

# How to Write (& Publish) a Book Transcript

**Michael:** Hello, everybody. I am Michael Bungay Stanier, you probably know that. I'm with my good friend, and colleague, and supporter, and mentor, and guide, Jesse Finkelstein, the co-founder of Page Two. And you are here for 45 minutes of madness about book writing. Because writing a book is a mad idea, it's probably the thing you should not do, unless you really should do it.

And that's what we're going to get into. I know people are still joining us, so just to give us a chance to catch up, in the chat, which we will be using a little bit, I want you to write down the name of one book that really matters to you. One book that has moved you, a book that has shaped you in some way.

Obviously, you get bonuses and points if you mention my books. Actually, don't mention my books; mention another book. *The Coaching Habit*. Well done, *Linchpin*. Okay, don't mention my books. *Bird by Bird*, *Good Inside*, *How to Begin*.

Jesse, I know this is tough for you because you've got a thousand authors you love, but if you had to pick a book, a non-Page Two book, what would you, what would you name?

**Jesse:** Non-Page Two book... Sort of one that I carry everywhere in my back pocket?

**Michael:** The one that's shaped you in some way, one that's kind of stuck, made a mark.

**Jesse:** Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. It's like nothing I had ever read before or since.

**Michael:** That is fantastic. We've got lots of amazing books coming through here.

*Humble Inquiry*, I love that. *The Outward Mindset*, I don't even know that one. *The Seven Habits*, of course. *10 Percent Happier*, that's fantastic. *Quiet*, Susan Cain, wonderful. *Into the Magic Shop*. A number of people have mentioned *When Breath Becomes Air*. That's come up quite a few times.

So that's obviously a powerful book. I haven't read that. So at a bare minimum, you've already got a reading list for the rest of your life coming through on the chat. Jesse and I don't even need to add any value here. We've already added the value.

All right, this is a conversation, particularly about prescriptive non-fiction, which basically means self-helpy books and businessy books, and those kinds of books which are trying to guide you to think differently, to do things differently. It's what I tend to write. It's what Jesse tends to publish. I've written eight or nine books now, and all of them are kind of facilitative.

It's like, let me show you a model. Let me show you a tool. Let me show you a framework. Let me show you some steps to try and help with that. So, if you're thinking of writing or you're trying to write a book like that, this is going to be a great webinar for you.

Now, we have a membership site called The Conspiracy. It's where people come to work on their Worthy Goals. Goals that are Thrilling, Important, and Daunting. This all comes from the How to Begin book. The seed for this idea actually came from within The Conspiracy because there are a number of Conspirators who are writing books and thinking about writing books; two or three have just published their books as a result of being part of The Conspiracy.

And I was like, we should get Jesse in to come and answer some questions. And I thought it was going to be me in the 20 Conspirators writing books. We've now got 1700 people signed up because we decided to take it further. But a big thank you to all the Conspirators who sent through questions.

This wasn't one of the questions, but I'm going to ask Jesse right from the top. "Why endure the misery of writing a book?" because it sucks writing a book! Or, as somebody once said, it's easy. You stare at a blank sheet of paper till drops of blood appear on your forehead. So books are hard to write. The first draft is always a disappointment.

The second draft is actually worse than your first draft. By the fourth draft, you're actually back to about where you were in the first draft. By the seventh draft, your book is taking shape, but you hate the idea, you hate the book, you hate yourself. You publish a book. Most books don't sell many copies.

So why would you do this? So, Jesse, you've worked with hundreds, if not thousands, of authors now. What drives people to write books? What are good reasons to write a book?

**Jesse:** Well, first, I'm going to challenge the assumption that it is misery from start to finish. It never fails to surprise me all of the different reactions that authors can have to different parts of the process.

Some people actually love the writing part and hate the marketing. We get all different stripes. People have different stripes and preferences. But “Why Endure the Misery?” I think we all know that there is something unique and special about a book. That might sound like the most obvious thing in the world, but I've been in publishing for almost three decades, and I've published through some times when people were challenging that assumption.

