Transcript for Episode 177: Generating Consistent Revenue Without Burning Out with John Meyer

Jessica Miller

00:01 - 00:07

Hello, everyone. Welcome to the It's Your Offer podcast. John, we are so happy to have you here. Welcome to the show.

John Meyer

00:07 - 00:09

Hey, I'm excited to be here. Thanks, Jess.

Jessica Miller

00:09 - 00:16

Yeah, it's going to be an awesome, awesome episode. So, for all of our listeners here, tell us a little bit about you and your business So they can get to know it from you.

John Meyer

00:16 - 00:49

Yeah, you bet. My business is called lead more and I help coach. Solopreneurs to double their monthly revenue without burning out. So that's my group coaching program. And then if you have doubled your revenue and hopefully you love it, you want more of it, and then I do some one-on-one coaching with creatives and agency owners. So that's the person that I used to be. And I just know the struggles of that. You're growing a services company, you're hiring the team, you have leads in your inbox that you aren't getting back to fast enough. And We can dive into how to solve that.

John Meyer

00:49 - 00:52

That's what I've been doing for the last 2 years and I love being a coach.

Jessica Miller

00:52 - 01:07

Oh, yes. I love it. I had the pleasure of being in John's community and meeting the amazing people that he coaches and seeing him coach, and I agree, firsthand, was awesome. Tell us a little bit about what you just mentioned about your previous company John and that piece of it we'd love to yeah,

John Meyer

01:07 - 01:17

you bet So I live in South Dakota and went to college in a little school in Northeast, Iowa It was a communication major, which I always say is short for I don't know what the hell I want to do when I grow up.

John Meyer

01:19 - 01:47

But I like talking. And I would always joke that what did I do in college? Like I wrote a lot of papers. I worked in groups of people. I had to give presentations as a communication major. And then ultimately when I became a CEO of an agency, I wrote a lot of emails. I worked with a lot of, worked with groups of people and I gave a lot of presentations. So, it actually sort of ended up working out even though I was, the path was more winding than by design. I never, didn't really ever think about being an entrepreneur.

John Meyer

01:48 - 02:16

Started my career up in Minneapolis doing a corporate job and just immediately knew it wasn't for me. I guess I'm a typical millennial. I was like, I want more purpose. Like if I came to work tomorrow, no one would notice I'm even, or if I didn't come to work, no one would even notice I'm gone. And what happened, you know, when you grow up in a place like South Dakota, often a lot of folks are probably trying to get the heck out of there. There's not too many of us, but what happened was there was a grant through the state of South Dakota is a $15, 000 grant.

John Meyer

02:16 - 02:48

And it said 2 rules. You have to build your business in the state and it has to somehow involve technology. And my brother and I, my older brother, we spent the weekend kind of brainstorming, whiteboarding an idea. This is 2009. And the idea was let's teach South Dakota businesses how to use sort of this new internet, this like web 2.0, create content online, be available, people are looking for you, but are they finding you? And so somehow, they gave us this 15 grand, and we moved back home. And we started an agency called 9 Clouds.

John Meyer

02:48 - 03:23

And the problem, I mean, it was great, but the problem, you know, we just weren't good entrepreneurs and we didn't have a good offer. We weren't valuing our time or we're charging enough. So, we kind of do whatever people would pay us to do as long as it was legal and it was like digital. And so, what's interesting about that story, and that agency still exists today, I've exited from that agency and they've really niched in and done really well. But that informed my second company, which is called Lemonly. And so, we had the struggle at 9 Clouds of like people have heard of us but they're like, but what do you I've heard of those social media brothers like what do they do?

John Meyer

03:23 - 03:28

You know, it was kind of like they had heard of us, but they didn't we didn't have a strong offer We weren't known for anything and

John Meyer

03:30 - 04:04

our first employee was a graphic designer, super talented. And I looked at Amy and I said, what if we just did one thing and did it really well? And that was the idea. Lemonly was born with this idea of we're going to make infographics because she was a really talented designer. I'm kind of a storyteller. And we combined our skills there. And we started making infographics circa summer of 2011. And it was honestly a project kind of underneath the 9 Clouds brand. So, if you worked with Lemonly, you got an invoice from 9 Clouds. And what happened was that project sort of grew faster than the thing, the actual company.

John Meyer

04:05 - 04:39

And so, we spun it out in 12 and created our own company. And the idea was let's tell the stories of the world's best companies using visuals because we're wired to be visual creatures. Attention spans are shorter than ever. People don't want to read anymore. And we were an infographic company, which in 2011 was a great spot to be, they were just exploding. And so, we ended up going on to do that with Netflix and Marriott, Google and Major League Baseball and Salesforce, and grew that to about 20 employees, a few million in revenue, ran it for a decade, and then ultimately in 2021 sold that company.

Jessica Miller

04:40 - 04:44

That is so fascinating. The power of a niche. Oh my gosh.

John Meyer

04:44 - 04:56

Yeah. We're all, I mean, even as a coach now, like I get so scared to niche down, right? We keep slicing down the onion and they're pulling the layers and we're like, it's too small. It's too small. Likely we probably all need to go another level smaller.

