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'It Started with a Lightning Strike ...'

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Cultivating Creativity to Optimize Efficiency  
in 3 Steps

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Practical Science

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Is it Safe to Return to Your Building?

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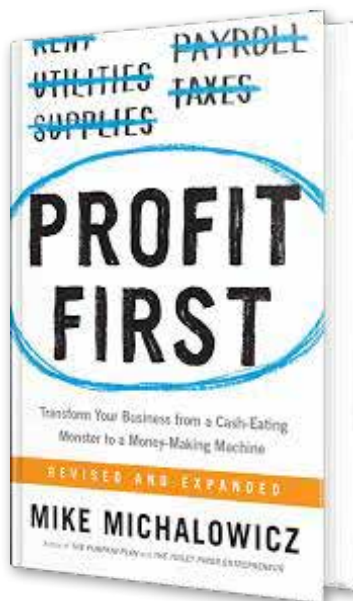
What Small-Business Owners Can Learn  
From 'Profit First'

# Manage Cash Flow With 'Profit First'

## MIKE MICHALOWICZ SHARES WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Running the day-to-day operations of a business while also managing the money can be difficult to juggle for many small-business owners. Even if they have systems and processes in place, these methods don't always work as well as they should and can easily become difficult to navigate. When you hit this kind of wall, it can be hard to keep your focus on growing a profitable business.

Enter Mike Michalowicz and his book "Profit First: Transform Your Business from a Cash-Eating Monster to a Money-Making Machine." The book was published in 2014 but



was updated in 2017. It's been a huge hit, garnering rave reviews from the business world due to its simple yet innovative profit-first formula. The book has been so successful because Michalowicz has faced these types of challenges before, and he used these experiences to develop principles that make life (and business) that much easier for small-business owners.

You'll get the scoop on Michalowicz's profit-centered approach and how his innovative system flips traditional accounting on its head, making

money management more streamlined. If you find yourself struggling to manage the financial side of your business, then he has you covered. His tips are especially useful for businesses that have cash flow that varies from month to month or that have a peak season. Michalowicz's insight is even more valuable in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, as business owners and entrepreneurs everywhere look to get back on track in the second half of 2020, boost their businesses, and recover lost profits.

If you're a seasoned business owner and are already money-minded and exceptionally organized, this book will likely serve as a quick refresher, but if you're a startup business owner and want to improve your accounting systems and catapult your profits, then "Profit First" is just what you need.



# 53,540 Degrees Fahrenheit The Perfect Storm

Early this summer, I went through one of the strangest experiences of my life. This may be a weird statement, considering that we have spent this year grappling with a pandemic. But if 2020 has taught us anything, it's that we never know what's around the corner. There's always something unexpected waiting to throw a wrench in our plans — like the lightning strike my wife and I experienced when a storm rolled through our area.

I was having a dream about fireworks when Kaye shook me awake at 2:15 a.m. She'd heard a loud crash, which is probably what those fireworks were in my dream. Our house was excessively dark. Sure, it was the middle of the night, but my house is usually fairly well lit because we have floodlights in front of the house and in the backyard. Those lights were all out. I grabbed a flashlight and made the rounds. I didn't smell any smoke, but I did find that four breakers had tripped because of the lightning.

The next morning, I discovered that my computer wouldn't start. The motherboard and the processor had been fried. It occurred to me that we might have had an electrical problem greater than what I'd assumed, so I called an electrician to come check all our outlets. We found a few outlets that had been tripped and burned from too much power, and upstairs next to my desk, where the AT&T cables come in, the electrician found smoke marks. Those cables, which are for our phones, TV, and internet, got so hot they fused to the box. No surprise, we had problems with our internet, TV, and phones.

We got AT&T to come out, and they dug a great big hole in my backyard to find the cable, which sat for a few days before someone else came out to actually fix it. Six days after the lightning

strike, our cable TV still wasn't working. On day nine, another guy came out and was able to get everything up and running. But while he was walking around the outside of the house, he found the spot where lightning had carried along the wire and reached a downspout. The lightning had burned a hole about 1 1/2 inches wide in the aluminum, melted the wires, and then kept going into my house. When you consider that lightning can reach temperatures 53,540 degrees F, a 1 1/2-inch hole seems pretty mild.