Like, “Well, in a digital landscape, what does a book even mean?” It still means something. So to create something, craft something in its long form and put it out there—it doesn't matter what format, digital, print, audio, but to distill something very essential about what you are up to in the world at that moment. Then, to put your stamp on it at that moment in time means that you are standing on a platform of some kind.

You are standing in your authority. We think of the word “Author Authority” and just planting your flag in that topic at that moment. That is powerful, and no blog post, no video, no article can replicate.

**Michael:** Yeah. There's a way that a book lasts where I can hold it up and go, look, here's a book I wrote, and I've still got it on my shelf, and I see people reading it, and people send me photos of it in a way that never happens with a blog post.

For me, I think there are often two really good reasons to write a book. One is, you just want to write a book. It's a really good reason, which is like, it's been on a bucket list. I want to have my name on the cover. I want to be able to give this to my parents and my siblings and say, “See, I wrote that book that I've been talking about for five years.”

That is a great motivator. And, people say, well, it's a bit just egotistical. I'm like, it's 100 percent egotistical and it's a great reason, which is I want to

create something. I want to bring something into the world. The second good reason for prescriptive nonfiction, in particular, is it can be a key part of a business.

For me, I write the books I write because they are portals through to a world that I am offering more on, whether that's as a speaker, whether it's as a training company—I have a training company on the back of *The Coaching Habit* called Box of Crayons, whether it's a community like *The Conspiracy*, which people are working on their Worthy Goals from *How to Begin*. There is a way that a book is often a book plus (+). You're actually building this into something more.

So, if you're thinking about expanding authority and credibility and leverage and codifying intellectual property, which are all key parts of running a business, writing a book can be a really powerful way of doing it. So that's a great start. Jesse, this is one of the questions from one of the *Conspirators*.

What difference do you see in authors and their approach when they're writing their first book versus they're on to their second, third or fourth book? Does anything shift?

**Jesse:** Well, I encourage authors not to get too stuck in thinking in a linear way. You know, there's the debut book, and then what is it, the sophomore efforts and people get really hung up and undaunted by that idea.

I like to think of different books, different times for different reasons. So in terms of the book itself, I just always encourage authors to think of it both. Yes, there is a continuum in terms of how it's building your career or supporting the building of your career, but think of each one as its own entrepreneurial endeavour.

That said, one thing I do notice when authors write a second or third book after the first is that there's been a whole education in which they understand themselves better, first of all. They understand their process, what they loved, what they didn't love. And honestly, you just have to go through it. It's like childbirth.

You can take all the prep courses—I speak from experience—all the prep courses you want. You have to go through it, and then you have your second child, and it's still hard, still painful, still amazing, but you also have learned a

lot along the way about what you like and what you want out of the whole experience.

**Michael:** Here's the insight I'd share around this. And I think it builds nicely on what you're saying, Jesse, which is I think people get stuck on their first book because they're trying to put in it everything they've ever learned and ever thought was useful. It's like, "But wait, there's more. No, no, I've got some more stuff I can shove into this book," because everything you know is useful.

And I'll tell people now: I have a very clear design principle when I write a book, which is this—"What's the shortest book I can write that is the most useful?" And the books that I have had the most success with are the books where I can, in a single breath, describe the problem and the solution that I am solving.

A lot of people, when they start writing their first book, are like, "I'm so excited! I kind of want it to be about this. And here's everything I've ever learned on leadership." And I'm like, that is almost certainly a terrible book—or if not, just a bland book—because it's just a sea of obviousness. There's something powerful about claiming a problem, solving the problem, and finding your unique framework and unique voice as you do that.

And what I've noticed is that once people get over that first book, their books get a little tighter often, and a little more focused, and a little more deliberate about how they're working. Not always. I think of Charles Duhigg. He wrote *The Power of Habit* as his first book—a really clear thing: "I'm going to explain how habits work."

Then he wrote a second book, which was a mishmash of other stuff. It's like, "Here's all the other stuff that didn't make my first book," and it wasn't very good. And now, he's just written his third book called *Supercommunicators*, which is like, "Oh, here's everything I know about supercommunication." It's been a big hit. Anything to add on that, Jesse?