Jessica Miller

04:57 - 05:10

Right? Right. Exactly. Yeah. That's so cool. How is that working with some of those, you know, bigger brands that we all see all the time? And sometimes it's like, oh yeah, they're sitting like over on Mount Olympus, you know, where they're like another league. How was that?

John Meyer

05:11 - 05:43

Yeah. So, the first thing I'll say is they're just like us, right? They put their pants, their pants on the same way every day. And the thing, if you are either aspiring to work with brands like that, or you do, if you're listening, what I always tried to tell my project managers, like our accounts facing people, is it's almost like we have 2 clients. Netflix is the client, But Jess at Netflix is also the client. And in those big companies, we need to make Jess look good. Because what happened was, especially if you're, often the incumbent’s kind of get to stick around in these big companies, because they're the safe choice.

John Meyer

05:43 - 05:53

And so, the bigger a company gets, the less risk they usually want to take. And so, getting into these companies was hard, but once we got in, we could try to make it really sticky.

Jessica Miller

05:53 - 05:53

Yeah.

John Meyer

05:53 - 06:00

And so, it's like, yes, we're making an awesome PowerPoint deck for Netflix, but we also want Jess to look really great.

Jessica Miller

06:00 - 06:00

Sure.

John Meyer

06:00 - 06:11

And we were always like reaffirming her decision, telling her boss that like, we, Jess was so great to work with. And then what happened is like, our name starts getting passed around in the walls of these companies.

John Meyer

06:12 - 06:42

Oh yeah. And all of a sudden, you know, at Marriott we're in the sales team and now we're in the marketing and eventually we ended up in the HR, right? Because it just gets passed around. Yep. So, at the end of every year, like after we kind of stabilized and started growing, about 70% of Lemonly's revenue would be what I called, like repeat customers. Yeah. And so yes, we always needed new business and ours was through SEO because we were sort of on the advent of this SEO or infographic movement. So, if you Googled infographic company, I think Lemonly is the first or second result.

John Meyer

06:43 - 06:47

But then it's like once we get them, we're going to keep them and make them super happy.

Jessica Miller

06:47 - 07:12

Yes, I love this. Oh my gosh, you're speaking to my soul, John, about this idea of like, yes, you always want to have traffic, but it's your existing client, it's your existing audience, and how do you have a big ROI by servicing and being valuable to those people where you make a whole lot more money. It's tons of fun. You're working with your ideal client and you don't have to constantly be bringing in new people. It's so great.

John Meyer

07:12 - 07:44

Yeah. And I think this is probably true for almost any service, but certainly for creative, every project after the first one got more and more profitable, right? Because we're learning your brand, we're learning your preferences, we're starting to speak the same language. So, at the end of the day, infographics are telling confusing stories and trying to make them simple through pictures. And we just got better and better at it. So, like by the second, third project, clients are saying, yep, no edits, approved, first draft. And what I hear is like, okay, we made some money.

Jessica Miller

07:45 - 08:04

Yeah, that's so great. And that's how you systematize it, right? That, I mean, even though it's custom, there are pieces of that that become rinse repeat, right? Because you know their story, you know the people, you know how to navigate the thing, and now you're going to tweak these different pieces for whatever the project is, maybe within that scope, which is awesome.

John Meyer

08:04 - 08:42

Yeah. I coach a lot of creatives and entrepreneurs and agency owners and it's not the best model ever created. Right. It's not SAS, it's not recurring revenue. It's, you know, it is every infographic, started with a white sheet of paper, like an empty Photoshop or Illustrator file. But I also am a big champion of services businesses and these quote unquote lifestyle businesses because you can make them very profitable and they're fun, right? You know you're creating transformation. You know that you're making a difference in your clients' lives. So, you just gotta do it right and focus on the customer and deliver the value and then figure out how to bring them back each time.

Jessica Miller

08:42 - 08:50

Yes, I love this. So, you took all this awesome knowledge and you moved more toward leaning into coaching. Tell us about that transition.

John Meyer

08:50 - 09:18

Yeah. So, I remember I went to a conference in fall of 19 and I was just like, I don't know. I think I've sort of done everything I'm supposed to do here. I read this book. I think it was called The Messy Marketplace and it's like 8 reasons why you might want to sell your business. And most of the obvious things like health and age and children, family, money. And one of the chapters said, you want to wake up and think about something else. And I remember being on the plane, And I was like, oh my gosh, like slapped me in the face.

John Meyer

09:18 - 09:38

I was like, that's me. Like I felt like I had probably sold a thousand infographics at that point and loved the team. I still miss my team dearly, but I just felt like I had other chapters to write. Yeah. So, we started 2020 with the goal of I'm a big manifester. And I was like, I think we're going to sell our business this year. Now, of course, on March 1st, we had 3 potential buyers and

John Meyer

09:38 - 10:09

then this thing called COVID happened. And I was like, well, that's not happening this year. And it all kind of disappeared for a while. And we just tried to keep any business, like any clients for a little while. And then actually 1, Ben, one potential buyer came back to the table later that summer and on New Year's Eve of 2020, we sold the, sold the business. And so stuck around for one year as part of the transition and then left in 2022. And I'll be honest, that part of my journey. No one likes to hear the guy who got a check to quit his job, complain.

