



## Michael Hyatt Interview

By Mike Dellosso

Interviewing Michael Hyatt, Chairman of Thomas Nelson and the keynote speaker for this year's ACFW conference, is a unique opportunity. He's a busy man and tracking him down is not easy. When I finally did capture a few minutes of his time I was struck by one thing: He's the real deal. Honest. Humble. Insightful.

**Mike Dellosso:** Between being a husband, father, grandfather, chairman of Thomas Nelson, speaker, and author, you're a busy man. How do you manage your time?

**Michael Hyatt:** I try to only do the things where I add value and delegate everything else. I'm naturally organized so I choose the top two or three things I have to accomplish every day. Being focused on two or three things that I absolutely have to accomplish

today is a non-negotiable.

**Dellosso:** When your five daughters were younger, how did you balance family time with work responsibilities so your family didn't feel neglected?

**Hyatt:** I didn't always do that well. There were certainly times I was tragically out of balance—where work was consuming all of my time and life. I did what a lot of people do and convinced myself that I was in a temporary situation, that if I could just get through this season or just get this project done that I could then give focus to what I knew was important, which was my family.

It came to the point where I had to hit a crisis. For me it was a health crisis. I thought I was having a heart attack. Thank God it wasn't a heart attack. It was a lot of stress in my life that gave me symptoms like a heart attack. The doctor said to me, "Look, you either make some serious changes about the way you're living and the way you're balancing your life and the stresses you've got or the next time I see you it's going to be a heart attack." That caused me to make some adjustments.

**Dellosso:** Was there a time in your life when you felt your faith was pushed to the edge, where you were at that point of no return and the only place you could turn was to God?

**Hyatt:** I've had a number of those tremors and shocks through the years. The biggest one for me happened in 1992. I owned a publishing company with a business partner and we had five years of incredible growth. But what we didn't realize as young and inexperienced business people is that it takes a lot of capital to grow. We had increasing sales but a lot of our cash was tied up in inventory. Eventually we ran out of cash and the company went broke. We thought we were doing God's will, we had this vision of what we wanted to accomplish and thought we were out to please Him and further His work in the world. Then we were

left high and dry. [We had] nothing except a phone and its cord. That was a really tough time.

**Dellosso:** How did that change you?

---

*Before you can grow and expand your leadership you've got to be humbled.*

---

**Hyatt:** For one thing it really humbled me. Up until that point I was pretty sure of myself, because I'd been successful and my career had been on a steady upward trajectory. I thought I had it all figured out. Then when that happened I thought, "I don't think I have anything figured out." It's important for any leader, that before you can grow and expand your leadership you've got to be humbled. You either figure that out on your own or God has a way of graciously and providentially orchestrating our circumstances so we learn those lessons.

**Dellosso:** You have a new book coming out, *Platform*. Give us some highlights from the book.

---

*For the first time in history it's possible for any author to build a meaningful platform.*

---

**Hyatt:** I wish I would have written this book 25-30 years ago to give to authors who showed up at the various publishing companies I've worked. Authors who had a great idea and a wonderful manuscript, but didn't have a platform—no connection to an audience. What's changed since then is maybe for the first time in history it's possible for any author to build a meaningful platform. But it doesn't happen overnight and though it's not easy, it's easier.

The book is divided into five parts.

The first thing I suggest is you have to create a *wow* product. With so much competition and so much noise in the marketplace you have to make sure your book is as *wow* as you can make it. At the end of the day that's what creates word of mouth and buzz. If people don't want to talk about your book or share it with their friends then you're dead in the water. No amount of advertising can offset a product that doesn't generate word of mouth.

The second thing is to prepare to launch. Before your book comes out you've got to be prepared. A lot of that, frankly, has to do with mindset—how you're thinking about your book, how you're thinking about yourself, and the role you're going to play as the book is launched.

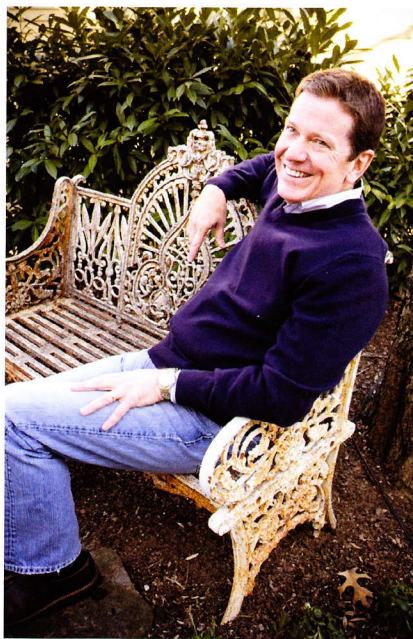
The third thing I talk about is building your home base. I talk a lot about blogging and building a website and having a place in cyberspace you can call your own and are constantly directing people back to.

The fourth is how to extend your tribe. How do you expand your reach in the marketplace so you're getting more readers for your blog and ultimately more prospects and purchasers of your book?

The fifth part of the book is how you engage your tribe. How do you develop a meaningful relationship with them? Today it's not about marketing. Marketing is dead. The days of bludgeoning people into buying a product are over. You have to engage people and build a relationship with them.

**Dellosso:** What do you say to authors who don't see themselves as sales types? Who don't like talking about themselves, bringing attention to themselves, pushing their books?

**Hyatt:** You've got to own the responsibility that you are your product's chief spokesperson—whether you like it or not. You are your product's last best



chance at staying alive and surviving. Nobody cares more than you do. Nobody has more at stake than you do, both positively and negatively. I don't think that means you have to stand up and hawk your wares. [It's] not just selling your message, [it's] sharing something that is very important to you and you believe will be helpful to other people. How could you keep that to yourself?

---

*Content is king but platform is queen.*

---

Content is king but platform is queen. You're not going to succeed in today's publishing environment without both. Authors have to stop telling themselves "I'm not good at selling." "I'm not a marketer." "I'm an introvert." That's not going to be helpful to them. They'll end up playing the role of a victim where they blame everybody else about why their book didn't sell. You've got to take responsibility and own it.

**Dellosso:** What do you plan on speaking about at the ACFW conference in September?

**Hyatt:** I'm thinking about several

ideas. I've thought about talking about the power of story. It's something I've lectured on before and something I absolutely love, because it's opened so much in my own world.

Or maybe this whole idea I was just talking about so passionately—that you've got to own your role as an author in the new world of publishing. What does that look like? What do you have to get good at? What do you have to let go of? What opportunities have opened up?

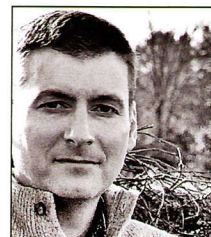
---

*All this change we're going through is great if you lean into it, if you embrace it.*

---

I do not look at the future with trepidation. All this change we're going through is great if you lean into it, if you embrace it. I firmly believe there's never been a better time to be an author than right now. There's never been more opportunity, it's never been easier—though it's not easy. There's never been a time when you could have a bigger impact and be in more control than right now. Personally, I'm excited about being an author and I would love to impart my enthusiasm for that to the people who will be at conference.

**MIKE DELLOSSO** is the author of *Frantic*, *Rearview*, and four other novels of suspense. As Michael



King he is the author of *A Thousand Sleepless Nights* (coming in October).

Mike is also a popular conference speaker and workshop instructor. He lives in Pennsylvania with his wife and four

daughters. Visit him at [www.mikedellosso.wordpress.com](http://www.mikedellosso.wordpress.com) or [www.michaelkingbooks.wordpress.com](http://www.michaelkingbooks.wordpress.com).