**Jesse:** I would love to add something. When people think about a short book versus a long book, I think many people are still hung up in the world of traditional publishing where, honestly, from an insider's perspective, word count is often just completely connected to what retailers will say—the length a book has to be in order to price it according to a certain price. So it's just sort of a formula that we have used for a long time in the book industry.

And I remember when we started working together, Michael, maybe a decade ago, you came and said, "Well, I kind of want to explode that."

Not because you don't care about the way in which the book is going to make its way into the world through distributors and retailers. They're very important parts of the process. But you said, "I want to think about my reader first; what does my reader need?" And that is what dictates the length of a book.

We've all read those books where we thought or said to our friends, "Well, this is pretty good, but it could have been half the length."

**Michael:** Yeah, exactly. I literally just read a manuscript of a friend of mine. He's written a book before—he's written a really excellent book about a certain topic.

It's 70,000 words, and I'm like, "Ah, this is so good. And yet, I'm your friend, and I can't be bothered reading this. It's just too long. And I can see a 20,000-word book in there." And he's like, "Yeah, I'm contracted to write a 70,000-word book." And I'm like, "Oh man, you're being screwed over by a publisher who thinks length equals value." And it doesn't.

In fact, the opposite, if you can make something so short that I can actually get to the end of it. Then you've given a gift to your readers. Alright, there is a pretty big question: What's the process for writing a book? So, I'm going to say, here's a spoiler.

You sit down, and you write the book. But Jesse, I'm wondering if you've noticed, what does it take to write a book?

**Jesse:** First, since we're talking about practical nonfiction, I recommend writing some kind of proposal, business plan, brief, whatever you want to call it, like a blueprint for your book so that you know what you're doing. Just write the outline.

If you can distill that outline and get very clear with yourself on what the different chapters are and what you are covering in each chapter, that's important. But one thing we love to do early with our authors is to really think about—well, we answer that question you posed, Michael: What

problem does this solve for your reader? And who is your reader, and what do they need?

And so if you can get very clear on that blueprint, the book writing process itself can flow much more. I wouldn't say easily, but more readily. We love to think of that as step one.

**Michael:** I love that.

**Jesse:** Then yes, go away and write.

**Michael:** Yeah, I mean, I don't do that with Page Wwo. And I think that's because I snuck in before they made their authors do that.

But what happens is I'll go to Jess, and I'll go, "I've got an idea for a book," and she'll normally say, "Well, that's interesting." But I then spend pretty much the next six months trying to find the shape of the book, trying to find the arc, trying to knead the dough until all the excess stuff gets out.

I don't need dough. I wring the towel until all the excess water is out of the towel until I've found the shape and the arc of it. So I do a lot of that work after I've signed a contract, but normally, you do that work beforehand to kind of like, I've got a pitch there.

**Jesse:** Can I speak to that Michael? That's where it comes back to trusting yourself as a writer, too. Ideally, you have support from a publisher an editor or some partner in the process. But once in a while, the best-laid plans are set, we dig in, and the author realizes at some point—we've got to unleash this.

The author just needs to go and write, and there's a discovery process through the writing. So, I want to honour that and say it's all about what really works for you. You've got to try it and see what works.

**Michael:** I mean, How to Work With (Almost) Anyone, one of my books, wasn't at all the book I pitched to you.

I wrote it, and everybody was like, "This is a terrible book." And I had to blow it up and, and, and pick something out of the rubble and rebuild the book from there.

The other key motivator for me is the framework that I set out actually in the *How to Begin* book. And so, for those of you who don't know it yet, in that book, I talk about finding a Worthy Goal.

And the Worthy Goal is very much often writing a book. And a Worthy Goal should be Thrilling, Important, and Daunting. And this is a framework I use all the time. And I'll tell you what these three things mean. Thrilling means, does this light me up? Do I get excited? Do I know the why of the work? Am I connected to a sort of sense of this really matters to me?

And it's a useful question because sometimes we inherit goals. You're like, "Oh, I should be writing a book." And if you don't have any kind of internal motivator for that because this is your internal motivation, you're going to get stuck.