John Meyer

10:11 - 10:42

But 2022 was like my hardest year of my life because professional life. I was a little bit more positive about myself, because I just felt like I didn't quite know who I was without that business. I started it at 23. It was my identity. And I always joke, our doors are yellow at our house. Like, we're wearing the brand, like Lemonade. I was that person. And so that was a transition, but I think ultimately a really good one for me. And thankfully the way the world works at a friend in North Dakota who runs an agency.

John Meyer

10:42 - 11:12

And she said, have you ever thought about coaching? And I had said no, but I had a coach myself, which was wildly helpful for me. And so, I took her on as a client, just a couple. I kind of just tried it on. I wasn't ready to like take that moniker yet. And then in 23, I thought, I think I'm good at this. I should maybe go for it. And I love it because it's like I get to be a part of all these companies, almost like a, I tell founders that I'm like your unofficial co-founder who doesn't have any equity, right?

John Meyer

11:12 - 11:31

Like I'm not taking any distributions, but I'm here in your company to work alongside you. What I love about solopreneurs is, as you also know, it just is very lonely. And having somebody else to run sidecar with you, i.e. A coach, just makes it more enjoyable.

Jessica Miller

11:31 - 11:39

Totally. Oh my gosh, I see another offer of you coaching people to sell their company after all of these sales. That's amazing.

John Meyer

11:39 - 12:02

I've wondered about that. Yeah, we'll have to wait for that. You know, I always wonder how do you, there's people who make pretty good money like being like M&A kind of consultants and guides. It's like, well, how do you, how does one learn that job? Like, I always think of like, how do you first jump out of a plane? Like, how does someone skydive or like ski jump, right? I watched ski jump in the Olympics. I was like, how do you do that the first time? Without like literally killing yourself.

John Meyer

12:04 - 12:34

And so like, I'm always, I think it's funny when people are like, yeah, I'm an M&A consultant advisor. It's like, well, I've sold a company. And then I always just have some imposter syndrome of teaching other people how to do it. But I do think there's probably something there because a lot of it, what I learned after the fact, kind of unintentionally, was everything we had done the first 10 years to build the business. Like we adopted EOS or traction, if you're familiar with that. And I always say we probably wouldn't have sold Lemonly without having done that because my leadership team knew their roles.

John Meyer

12:34 - 12:44

We all knew sort of our, our, our, what we controlled and the metrics and the scorecard. And so that's the stuff with coaching. What I do try to say is like, I want to build, help you build a business. You could sell.

Jessica Miller

12:44 - 12:44

Yes.

John Meyer

12:45 - 12:55

Doesn't mean you need to or want to, but you should be building a business you could sell because we can also use the hit by a bus analogy or we can use the you wanna wake up and think about something else analogy.

Jessica Miller

12:56 - 13:02

Yeah, yeah. And I think every single entrepreneur is sitting on an asset whether they know it or not.

Jessica Miller

13:02 - 13:26

And it could be something that's sellable. And many people don't even know how to start thinking about that. Like you may not want to sell, you may be far from it, but it's one of those things where at some point you're going to get to a point where that could be an option and you should know what it looks like to get there. I don't know, to me I'm like group program, group program, bring all these entrepreneurs together, talk to them about this is the path.

John Meyer

13:26 - 13:53

I always thought of it as like what happens when I'm sitting at a bar at some conference and kind of just shooting the shit with somebody and I'm telling them about my business and they're like, would you ever sell? I feel like I should be able to answer that question even if the answer is no, but certainly then I picture the movie scenario of someone sliding a sheet across the paper with like, across the table with a number, right? And then the next question is like, would you ever sell? Well, I guess everybody has a number.

John Meyer

13:53 - 14:13

But then what's your number? Right? Like, that was, that's a hard part to like, it's easy to value a business on in your QuickBooks, right? But some EBITDA multiple of your revenue, and, But there's all these other intangible things that it's hard to put a value on that was an interesting process to go through.

Jessica Miller

14:13 - 14:31

Yeah, yeah. I come from the corporate bio farm world and the acquisition of molecules all the time. And people are like, oh, it's just a molecule. But yes, but if you're this company with this pipeline and this potential growth trajectory, that molecule, quote unquote, is a multi-million-dollar asset.

Jessica Miller

14:32 - 14:36

So you're just being able to think through, these are the pieces. I don't know. It could be really cool.

John Meyer

14:36 - 14:50

I remember the days when Instagram was sold for a billion dollars and there was only 12 employees and people thought that was just crazy. And now I'm like, Zuckerberg got a pretty good deal, right? Like that turns out to be pretty cheap for what Instagram has become.

