

POSTCARDS FROM THE ROAD

Pumpkin Planning the Music

*Met with singer/songwriter
Josh Rogan today. Totally
kicked musical ass!
You won't believe his story...*

POST CARD



THE ROGAN ROAD



Being “On the Road,” isn’t all work and no play. Mike Michalowicz took time out from his keynote speaker gig to check out some musical talent and offer some Pumpkin Planning business advice to a young musician in Free Union, VA

Any entrepreneur knows the number one rule of “entrepreneur club” is “follow your passion.” You can swap out the word “passion” for “dreams,” but you get the idea. Feed your soul with the thing, or things, that juice you up, get you excited and launch you out of bed in the morning, ready to work even if you’ve only had three hours of sleep.

A couple of the just as well known, but less followed rules of entrepreneur club “Never judge a book by its cover,” and “trust your gut.” Those rules sound easy enough to follow, until the pressure’s on to produce, or perform, or deliver.

That’s when the average entrepreneur falls back on “safe,” or “proven.” They opt not to waste time “trying some new thing that might not work out.” Those who separate themselves from the competitive pack are willing to take risks, even if the risk is only a lost day, or a potentially boring meet up.

They’re the ones who have learned to trust their own judgment and to ignore the naysayers. Business author and businessman Mike Michalowicz is one of those who advocates risk, and follows his own advice.

“I have both, gut instinct or intuition, and then a filter,” Michalowicz says. “The filter eliminates the bullshit, lies, jerks and users, and it tells me who I can trust or not trust. My intuition is my ‘go’ button. I hear something, maybe a sentence or a kind of off-hand remark or someone says ‘You should check this out,’ and my intuition jumps to attention like a jump instructor in a skydiving plane—you know, the one pushing guys out of the door of a perfectly good airplane and screaming ‘Go! Go! Go!’ That’s my intuition when it’s on full-bore, screaming ‘There’s not much I can do except pay attention. I don’t always jump out of the plane door, but I pay attention when the jump master in my gut stands up and starts kicking butts out the door.’”



Mike Michalowicz and Josh Rogan jamming, and talking in Rogan's Airstream Trailer. Mike went out to the trailer to share business advice for musicians. Photos and story courtesy of **Airstream Life Magazine**.

*"If you live out one dream,
it gives you the confidence
to live out another one.
Then you just kinda start
living your dreams.
All of a sudden it's easier
than you think.
You've just gotta go do it."*

— Josh Rogan, singer, songwriter

"One of my buzz team members mentioned a singer by the name of Josh Rogan who was a couple hours south of DC getting ready to head to Texas, then Colorado to start his touring season with his wife, and artist, Eliza.

"She said, 'I think you ought to hear him play. Oh, and by the way, he lives and runs his band out of an Airstream, and he could use some business advice.'"

"I didn't even know what an Airstream was," Michalowicz says. "I thought it was a commuter jet." But he drove to Free Union, VA to check it out anyway, because the drill master was getting a little agitated so why not, right?"

So he drove down.

Rogan's Airstream was parked on one of the several hundred acres his father and brother own north of Charlottesville, Virginia. It's so rural it's not on any GPS system. The Post Office



Josh and Eliza Rogan outside their Airstream. Bottom: Eliza's "Birthday pumpkin."



is so small that more than six people in line means four of them are waiting outside the building. The property Rogan is on is way off the road along a winding gravel driveway. The woods and isolation are so pronounced that you almost want to say, "Paddle faster, I hear banjos," as you wind your way around the switchbacks at 3 mph. But at the end of the drive is a wide-open field, a 1962 Airstream, a small

wooden shed and two dogs happy to see visitors.

The pumpkin on the trailer's hitch was serendipitous. It's not related to Mike's book, "The Pumpkin Plan." October is Eliza's birthday month and the pumpkin was there to celebrate that. It's a good omen. Michalowicz's intuition is waking up. It's curious, but no one's standing up to move to the front of the plane quite yet. That takes the first dozen chords on Josh's guitar, and a smooth voice edgy with raw talent. It's not until Eliza says, "Play your new song," that the jumpmaster stands up.