Important is, does this serve the world? Does this make the world better than it would be without it?

And I think this is really important, particularly for prescriptive non-fiction, because you're like, "I'm looking to make somebody's life better in what I have in this book." And the clearer you can be about who you serve in your book, the more powerful it can be. And also, that becomes external motivation. So now you're trying to set up internal and external motivation.

And then the third part of that is Daunting, which is, is this going to stretch me and grow me? And that's different for different people. I know when I'm writing a book, even though I'm on to my eighth or ninth or tenth now, I'm looking to try and stretch myself and stretch what's possible with the book and push my partners at Page Two to go, "How do we create something new and different and amazing in this?"

So I constantly want to be at that learning edge. I mentioned *How to Begin* in part because we're going to send you an email after this, which will: A-) give you a worksheet—it's completely free. It's a fillable PDF worksheet where you can work through the *How to Begin* process. You'll get this in an email, but Emma's going to put a link in the chat now for you.

And then, if you're really keen to go further and you want to do the [How to Begin video course](#), we're going to send you a code, **BOOK**, where you'll get 20 percent off the price. All of that's coming in an email afterwards, but I just



wanted to give you a heads-up on that right now. Alright, digging into the process around writing.

Jesse, how do you tame your dragon? by, which I mean tame your editor. Give me some tips on working well with an editor.

**Jesse:** Well, first of all, think about the editorial process as querying. That's how we like to think of it. Your editor isn't the person with the red pen. That comes later. The red pen is proofreading, right?

That's right and wrong stuff: spelling errors. But when enduring the developmental editing process, the substantive process, a good editor should be asking the right questions to tune out the best in you as the author. That's really what it's about. So trust the process, lean in, let the editor ask the right questions, and then challenge yourself to think meaningfully about those questions.

As a writer, I think, naturally, you know your subject area so well that there can be a natural defensiveness built-in—understandably so. The authors I work with, who then take a second beat after initially feeling, “Well, that has to stay in; the reader needs it.” Those authors will enter into a really meaningful dialogue with their editor, and it should be a conversation.

So there's a backing and forthing. And if, ultimately, the author knows—once you've done all of that self-questioning—that it's really important to your reader, lean into that and speak up for yourself in dialogue with your editor. That's when the best result will come.

**Michael:** I love that. So I'm going to build on two things on that. First of all, your editor doesn't know how to work best with you. So teach them how to do that. Like when I work with Kendra at Page Two, I say to Kendra, “I need you to be fiercer with me than you are with most of your other authors. I want you to edit this to the bone. I want you to be ruthless.”

Kendra is extremely lovely, so I'm kind of asking her to step out of the way she probably normally works with people. I'm like, “I need a fierce partner here.” Because I come with some authority—literally, I've got books, and I've had successful books. I can sound pretty persuasive when I'm in conversation.

So I need her to know that and not be fooled—or not to collude with my own delusions around that. So, first of all, with Kendra, I'm like, be fierce, push back, don't believe everything I say, because I probably don't believe everything I say.

The second thing that somebody said to me, and I think this is helpful in general, is as a rule of thumb, you should believe your editor when they tell you what's wrong because they're almost certainly right.

They've almost nailed the kind of structural issue or the tonal issue that isn't working. But don't believe what your editor suggests as a solution. That's just one of the solutions and you may see a different way through that, a different option, a different thing that's truer to you and true to the book that you're imagining.

But almost certainly if like this isn't working, what that means is this isn't working. And then, between the two of you, you can figure out some potential solutions. Here's what I tell Kendra. I've got a very specific goal with her. The process is, what's the shortest book I can write that will still be useful?

Because I have a very clear goal. I want my readers to read my book to the end. Which is, I mean, you know how hard that is because you've got a whole bunch of books that you have half-read in your life. Because it is hard to read a book, but then it's really hard to market a book—get them to buy the thing.

And then once even they bought it, it's hard to get them to read the thing. I'm trying to write a book that is irresistibly readable. And that's what I'm trying to work with my editor around. And I can't do that by myself. I need somebody to support me around that. Obviously, I had a relationship with Kendra for a while, but I also used other readers to help me with that.