Jessica Miller

14:50 - 15:19

Yeah, it's amazing. So, you mentioned, like, that's the beautiful thing about having such great experience is that when you're coming to the table as a coach, you have your brand promise of why people are working with you. There's, like you said, there's that very altruistic heart part of it where you're seeing people working really hard. They are doing something amazing. They're burning out a lot of times. You're like, there's a better way to do this. But there's all these other different vantage points also that you get to bring to the table where you're like, and there's this thing over here.

Jessica Miller

15:19 - 15:43

And so, as you're guiding people, you're doing it in the context of all that experience, which is really powerful and speaks to this idea that skills are so transferable. Like, I love that story about, you know, you were a communications major and you were talking and doing these things and then all of a sudden, you're like, wow, I'm doing that now. I used to joke around when people would ask you that, right at like 18 years old, what do you love to do? I'm like, this is the dumbest question ever. You know, I don't know.

Jessica Miller

15:43 - 15:59

I was like, sit around, talk to my friends and drink tea. Like, that's what I like to do. Well, fast forward, I kind of sit around and talk to my friends and drink tea, you know. But you're coaching these entrepreneurs now. So, tell us a little bit about the coaching that you're doing and the client that you help and how you're helping them.

John Meyer

16:00 - 16:29

Yeah, the reason why I chose solopreneurs or specifically like creatives having run to agencies is what I saw, you know I used to sit there in my own office and watch these amazingly talented creatives. I had some imposter syndrome I ran a design agency and I don't know how to use Photoshop So That was an example of Amy and I, my co-founder, just being the perfect sort of blended skills. But I would look at these folks and I thought, man, I think you guys could probably go out on your own and make more money than I can even pay you.

John Meyer

16:30 - 17:09

But I later learned, of course, as the person who did the sales and the marketing and sent the invoices and did the taxes, I'm like, they don't want to do that. But I saw a lot of creatives leave agencies and go out on their own, and they're typically because they're really good at their craft and what they do. And for 8, 10, 12 months, they just grind and they put their head down and they get that $10, 000 project and they thought, great, I'm set for December and then they grind and work and do awesome work and on the 27th or 8th, they send the file back to their client and it's approved and then they're like, Oh crap, I don't have any projects for January, you know, and it's just sort of roller coaster of revenue and this up and down, of business.

John Meyer

17:09 - 17:16

And they eventually, unfortunately, maybe give up and jump off of the roller coaster and go back in house and work at an agency again.

John Meyer

17:16 - 17:53

And I just didn't, I just believe, I kind of believe everybody should be an entrepreneur. So, I wanted to help those people stay on that roller coaster and to get off that solopreneur hamster wheel. The truth is you have to grow to some degree. And you're growing either in systems or you're growing in people, maybe some combination of both. And so, the program's called No More Solo. And the idea is I can not only smooth out your revenue but I can grow your revenue in a way that isn't going to cause you to burn out because if you're a solopreneur making 15 20k a month and I said hey you want to get to 40 that sounds good but you're probably actually thinking there's no way I could survive.

John Meyer

17:55 - 17:58

I would never see my family. I would pull all my hair out, right?

John Meyer

17:59 - 18:01

And so I said, it doesn't have to be that way.

John Meyer

18:01 - 18:09

And so that's really the focus of the program is let's build a traction engine, marketing, to bring leads consistently.

John Meyer

18:09 - 18:31

Let's help you close more of those deals so we're not getting all these kind of looky-loos who check in for your service and then never buy. And then let's deliver that product or service consistently and efficiently, i.e. Maybe other people, consultant, a VA, a contractor, so you can do more of what you love to do and then also have some work-life balance.

Jessica Miller

18:31 - 18:43

Yeah, I love that. And so, the people, when they're coming to you, do you feel like they're at that point where they're like, oh my gosh, save me? Or do they see it coming or a combination of both? Where are they at?

John Meyer

18:43 - 19:15

Yeah. Usually they're growing, but in a stressful way. Or they're in that lumpiness curve where they're like, I did 25K last month and now I have nothing. I'm gonna make 2 grand this month. So, they're usually like in one of those, they're like, I'm growing too fast. I'm not sure, I'm trying to keep this train on the tracks, or it's just that up and down, up and down. And so, I'm really obsessed with getting back to basics and doing kind of the unsexy daily tasks. And so, as a solopreneur, you do need to always be selling.

John Meyer

19:15 - 19:49

I mean, you understand offers. And I generally believe that in services businesses like founder led sales, probably up to a million in revenue. So, it's like before you're trying to outsource sales, like you got to figure out your offer and some marketing engine to consistently have leads, but kind of fall in love with the process. I think people hear the word sales and get kind of, that's gross. I'm a creative. But if you reframe that as problem solving and helping your customer, and if it isn't a fit, then it's just not a fit. You move on to the next 1.

John Meyer

19:50 - 20:01

Then I don't think it's so icky. And I think that's one of the big kind of belief blockers is just being like, you're a salesperson because you're really good at what you do and you can help other people.

Jessica Miller

20:01 - 20:19

Yeah. Yeah. And then having them lean into that in a way that feels good. I mean, it's not a one size fits all, right? So, knowing them, being with them, what are they like, and teasing those things out. I think as a coach, you see a lot of things people don't see. You know? Yes.