"What's the new song?" Michalowicz asks.

"I'm alive," Rogan says, plucking a guitar string, tuning another and resettling himself on the corner of the bed jutting out into the small kitchen of the RV.



Josh and Eliza Rogan's 1962 Airstream.

TIPS

from Mike

“Wow. Wow. Wow. That song is the voice, the song of entrepreneurs everywhere.”

It's more than a song to touch the heart of an entrepreneur. It's the spark Michalowicz uses to jumpstart the business advice he gives Rogan. Rogan has the talent. Now he just needs to know how to get the attention of fans.

Sipping from a thick coffee mug filled with dark French Roast and eating one of Eliza's fresh pumpkin muffins, made in the Airstream's tiny oven, Michalowicz begins his business advice with a [“Seth Godinism,” — the “Purple Cow.”](#)

“There are millions of talented singers and songwriters all trying to get noticed.

“You've got to be a purple cow,” he says, referring to Godwin's business book, “The Purple Cow,” the art of transforming your business by being remarkable.

“You've got to stand out.”

In the competitive world of music talent is important, but it's rarely the way to stand out. There's too much competition. You have to have find something else to get the fan's attention—

The only sound for the next two and a half minutes is Rogan's voice, the guitar and Michalowicz's boots tapping, shaking the small trailer.

“People say that I'm insane, take a ride in my airplane, through a thunderstorm on my motor bike, take off in the middle of the night. Cross the country all alone and I never felt more at home. Climb a mountain to get high, look up to see the other side cause I'm alive. I'm alive...no need to be in the dark, a little fuel, a little spark.... I keep my promises to myself, I wouldn't do for anyone else....” Rogan croons...

The jumpmaster inside Michalowicz must be screaming, “Go! Go! Go!” because the next words out of Mike's mouth are,



Josh and Eliza Rogan's 1962 Airstream Safari sitting on Rogan land outside Free Union, Virginia. Josh and Eliza travel around the country singing at a variety of venues and concerts.

something that tells them who you are, that “makes you purple, remarkable” and someone or something they want to tell their friends about.

“This,” Michalowicz says, lifting his coffee mug up in the air and gesturing around the Airstream, “This is different, but it takes more. This song is amazing. Invite people to bring their guitars to wherever you’re playing and teach it to them. Talk to them about how you wrote it, answer their questions. Give them access to you.

“What will happen is they’ll learn the song, go back and play it for their friends. Their friends are going to love it and ask them, ‘Hey, what’s that song?’ and then they’ll tell them about the amazing evening they spent sitting around with you jamming and talking and learning to play the song. That’s purple. Don’t be just grassroots. Be the ULTIMATE in grassroots. Be the guitar guy other guitars want to be.”

It’s an advice twist on how the Grateful Dead became legends. The Grateful Dead were never a pop band, never had more than one top-40 hit, but they had fans.

They had fans that called themselves “Dead Heads” and drove around the country forsaking jobs, family and school to attend Grateful Dead concerts. They were purple. How did they do it? They embraced the fan experience.



“At a time when concert security was seizing concert goer’s tape recordings to prevent bootleg sales of a band’s music the Dead roped off the best acoustics in the venue and invited attendees to record and share their music. It cost you to attend the concert and have the experience, but you could share the music all you wanted.

“When you talked about the experience and shared the music, more people wanted to attend the concert, and follow the band, and so they did. The concerts were where they made their money. The tapes were their marketing and branding.

The t-shirts and stickers and product were the souvenirs—the tangible stuff they took home and shared with friends. Now, how are you going to replicate that? How are you going to find that thing that makes your fans rabid, slobbering, we love Josh Rogan fans?”

Make The Earth Move: “People will forget what you said, or most of what you did,” Michalowicz said, “But they’ll never forget how you made them feel. The thing you want to create with your music is an experience—something that makes your fans FEEL like it was worth coming out to see you.