Where I'm like, tell me where you get stuck. Tell me where this is crappy. When I sent people the first draft of *How to Work with (Almost) Anyone*, Misha wrote back and went, "I've read 60 pages. I have no idea what your book is about. This is terrible." And I was like... Well, the first draft is always crap. But this is crappier than I thought it was. Let's start again. Very helpful.

Jesse, let's talk about the options people have for publishing their books. I think there are three options. Option one is self-publishing. And we're not

going to spend any time on that because it basically is, can you create a PDF?

If you know how to create a PDF, you can upload it into the Amazon system and follow their guidance, and you'll get something out on Amazon, which will be Kindle and print on demand, and you'll be perfectly okay. Easiest, most profitable—less likely to get you a really brilliant book.

Number two is traditional publishing, which I think is an outstanding 18th-century industry. It's totally rocking it. But mostly, it's terrible. Mostly, the experience of working with a traditional publisher—Jesse can't say this because it's part of her community, but I can. Mostly, traditional publishers are terrible. They don't know how to sell a book. They're playing a numbers game, so they're just trying to pump books out into the world.

You hope that they're going to help you market and sell things, but they don't. They often give you far less editing and kind of book-building than you hope. There are some people, but there are very few people I know who go, "Honestly, traditional publishing is the best decision I've ever made." That's almost not true for anyone.

And then the third version is hybrid publishing, which is what Page Two is. And obviously, we're hoping that some of you become Page Two authors. I think there's an option here.

But Jesse, give us a quick summary of how hybrid publishing and Page Two's model are different from those of traditional publishers.

**Jesse:** Well, thank you for outlining them. I think you're right about those categories, broadly speaking. The funny thing is that within the hybrid spectrum, it can look very, very different from one need to the next. I encourage everybody thinking about finding a publisher—whether it's traditional or hybrid—to think about the kind of partner you want. What do you want from the experience as well as the result? And what are the deal breakers for you?

So for Michael, for instance, as you can hear in the very strong way he's describing his preference for hybrid, I know for you, Michael, you're very entrepreneurial. It's very important to you to have a lot of agency in the process, to really own your intellectual property. That's hybrid.

**Michael:** The agency is the code word for control. I really care what my book is called and what it looks like and what the reading experience is and the words that show up in it.

And with hybrid publishing, I am effectively the executive publisher of my books. I get to make all the decisions in the end with lots of guidance and support and coaching. But in the end, it's down to me to make those decisions. And I really care about that.

**Jesse:** Yeah. And Page Two authors really care about that.

The way we define a Page Two author is it's someone who is changing the conversation in their field. You're actively making change within the conversation and other parts of your ecosystem. So you want the book to do that, too. And it should do that in brilliant alignment with everything else. That is what a really good top-tier hybrid publisher can help you with.

**Michael:** Yeah. I am just seeing some questions coming through. I'm sorry. We've got so many questions and so much content. I'm not paying that much attention to the chat. So apologies for that. Somebody's asking how you get an editor. Well, you either sell your book to a publisher, like Page Two agree to work with you.

They've got a backlog. Not everybody who pitches Page Two gets selected, but if you do, then you get assigned an editor. But I self-published *The Coaching Habit*. And then I moved it into the hybrid publishing model, and I found an editor by word of mouth. Seth Godin recommended his editor to me, and I worked with Catherine, and she did a wonderful job. And so I hired one. There are editors for hire everywhere, so you can find your editor around that.

Let's talk about who makes money writing books. I'm going to tell you what I think the answer is, Jesse, and then you can build on it and tone down my answers.

**Jesse:** Okay.

**Michael:** In traditional publishing, you don't really make much money.

You will get an advance. In the glory days, they were like these enormous figures. These days, they're pretty small figures, maybe a couple of thousand dollars. And it's not even money to write the book. It's an advance on future sales. So the publisher's kind of going, "We think you're going to sell a few thousand. We'll give you a bit of money towards that."