John Meyer

20:19 - 20:23

Yeah. And I think a lot of it is encouraging and cheerleading their strengths.

John Meyer

20:24 - 20:54

Totally recognizing, you know, we talked about, well, you came on my show and we talked about offers. Like I always call it the sawdust. What are you creating that you maybe aren't even realizing you're creating? You're a creative as a crafts person, and so they're making this amazing custom cabinet or table. There's a bunch of sawdust on the floor that might also be a valuable product or service, and you're stacking your ladder, your product ladder. Even you telling me, you should probably have a group coaching program for people who want to sell their business.

John Meyer

20:57 - 20:59

I can't help myself. I'm like, wait, should I? I never thought about it.

Jessica Miller

20:59 - 21:03

And from your existing community, from your existing audience and your community.

John Meyer

21:04 - 21:05

Yeah, yeah, exactly.

Jessica Miller

21:06 - 21:35

Yeah, yeah, I love that. Because they're so, to your point about, I think when you use that analogy of somebody's at 20K a month and you talk to them about going to 40K, people's minds are like, I have to figure out how to double what I'm doing right now. I need to work twice as hard. I need to do twice as many things. It's in this like, add more, more, more, more mentality. And actually, I'm sure you've found, and I've definitely found that that is the slowest way to grow. Like, yes, you can grow doing that, but there are so many better ways.

Jessica Miller

21:37 - 21:45

How do you help them see that? Is there a way that you help them lean into looking at that differently or uncovering that?

John Meyer

21:45 - 22:16

Yeah, great point. Some of it's just, do you know your numbers? Like one of the first things, we implement is a real simple basic scorecard. Because I find, and I remember these days too, like, hey, I looked at the bank account and we made more than we spent last month. Awesome. It's like, well, wait a minute. Maybe how could we use that profit strategically or when's the right time to hire? Or what is the next? Because the hardest part about the services game, and I know this is like I had 20 miles to feed every month.

John Meyer

22:16 - 22:52

Yeah. And Lemonly was a project-based agency. So even though we got a lot of repeat customers, we didn't have big retainers. We didn't have 7 figure contracts. And so, I'm always looking 90 days out, and I see like a 0 on our sort of forecast. I'm like, oh boy, we gotta always be selling. Yeah, so I think some of it's just, nope, get your hands around your numbers. And so, the basic blocking and tackling is like, are you doing marketing activities every day? You can't be responsible for whether or not your lead says yes or no, or if it's a Q1 project of next year, or if it's a now thing.

John Meyer

22:52 - 23:24

You can't control their budget, but you can control like, are you doing the sales calls? Are you sending the emails? Let's put that metric on the scorecard, and if you don't get it, it's red. If you get it, it's green. Tracking their numbers. Then I think moving into, where is your time most valuably spent? Like what is your, how do we buy back your time and sort of move you up the ladder? Because I think there's no more addictive feeling, I think, than selling something, giving it to someone else to do, and then going on to sell the next thing.

John Meyer

23:24 - 23:38

Totally, Imean, it's just like. I've never done cocaine, but I'm guessing. Like. It's like I sold it. I sold it for a thousand. I'm paying someone else who loves to do the work a fair wage that they're excited about doing, and now I've made money and I can go do it again.

Jessica Miller

23:40 - 24:04

Yes. So good. I definitely used to joke with myself that I love the sales part too. There's just something so great about feeling like you have complete confidence that you have just given something to somebody that is gonna totally rock their world. Like, I think that is the beauty of having an offer that you really believe in and you know is going to just change everything for them. It's like, this person just hit the jackpot by buying this thing.

Jessica Miller

24:05 - 24:39

It's like, life is great. And I used to think like, I could just do this for everyone. Like, should I not be like coaching and doing all this to be salesperson for everybody? Cause you're right. I mean, that combination though, of being able to give that thing to somebody else that they love to do, you get to stay in your lane, is such a high. And I think there's always things in our business that we have to do that maybe we don't wanna do. You wanna minimize that to the extent that you can, but it's the highs of the things that you get to do that you love that counterbalance the crap you don't really wanna do.

Jessica Miller

24:39 - 24:42

And it's like helping people stay in that lane more. Right?

John Meyer

24:43 - 25:17

Yeah and with solopreneurs, what I'm often telling them is this doesn't have to be a big investment. This doesn't mean you're signing up for a 70 K salary plus benefits and PTO. And I mean, frankly, sometimes it's a, it's a virtual assistant. Like every company I've already, I've built since Lemonly. The first thing I've done is hired an assistant because it's almost like cloning yourself, right? Like if you are uniquely the person to start this business Then you should be the person doing all the things that drive the business which is not scheduling paying bills Running errands, you

John Meyer

25:17 - 25:48

know, like someone else wants to do that work. And if you build a system, it's okay to delegate. And so sometimes with like that scorecard, it's showing them the value of their hour and being like, hey, you have an hourly rate in mind when you sell your infographic or your video or your copywriting or your coaching program. When you're doing this, you're making $10 an hour, right? Like let's delegate that task. Yes. And then I think the light bulb, like giving them permission. That's a lot of what coaching is. I think it's like accountability and permission.