TOP LEFT: A coyote skull stands guard over CDs, jewelry and assorted concert swag in the Rogan’s product case. ABOVE: Josh Rogan plays a tune while sitting across from his wife Eliza at the table in their Airstream.



Be Accessible: If that means signing autographs, or teaching them to play a song, or sitting around talking to them after a concert, or giving song writing talks or tips before the concert, do it. Don't become some unreachable ivory tower ego.

Hyper-Sharing: Put your sheet music up on your website. If people want it, for God's sake give it to them! Let people download it, play it and share it.

Know Your Endgame: Sit down and look at the endgame. The endgame is where you want to be when you have the perfect customer experience. "It's the sweet spot—the way you thought you'd feel every day when you decided to go into business for yourself. Then work back from there. Ask yourself, "What does it take to duplicate that experience over and over and over and over?" Then do it.

Campfire Marketing: Don't copy the way others promote their stuff since what works for them isn't necessarily going to work for you. You are a grassroots guy. Marketing happens around the campfire, so help others share your music around the campfire. Always ask yourself this, "Is what I'm doing helping people share it around a campfire? If not, DON'T do it. If so, then DO IT!"

"Never forget this," Michalowicz tells Rogan.

"Ordinary pumpkins are always forgotten. Only the giant pumpkin draws a crowd and lives on in holiday cards and photos, refrigerators and grainy YouTube videos...forever. The giant pumpkin is legend. And when you've grown one, you will be a legend too.

"You didn't start your business because you wanted to blend in, or to make enough money to just get by and to save enough to pay for the nursing home. You went into business because you wanted to grow something amazing, something that would dramatically change the quality of your life, something that could make a difference in the world."

"You want to know how to grow a business, or a band, or an art gallery? Then do it like we do down on the farm:

“I just want to live and follow my dreams. I want my music to be about people’s stories, about freedom, about being real and connecting with each other. I want to see that happen.”

— Josh Rogan

STEP ONE: Plant promising seeds. Pick venues that speak to your heart or your music or your fan base, not just because they’re offering you a check.

STEP TWO: Water, water, water.

STEP THREE: As your business grows, routinely remove all of the diseased or damaged pumpkins. This may mean not playing state fairs and focusing on motorcycle rallies. Go where your strongest fan base is. Don’t try to convert fans. Just be accessible to the fans you have. They’ll do the rest.

STEP FOUR: Weed like a mad dog. Nothing that takes away from your business, dream, plan or vision is allowed to suck up energy, resources, or time.

STEP FIVE: As your business grows, find the strongest, fastest growing pumpkin (music, venue etc) and remove all the less promising pumpkins (music, venue, etc) Repeat until you have one major, massive pumpkin on each vine.

STEP SIX: Focus ALL of your attention on the big pumpkin. Nurture it around the clock like a baby. Guard it like you would your first Mustang Convertible.

STEP SEVEN: Watch it grow. In the last days of the season, this will happen so fast you can actually see it happen.



Marketing really is about making your product a memorable experience for the buyer, the fan, the audience, Michalowicz says. But for you to make it scale, to make it profitable, to make it work for you as well as it does for your fan base, there’s got to be something more than turning yourself into a factory and working 100 hours a week.

Listen to your intuition. Follow your passion. It won’t always turn out, but learn to recognize the voice when it does. You’ll get better at it.

Learn to systematize things so that the experience is repeatable, fluid and less stressful for you. Free up your time by making the stuff you have to do organized so you can focus on the parts you love to do. And always listen to the jumpmaster in your gut when he starts screaming, “Go! Go! Go!” He’s probably onto something there.

A Simple Strategy to Grow a Remarkable Business in Any Field

The Pumpkin Plan is available on Amazon.com and everywhere seriously kick-ass great business books are sold. More on Mike and the book at:

<http://thepumpkinplan.com>



Josh Rogan's CDs are
available through his website:

<http://joshroganmusic.com>

Or on Amazon.com,
and CDBaby.