You have to earn out your advance before you start earning money. An approximate number for your royalty is about eight to 10% of the cover price of your book. So, if you have a \$20 book, you're going to be earning somewhere between \$1.50 and \$2 a book after you've earned out your book. Most books sell less than 5,000 copies. Many books sell less than 1,000 copies. Many, many books in traditional publishing don't earn out their initial payment.

With hybrid publishing, the difference is that you pay money upfront to hire Page Two—or whoever your hybrid publisher is—to help you produce a book. I'm going to give you a very broad range here: it's somewhere between \$30,000 and \$50,000. So, it's not an inconsiderable investment.

What you get for that is a brilliantly professional team. You get distribution, which matters. You have a sales team getting your books all over the world. You earn roughly 30% of the cover price, so a much higher percentage around that. You maintain control, and you also have the backend, which is why having a backend—a business model behind this—can be so important.

As an example, I'm lucky enough to actually make a good living from *The Coaching Habit*. Because nine years after it, we're just about to celebrate the ninth birthday, it's still selling a bunch.

And *Box of Crayons*, my training company, has made literally tens of millions of dollars over the last ten years because of people who bought the book and then hired the company to come in and making the money there.

And then with self publishing, I know these numbers less accurately, but Amazon has set terms, you get a certain percentage of a Kindle, you get a certain percentage of a production thing.

You don't pay anybody any money—unless you hire freelance editors and freelance designers, which I would recommend you do. And there's a way of making money there.

Jesse, what did I get wrong?

**Jesse:** No, that's absolutely right. And if you self-publish through those platforms, it's roughly consistent with what you outlined when working through Page Two, because the platforms themselves take a big percentage.

**Michael:** Perfect. We've got 15 minutes more. We, there's still more to come. We're going to talk about titles. We're going to talk about marketing. We're going to talk about my three best tips. If you're going to launch a book, here are my three best tips.

But Jesse, how do people get picked up? How do they get found? How do they get discovered? How do they get to sign a contract with Page Two or with a traditional publisher? How do they get noticed in this world?

**Jesse:** I really recommend thinking of it not as getting discovered necessarily but as really identifying a strategy for yourself. And you being proactive in reaching out to the people you feel would be the right partners for you, whether it's hybrid traditional or finding a great editor.

Do your homework, identify who those people are, and then make the case for why you are the right fit for them as an author. So the way to do that is to be strategic, selective and then it's like you're discovering yourself. You are making the case for yourself. I think the more targeted you can be, and the more you can show them that you've done your homework.

If you're sending a query letter, for instance, at the top of the query letter to a publisher or an agent, identify why them and why you are the perfect fit in a sentence. And that would be the same coming to Page Two. I love it when we're reading our submissions to see, "I loved *The Coaching Habit* and I'm totally aligned with those values and here is why I'm doing something similar but different."

**Michael:** Yeah, that's fantastic. Jesse, does hybrid publishing exist for fiction or is that primarily nonfiction?

**Jesse:** There are some publishers that do that and do it really well. An example is a company we love, Girl Friday Productions. They have a model that's similar to Page Twos, but they will do many other genres.

And so it's worth looking, what you want to do is look for one that is really good and high quality.

**Michael:** I'm going to just endorse what Jesse's saying, which is a quality trumps quantity. What doesn't work is a generic cover letter pumped out to a thousand agents and a thousand publishers or whatever because they're besieged by people who want to write books.

You have to sprinkle in some magic around this. And part of it is going, let me make my case for you and me working together. Let's talk about titles. How important are titles?

**Jesse:** Well, it's right up there with the book cover. It's one of your most powerful marketing tools.

**Michael:** Exactly.

**Jesse:** And I love for people to think of the title and the subtitle working together symbiotically—that both of those things need to sing, and they need to work together. You can have one part of the equation be exciting and dramatic and spark curiosity, wordplay, and fun.

If that's the case, the other part has to be pretty prosaic and really expressing in very grounded, clear terms: What is this book? What's the value? What does it do?