My next-door neighbor was out of town when all this happened, so I sent him a note letting him know about the lightning strike and recommending that he check things around his home for damage. He found that his TV and internet were also out. And then he looked in his backyard at his two pine trees. On my side of the tree, they looked fine. But on his side, there was a 4-foot long vertical split in the bark on both trees. Turns out, the lightning had struck his trees first. Then it went through the ground into my yard and got into the AT&T cable wiring. From there it worked its way through the AT&T box and into my house, where it caused a whole mess of unexpected trouble.

When I went to file an insurance claim, my insurance agent Robert, who is also a longtime friend, recommended I wait a week to file so we could find everything that had been affected. This was good advice. Little by little, we kept finding more things that had been affected — the exterior ground fault circuit plugs, exterior security lights, inside LED light fixtures, my computer, all the AT&T equipment, a tool charger, a telephone base station and four handsets, the Apple TV, two of the HDMI ports on the flat screen, and our washing machine.



These things were all over the house. Lightning had spread like water damage, showing up in unexpected places. Every time I turned around, something else was fried!

Six days after filing the claim (and 2 days after the sale was off), our dryer suddenly gave out. We originally thought that only the washing machine had been impacted, but it turns out the dryer was also damaged. It only had a few cycles left before it went out on us, right in the middle of laundry day. I told Kaye she could tie all the wet clothes to a string and dry them by running around the backyard like a kite. She chose to go to a friend's house and use their dryer instead.

I have to give my thanks to Robert. I've never had to file an insurance claim like this before, and he was a huge help. He's done a great job for me. As frustrating and inconvenient as it all was, I am really glad that it was just an inconvenience. We're lucky that our house didn't catch fire and nothing that was damaged couldn't be replaced. This was a strange experience, but it's the kind of story I'm sure we'll be able to laugh about later.

*Travis West*

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### 3 Habits Entrepreneurs Use to Excel During COVID-19

Why did some companies thrive during the COVID-19 pandemic while others had to shut their doors forever? The answer is simple: Successful companies embraced creative solutions to overcome the obstacles of the shelter-in-place orders. Creativity is key to a profitable business. Innovative problem-solving is how business leaders come up with new ideas, address unexpected issues, and inspire their teams during difficult times. Here are a few habits that resourceful entrepreneurs share.

**They make a schedule.**  
Though it may sound counterintuitive, structuring your day actually improves your ability to be creative. Establishing a schedule in advance allows you to avoid having to make small, inconsequential decisions. You won't be distracted by wondering when you'll get lunch or if you're missing a big meeting. It's all already on the calendar. Reducing daily decisions gives you more time to think about what matters and helps you dedicate more of your mental energy to solving problems or refining big ideas.

**They take time to recharge.**  
This doesn't mean spending all day watching Netflix. Recharging your imagination is an active process. If you're feeling creatively drained, then go to a place that inspires you. This could mean taking a walk around a park, going on a hike in the woods, or visiting your local library. Immersing yourself in others' ideas can also help recharge your creative batteries. Swing by an art museum, pick up a new book, or treat yourself to a solo movie date. Ask yourself why a particular piece of art inspires you, what makes it worthwhile, and if you would have done anything differently.

**They practice creating.**  
You don't have to wait for inspiration to strike. Cultivate creativity by making something every day, even if it has nothing to do with your projects at work. Doodle during lunch, sing along to the radio during your drive home, or write a few sentences of a short story each night. Don't worry about whether these personal projects are "good" — just focus on bringing them into the world. Practice makes perfect.

If you believe that creativity is something that only a select few are born with, then you might find yourself struggling to be imaginative during difficult times. However, when you view it as a skill that can be strengthened, you'll develop habits to see you through what might otherwise be a creative drought.