John Meyer

25:48 - 26:12

It's like, I want you to delegate this by next month or higher in a virtual assistant. I went the overseas route. I think as my business continues to grow; I'd love to have another person too. I want to have my assistant to have an assistant. So, 1500 bucks a month, 40 hours a week. That's just a cheat code in terms of scaling yourself and cloning yourself.

Jessica Miller

26:12 - 26:23

Yeah. And it's a sobering moment when you find that they do it so much better than you do. You're like, okay, now really, I'm working for you, but we'll just call it whatever you want. And then everyone's happy. You know?

John Meyer

26:23 - 26:49

Yeah, I think just like, I think there's this like, what's the right word for it? But there's almost this like martyrdom of as an entrepreneur. It's like, we have to be in the suck and we have to do it all and I have to wear every hat. And I created a business, so this is what I signed up for. And it's like, no, you probably have some really unique superpowers, which is why you're even able to consider starting your own business, and that people would consider signing your proposals and giving you money for the craft that you've learned.

John Meyer

26:50 - 27:02

You don't have to be a pro at everything. Our culture is sort of like, let's focus on our weaknesses and build them up so that we're okay at everything. And I want to tell you, double down on your strengths and lean into those superpowers.

Jessica Miller

27:03 - 27:41

Yes, completely, completely. We talked a little bit about this before the show started, but I was sharing for the audience, this idea that we're moving into the next year and people are always looking at their time. To your point, it's one of the most valuable assets. And we look at, to your point, we look at our business, we're like, this is how it is. And these are the days I work and this is how I do it. But the truth is it's your business and you get to do it however you want. And I know for me in 2024, one of the most powerful levers that I pulled was how I manage my time, especially client-facing time, because that is what requires the most energy from me, how I manage that time to work for me.

Jessica Miller

27:41 - 28:14

And this idea of managing and manipulating your work week and your schedule to work for you. And I personally had, especially over the summer, I went and changed my calendar. So, I was doing forward facing, outward facing client tasks once a week. It totally changed my life. I didn't think it was possible. I remember thinking about it and thinking, oh, we'll see how this goes. But then all of a sudden, like, there it is, my calendar, this one day. And I worked other days, but they weren't client-facing. And so, a lot of entrepreneurs, it's just like a dream.

Jessica Miller

28:14 - 28:34

Like, could I take Fridays off? Could I work 4 days? Could I do that? And can I do it without killing myself? I think that's really the key thing. And so, I'm sure you hear this from your clients too. Talk a little bit about like, how do you help them move into these places, whether it's their schedule especially, you know, where they can do it without feeling totally overwhelmed by it.

John Meyer

28:34 - 29:07

Yeah. I think permission off the top is a big 1. My coach taught me this lesson of don't hire to grow your business, hire to buy back your time. And That sounds like you think, well, no, I have to hire because I need to grow, make more revenue and expenses and revenue. But if you reframe that as buying back your time, you then get to decide how to choose that time. It's either doing more of the thing you love, selling, designing, creating, or guess what? It could be exercising, spending time with your kids, doing kindergarten pickup, going golfing, whatever you love.

John Meyer

29:08 - 29:42

I always say entrepreneurship, if you work hard at, you lean into your superpowers, you can have financial freedom. But the real reason we're doing it is the time, freedom, the control. There's likely a lot of entrepreneurs have come from something that they felt spurned or kind of burned by. I'm not going back to that. When I launched, I was like, I'm gonna make sure, I'm gonna work so hard that this company exists, I don't have to go to back. You know, it's that line of entrepreneurs are crazy enough to work 80 hours a week so they don't have to work 40.

John Meyer

29:42 - 30:15

And that's like tongue in cheek, but the thing is like, you can still work 40 and still have what you want. So, 1, its permission, but then 2, what I like to start with, I do an exercise called the energy audit, and if you draw a line down the center of a paper, you put a plus in one side and a minus on the other, And I would challenge you to just write down everything you do on one side of the ledger. And the plus is going to be the things that give you energy. So, I could stand up in front of a group inside a company and do a two-hour workshop on my feet and moving around at high energy.

John Meyer

30:15 - 30:31

I might be physically tired, but when I leave, I'm jazzed. I'm pumped up. On the left side of my ledger, on my minus, is like balancing my QuickBooks. It's like nails on a chalkboard for me. I'm probably 2, 3 months behind, maybe 6.

Jessica Miller

30:32 - 30:34

Your next hire, John.

John Meyer

30:34 - 31:04

Yeah, exactly. Also, I did finally outsource that 1. Cause I probably was also doing it incorrectly. Sure. Like I just not even, it was 90% right. And so that's, you're headed the right track. It's like you get all the pluses, you get the minuses. And then on that minus bucket, I do what's called D, E, and A, which could be delegate, hiring someone, eliminate. Sometimes if you just stop doing things, like when an employee would leave Lemonly, before we hired, I would just say, let's just wait for a couple of weeks and just see if anything breaks.