**Michael:** Yeah, I often spend as much time thinking about the title as I do writing a book.

It's so annoying. But you have a second—maybe two if people are moving slowly—for people to go, “Oh, yeah, okay, maybe.” Particularly for prescriptive nonfiction, I think in three to seven words, you have to somehow name a problem and hint at a solution.

So you have to work really hard. Now look, here are three of my books. The Coaching Habit, the one I'm best known for. Say Less, Ask More, & Change the Way You Lead Forever. I think The Coaching Habit is okay as a title. I think that the subtitle is excellent. It's like, “Oh, you're already kind of giving me the hint here. How do I do that, though?”

You'll need to buy the book around that. So I would give this a like an eight out of 10 for titles.

**Jesse:** Could I add to that? To me, it's a 10. Because that's where the symbiosis happens, that's where they're working together. The Coaching Habit is absolutely clear in expressing the value proposition in the most direct way.

It doesn't have to be playful and exciting. It is exactly what it is.

**Michael:** In fact, it shouldn't be playful and exciting. People are trying to create these cool, creative titles. And I'm like, "I don't know what your book is about. I don't know what this word means."

**Jesse:** That's right.

**Michael:** The Advice Trap. Be Humble, Stay Curious & Change the Way You Lead Forever.

My least well-titled book, I would say. Because what is The Advice Trap? Is that a good thing? Is it a bad thing? Are you backing me into it? Are you backing me out of it? And why is being humble a good thing?

To me, this gets carried along by The Coaching Habit—you can tell that these are sister books. It gets swept along by The Coaching Habit book. I'm giving that like a six out of 10 for titles.

**Jesse:** Well, I was just thinking what it was almost going to be: The Advice Monster, Taming the Advice Monster.

**Michael:** Tame Your Advice Monster, which I think would have been a better title.

**Jesse:** Except, from our point of view as your publisher, and I know others in your community, "monster" is a polarizing word. That's the risk we run.

**Michael:** That's true. And I asked a lot of people around that and we were like one way or the other.



How to Work with (Almost) Anyone. My favourite book title. Hasn't sold the best by any means, but Five Questions for Building the Best Possible Relationships. I'm like, How to Work with (Almost) Anyone?

Everybody laughed as soon as I told them the title of my book because they immediately got the power of that “Almost.” It somehow creates magic unicorn dust in book titles. And when I came up with that book title, I was like, goddammit, this is awesome. I love this title.

So you want to work really hard at your book titles, and then you want to test them. And there are all sorts of little ways you can just test them with a marketplace around that.

Tim Ferriss famously considered calling The 4-Hour Workweek—I don't know—something silly like How to Ride a Giraffe. It was only through testing that they landed on The 4-Hour Workweek, and that worked out pretty well for him.

Alright, seven minutes left. We're going to have to keep going. Marketing. It's hard to write a book, it's hard to launch a book. And lots of people lose their nerve around that. Or at least they go, “Well, I've written a book, if I build it, surely they will come?” They will not come! And in fact, I would reset your expectations and say you probably aren't going to sell many copies of your book.

If you do, that's all a bonus. We always hear about the people who've somehow broken through and sold a bunch. I'm one of them with one of my books. But most people don't sell many copies of their book. So that's why you want to know what your purpose is for writing your book. But there are different ways you can spend on marketing.

And you're basically looking to spend money, time, and ego—those are your three currencies. So, what have you noticed, Jesse, around the best guidance for book marketing?

**Jesse:** I think, first of all—and you've suggested this already, Michael—thinking of your book not in isolation, but always as a key part of your ecosystem.

So how can you constantly connect the dots between your book and everything else you're doing, whether it's your keynotes, training, or consulting?

There are two principles I really love, and I'm going to borrow them from some other Page Two authors. AJ Harper, author of a beautiful book on writing and publishing called *Write a Must-Read...*

She recently shared with me a concept about facilitators. When you think about who you're writing for and who you're marketing to, don't get overwhelmed by the sea of audience members out there.

Think about the audience members—your readers—who will facilitate that book to their community. If you can identify who they are, how they're different, and take different moments in time to market to them directly, you're going to be catching those different market segments. That connects with another marketing term I love. Our author, April Dunford, talks about marketing as rolling thunder, so don't feel like you need to blast everything out at once. And Michael, you are a master at this.

