

Michael Hyatt interview

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By Mike Dellosso

Recently, I had the unique opportunity to interview Michael Hyatt. He's a busy man so tracking him down was not an easy task. When I finally did capture a few minutes of his time I was struck by one thing about him: 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 are non-negotiables.

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

MH: I didn't always do that well. There were certainly times when I was tragically out of balance where work was consuming all of my time and life and 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. But it came to the point where I had to hit a crisis, and for me it was a health crisis

where 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 got or the next time I see you it's gonna be a heart attack." That caused me to make some adjustments.

MD: Was there a time in your life when you felt like 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?

MH: 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 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 just ran out of cash and the company went broke. It was a situation where 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. And then here we were left high and dry. [We had] nothing except a phone and its cord. That was a really tough time.

MD: How did that change you?

MH: 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, so I just thought I'd had it all figured out. Then when that happened I thought, "I don't think I have anything figured out." I think it's important for any leader, that before you can grow and expand your leadership you gotta be humbled. And either figure that out on your own or God has a way of graciously and providentially orchestrating our circumstances so we learn those lessons.

MD: You have a new book coming out, *Platform*. Can you give us some highlights from the book?

MH: 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 for who had a great idea and wonderful manuscript but they 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 that 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 and 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 that you can call your own and are constantly directing people back to it.

The fourth is how to extend your tribe. How do you expand your reach in the marketplace so that 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? Because today it's not about marketing. Marketing is dead. The days of bludgeoning people into buying a product, those days are over. You have to engage people and build a relationship with them.

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

MH: 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, and you've got to accept the role as the chief marketing officer for your book. Now, having said that, 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?

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

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

MH: 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 that I just absolutely love because it's opened so much in my own world.

Another idea is this whole idea I was talking about so passionately which is, you've got to own your role as an author in the new world of publishing. And what does that look like to be an author in the new world of publishing? What do you have to get good at? What do you have to let go of? What opportunities have opened up? I do not look at the future with trepidation. I think all this change we're going through is great if you lean into it, if you embrace it. I firmly believe

that 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 listening to me.

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 or www.michaelkingbooks.wordpress.com.