John Meyer

31:05 - 31:34

And then you're kind of like, maybe we don't need that one meeting we used to do, or maybe we don't need that one software tool. And then that's eliminate and then A is automate. And that one's pretty exciting now as we start to enter into this AI world. And there's maybe some other ways to get rid of tasks you don't like doing. But then on that plus side, the second phase, after the energy audit, I call it the perfect week. And it's really like, it's nothing fancy. I can share it with you, but it's just a simple Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday.

John Meyer

31:34 - 32:01

And I really like the idea of theming your days. It's this idea of batching, right? So, like even me as an entrepreneur, business owner of Lemonly, sometimes Monday mornings were still hard. It's like you had a great weekend and spent time with your family. And so, what did I do on Mondays? Mondays was my team day. Like we had a 10 a.m. All call, the whole kind of like all hands get on the same page. I did my one-on-ones on Monday. I didn't wanna be in my inbox. I wanted to be with people where I get energy.

John Meyer

32:01 - 32:58

And that kind of kept me accountable because they needed me and I needed them. But then Tuesdays, we had a rule of Lemony, like no client meetings on Tuesdays. Because when you're doing creative work, 30 minutes every day, 366 days. I can tell you today's day, 344. And it just takes, I like to say, exhaust the body and then to tame the mind, right? We worry about a lot of things as entrepreneurs and when you're exercising, that sort of takes care of itself. If you have a tough conversation you need to have with a client, an employee, maybe even a loved 1, I always say, go for a walk.

John Meyer

33:00 - 33:33

Fresh air, it'll be better before you make that phone call. And so that's an example of designing your life to fit your business. And those opportunities only open up more when you're willing to go no more solo, when you're willing to delegate, have some other people. And that's kind of the hidden secret, I think, of No More Solo is, guess what? It's more fun to build a company with other people. Right? And so, it's just more fun to share your wins. And I know that there's this obsession with kind of building the most efficient companies possible.

John Meyer

33:33 - 33:45

And it's a $10 million business with only 3 employees. Like that's really cool, but it's also fun to have wins and like give people these great opportunities and hire people and share in the success together.

Jessica Miller

33:45 - 34:11

Yeah, I love that so much. And I think you bring up a good point, which is, and I know when you talked about the fact that you're a manifester, you have to be able to dream it. You have to be able to vision it. It's going to be different for every person. Some people are, you love a big team and that's the company you want. So, if I was like, John, here's how you do it by yourself, you know, whatever, it wouldn't fit and it wouldn't feel the same, right? And I think that's a big part of it.

Jessica Miller

34:11 - 34:46

It's like starting with like, what do you want? What lights you up? What do you want to manifest? And then marrying it with those really simple, tactical frameworks. I mean, if you're not measuring it, it's not happening. I don't care if you're like drinking water or doing your sales calls or whatever it is, right? You have to be able to intentionally know what those things are, see them, and know if you're doing them. Sometimes it's back to basics, but having someone tell you, these are the things you need to do. You don't need to do everything, and you don't need to do it over complicated.

Jessica Miller

34:47 - 34:50

Let's focus, constrain to really expand.

John Meyer

34:50 - 35:03

Yeah. And one thing I always say to folks is, we used to do this at Lemonly, we were pretty innovative. Our first employee, 2011, was a remote person in Serbia, full-time, salaried. So, we were doing that long before COVID and

John Meyer

35:04 - 35:35

people would come to me in South Dakota and say, how do you have remote employees, like how do you trust? How do you know that they're doing anything? Or they'd say, how do I convince my boss to let me work from home one day a month? And I'd always say like, use the E word, which is experiment. Like phrase it as an experiment. Like, hey, could I do the first Thursday of every month remotely? And, and then guess what? If that's you, when you have that first Thursday of the month and you get to wake up in your jammies and work from home, be super productive and get a lot done, right?

John Meyer

35:35 - 36:12

Because guess what? What boss is going to say, you know what, Jess, I need you to be here and do less work, you know, and like, thankfully that example is sort of age because COVID sort of took care of that for many of us, but the same idea applies. So, if you're an entrepreneur or solopreneur listening to this, you're like, yeah, that sounds good, John and Jess, but I'm trying to grow my business. I got to grind. There's no way I could take Fridays off. I'm going to take Fridays off. My guess that alone will force you'll be probably 25% more productive Monday through Thursday, just by mentally deciding you're going to do it.

John Meyer

36:12 - 36:33

Totally. I remember the first time I got an out of office email from someone that's like, sorry, not available. I only check emails on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10 AM to noon. And I remember my first response was like, what a dick. Like they only check email 4 hours a week. Who do they think they are? And then like, and then like an hour later I was like, dang, that's really smart.

Jessica Miller

36:33 - 36:37

It's really, yeah, exactly. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

John Meyer

36:37 - 36:54

You know, and I'm like, that's just deciding. In the services business, I always say, we teach our clients how to treat us. And so, when you teach them like, hey, when you work with Leadmore, like we don't do coaching calls on Friday, like business is off, you know, whatever your, whatever your version of that is.