# INDUSTRY WHO'S WHO

## How Dr. Jason Dobranic Helps People and Communities



In the time of COVID-19, we've been reminded of the importance of scientists. Doctors are fighting the virus in patients, medical researchers are racing to find a vaccine, and countless other scientists are working to understand the virus better to provide resources to protect

the public. One such scientist is Dr. Jason Dobranic, vice president of Microbiology & Life Sciences at EMSL Analytical, Inc., a company that has successfully created a swab test that can detect the presence of the COVID-19 virus on environmental surfaces. (See the article on Page 3 for more details.)

Dr. Dobranic is a microbiologist with an emphasis in fungi by training, and when he was graduating, he began looking at what was out there in terms of industry applications for microbiology.

"I was 90% sure I would stay in academia and become a professor," he says. "But I decided to look a little further and see what else was out there. This was in the early 2000s, when mold was gold. There was so much interest in mold and its health effects and how having water damage in the home could make someone sick. I saw this whole industry that was nascent at the time. They needed more experts, people like me. I interviewed with a few companies and settled in with EMSL in 2001. Almost two decades later, I'm still here."

Dr. Dobranic worked his way up through the company, starting in an entry-level position before becoming its national director. He is now the vice president of microbiology and life sciences there. EMSL is the nation's leading environmental testing firm. With laboratories from coast to coast, EMSL provides support in testing everything from asbestos and lead paint to indoor air quality and food.

"I love that the work I do is so practical," Dr. Dobranic says. "I'm not stuck in a lab or a black box all day. We're doing important work for people. This is helping communities and people. We test everything people could be getting sick from. Research is important and being in academia and teaching is important, but I'm really glad to be out there doing practical science. It does a lot to remind people why science is important and how it helps society. I think that's an important thing for everybody."

## IS YOUR BUILDING A COVID-19 HOTSPOT?

### New Test Detects COVID-19 on Environmental Surfaces

Last month we featured an article about how adenosine triphosphate (ATP) tests can be used to measure the cleanliness of surfaces after cleaning. While ATP tests are effective, they only test for the presence of bacteria and other microorganisms. More recently, a new molecular-based test has been developed by EMSL Analytical, Inc. that is specially designed to detect the presence or absence of the COVID-19 virus on surfaces.

Recent studies show that the COVID-19 virus can remain viable and infective on surfaces for several hours and even days. While surface transmissions do not seem to be the main way the virus spreads, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has stated, "COVID-19 is a new disease and we are still learning about how it spreads and the severity of illness it causes." For this reason, building owners and property managers are encouraged to have their buildings thoroughly cleaned should they suspect that an individual infected with COVID-19 has been on the premises. As addressed last month, tests must be conducted after the cleaning process to ensure such cleanings are done appropriately.

"We had been getting a lot of calls as people were trying to open up buildings post-cleaning after someone had been sick in the building," says Dr. Jason Dobranic, vice president of Microbiology & Life Sciences at EMSL Analytical, Inc. "We wanted a way that our customers could validate that the cleaning process was done properly. There wasn't a test available at the start of this. We looked into using the same technology that the FDA (Federal Drug Administration) and the CDC use to test if a patient has the coronavirus. When they published that method, we reviewed their method and used the same technology but applied it to an environmental swab sample for a surface, versus taking it from someone's nasal cavity."

As stated in the EMSL report on the surface testing process, "EMSL employs a RT-qPCR test that targets the SARS-CoV-2-nucleocapsid N gene. This method



is specified by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for clinical COVID-19 diagnostics." The EMSL test is **not** meant to test for COVID-19 in living specimens and can only be used for environmental testing on surfaces. Swabs are sent to and tested at an EMSL lab in New Jersey, which is currently the only lab in the nation equipped to test for COVID-19 on surfaces. As directed by the CDC, results of this surface testing are reported as either "detected" or "not-detected."

Medical experts warn of a potential second wave of COVID-19 infections in the coming fall and winter. It is vital that business management teams do what they can to create and maintain clean, hygienic environments within their buildings. The COVID-19 surface test from EMSL Analytical, Inc. may be a vital resource in achieving that goal.

Visit [EMSL.com](https://www.emsl.com) for more information about COVID-19 surface testing and to learn how to order tests for your own building.

# SUDOKU

## HAVE A LAUGH WITH TRAVIS



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