest book you can.