John Meyer

36:55 - 37:13

So, I think we hear design your business to fit your life and we think, well, that'd be great once I'm ready. And the truth is it'll never be right. There'll never be enough money in the bank account or the team. So just you have to design your life first and then let the business fit it.

Jessica Miller

37:13 - 37:34

Totally. I love the question of what would it take? Like if you decided I'm not working on Friday anymore, what would it take for you to only work Monday through Thursday? And like, especially working with creatives, and people are inherently creative, I think, as entrepreneurs, it is amazing. I'm like, don't judge it. Just like, what would it take? What are the

Jessica Miller

37:34 - 37:43

possibilities of this? And it's really cool too, to do it in a group because then, you know, like, well, what about this? Well, what about you get all these smart people in a room and it's fascinating.

John Meyer

37:44 - 37:50

That's a nice like kind of close sibling of the question I call the, what would have to be true question. Yes.

Jessica Miller

37:50 - 37:50

Yes.

John Meyer

37:50 - 37:55

And this works even if you're listening to this and you're not an entrepreneur, but you want to be 1, like go

John Meyer

37:55 - 38:02

to your boss and say like, what would have to be true for me to become a contractor and work one day a week on my side hustle.

Jessica Miller

38:02 - 38:03

Totally.

John Meyer

38:03 - 38:08

And they might just say, nothing, you can't do that. Well, then you could maybe just quit that job and go start.

Jessica Miller

38:08 - 38:09

Yeah, or at least you know, right?

John Meyer

38:09 - 38:38

At least you know, yeah. Because what the beauty of that question is that their answer is gonna tell you the roadmap. So, you ask yourself, what would it take for me to take Fridays off? Well, probably need to be more, you probably need to, you know, get all your work done in 4 days, obviously, which means you probably need to be more efficient, which probably means you need to be a little bit more diligent with your schedule, probably don't take some of those inefficient coffee meetings. Or like, you know, I always say we probably should be waking up and spending the first 2 hours Tackling our biggest roadblock every day.

John Meyer

38:39 - 38:51

Sure, because then after that everything is sort of gravy, right? So be honest with yourself. What's your roadblock and start with that thing? Don't start with like the thing that makes you feel good, like being in your email inbox, like you feel like you're checking off to doing something.

John Meyer

38:53 - 38:56

Yeah. So, like what would have to be true? You'll probably give yourself the answer.

Jessica Miller

38:56 - 39:00

Yeah, I love that.

John Meyer

39:00 - 39:24

And I think we forget to dream sometimes and just kind of go outside the box. And it's really important just to know that. There's pretty much a way to do just about everything that you want to do. And you don't have to be a special snowflake to do it. You figure it out. You know, and if you've gone the road of an entrepreneur, you're kind of unique anyway, and you're a rockstar. So, well, we started with like some of the Lemonly clients and that probably over time, some

John Meyer

39:24 - 39:48

of the novelty wore off too. I remember like we got Google later on in our business history and to part of your snowflake questions, like they are just like us, right? They do. And they need you as the entrepreneur or as the coach or as the service provider. It's like, they're coming to you for an answer that they don't have, which is why that they reached out to your company. So, you know, recognize your specialty and your expertise.

Jessica Miller

39:48 - 40:00

Yeah, I love that so much. John, this is so good. I could talk to you about this all day long. For the listeners, tell them where they can find you on the interwebs, come check you out and learn more about you.

John Meyer

40:00 - 40:15

Yeah, pretty easy. I'm just johntmeyer.com. I have to use the T because if I Google **John Meyer** with an E, which is my name, Google will say, did you mean John Mayer? And I say, no Google. It's not even spelled the same, but my body is a wonderland. And I have a nice singing voice.

John Meyer

40:20 - 40:46

Yeah. And you have a guitar. So, I know you always bring your guitar. So johntmeyer.com. So, typically 8 or 9 solopreneurs together, which that's really cool too, because in the creative world, often we're even sharing services or sharing clients. It's like, you're a great copywriter, I'm a designer, like we could probably work together.

John Meyer

40:47 - 40:52

And so that's really fun. That'll start in the middle of January. 25 is the next cohort. There's information there.

Jessica Miller

40:52 - 40:54

Awesome. And you have your own podcast?

John Meyer

40:55 - 41:19

Yeah. The podcast is called the Lead More Podcast, which you've been on. And I believe the world needs more leaders. Entrepreneurs, I think, are great leaders. And they are the ones who aren't willing to wait until someone says, now it's your turn or now you have the title or now that you got that degree. What I love about entrepreneurs, they just say, I think I could do that now. And that's a lot of the goal of the podcast.

Jessica Miller

41:19 - 41:25

Yeah, awesome. We're gonna link all those things in the show notes. And John, thank you so much for being on the show. This was awesome.

John Meyer

41:25 - 41:27

Thanks, Jess. This is fun.

Jessica Miller

41:27 - 41:32

Yeah, it was awesome. And for everybody else, we will see you next week. Thanks again, John. It's been such a pleasure.