There are times to really dig in and focus around a launch. Of course, you want to get that momentum that you can build on but don't shove everything into that moment, into those few months.

Rolling thunder—do a big push, ease off, and then identify the next segment, the next initiative, and put some muscle behind that over time.

**Michael:** That's great. The reason *The Coaching Habit* keeps selling is word of mouth. If you can get that magic around word of mouth, that can make all the difference. I'm just picking up a question from Stephanie. "If you pay 30 to 50 grand to a hybrid publisher and then make 30 percent and most booksellers can 5,000 copies, how does this make financial sense for an author?"

Well, it doesn't often, if you're writing a book and you're thinking you're going to make your money from your book. That's why a backend is really helpful. As an example, I sell a keynote speech for somewhere between \$35,000 and \$50,000, which I appreciate is a ridiculously large amount of money. It's taken me 35 years to get to that price point, and it's just one of the weird

things about keynote speaking. But it means that if I think I can win one or two speeches with a new book, then it makes financial sense for me.

So that's why often we're talking about an ecosystem around thinking about why you publish your book and why you'd care and why you'd invest in that, because there are different ways of making your money back. Making money from book sales alone is a rare thing.

**Jesse:** Right.

**Michael:** Let me give you my three key marketing tips.

Number one, have a party. You work so hard to write a book, you cross this finish line, and most people don't even notice because they're out grinding, trying to get people to be on podcasts and get people to buy their book. And I'm like, celebrate! It's amazing that you wrote a book. You should absolutely celebrate.

Secondly, pick one marketing tactic, one strategy. The most powerful strategy and one that everybody can start today, is to grow an email list. Those are the people who are most likely to buy your books. Social media isn't that helpful. Somebody told me that it's roughly 10,000 followers generate one book sale.

I know. But an email list is powerful. But pick one thing to do; it's like growing my email list, being on podcasts and then keep going. I still talk about The Coaching Habit relentlessly, but I worked really hard for two years talking about The Coaching Habit to bring it out there.

So, don't collapse exhausted after two weeks and go, "Well, my work here is done." Have a party, and then realize you've just started the process of bringing your book out into the world.

Alright, we've done so well. As a reminder, we will send you an email out tomorrow with a replay of this and a list of those bonuses.

One is a fillable PDF using the core principles from the How to Begin book. Thrilling, Important, and Daunting, which you'll be able to use.

And if you want more, there's an invitation to buy the [How to Begin training course](#), which is me teaching via videos. We're offering a 20 percent discount on that using the code, **BOOK**, if you're so inclined.

As a wrap-up, in the chat: What was most useful or most valuable in this frantic 45-minute chat?

And while people are putting their thoughts in for us, Jesse. Tell me what landed for you. What was most useful or most valuable?

**Jesse:** I just love the creative tension that you describe, Michael. The wrestling—we talk about the wrestling and the beauty of that, the beauty of the pursuit in and of itself.

You embody that for me, and it's a gift to work with you.

**Michael:** Oh, thank you, Jesse. Well, for me, I've got another, what, three books planned with you over the next two or three years.

I've realized that writing books is something I like doing and am good at. And in terms of building a body of work, it's one of those things where I'm like, far more than anything I've created, my books have stood the test of time so far.

So even though I started off by going, "Why endure this misery?" what I'm hoping you've got is that if you're going to do it, it can be an amazing experience. And for me, it becomes alchemical—things turn into gold.

And definitely, one of the great advantages for me is working with such a wonderful team at Page Two.

Everybody, thank you for your comments. It's been lovely to have you all so active. Thanks to the MBS Works team behind the scenes for making all this happen—Ainsley, Emma, and Tugba.

Look for an email from us tomorrow with the worksheet and the invitation to the How to Begin course.

Jesse, I think our work here is done. You're awesome. You're doing great.

**Jesse:** You're doing great.

**Michael:** Bye, everybody.

**Jesse:** Thank you.