



Kelly Scanlon: On this episode of Banking on Kansas City, John Jantsch joins us to talk about his latest book, *The Self-Reliant Entrepreneur*. John has been a business owner for nearly 30 years and he's the bestselling author of several other books including *Duct Tape Marketing*, *The Referral Engine*, he's a well-known and respected expert on marketing and those books have been translated into 10 languages. He speaks quite often and his writing also appears in *Inc*, *Entrepreneur* and *Southwest*, the magazine. In this episode of Banking on Kansas City, John talks with us about *The Self-Reliant Entrepreneur*, why he chose to write it and tips on growing a national audience. Welcome to the show, John.

John Jantsch: Hey, thanks for having me, Kelly.

Kelly Scanlon: Yeah, Kansas City native, but man, you're really known well on the national stage and even the international stage now. Talk to us about why, after establishing a brand and a personal brand too around marketing, you decided to depart from that and produce this book called *The Self-Reliant Entrepreneur*.

John Jantsch: Well, as you mentioned, I have written a number of books, five books prior to this, and they've all been very squarely on how to do marketing. But I've also owned my own business for 30 years and I don't know, there was just a side of me that, maybe on one hand was kind of tired of writing about marketing. Let's be honest, there may have been a little burnout in that element, but there also, I'm getting to a point where I wanted to write something that I was able to share my own experience as a lifelong entrepreneur. It's really about the only thing I've ever done. This is less a book about how to do something and more book about why to do it. Working with now thousands of small business owners and entrepreneurs over the years, I do firmly believe that one of the ways that we produce a business or build a business that is going to serve our lives is that we're constantly working on ourselves.

John Jantsch: And, in fact, I often say that that's the definition of a self-reliant entrepreneur is somebody that realizes that their life is a work in progress. I see a lot of entrepreneurs that are getting the life sucked out of them by this thing that should be joyous and freeing, their business. I really wanted to tackle the whole idea of what it means to be an entrepreneur and how to create a business that

not only, hopefully, generates wealth, helps you employ people, brings value, but also enhances your life.

Kelly Scanlon: Yeah. And you just nailed it there with the self-reliance. I was going to ask you, what do you consider to be a self-reliant entrepreneur? And to help define that and to help inspire and to help motivate you actually borrow from a time period that some people think is outdated and has no application to present day entrepreneurs. And that's the transcendentalists we're talking about the 1860s and a little bit beyond that. Talk to us about why you chose that period to write the book from.

John Jantsch: Yeah. To give listeners a little idea, the book is structured as 366 daily entries. Got one in there for leap year even. Every day is a different page. It starts with a quote from this period of literature in the mid 19th century that you talked about. Then I give my sort of application or relevance to maybe today's entrepreneur and then it ends with a, what I call, a challenge question to give you something to really think about around the topic for the day or maybe have as a centering thought.

John Jantsch: I chose this body of work personally because I like it, but also because I think it's still today some of the best entrepreneurial writing ever and they weren't necessarily writing to entrepreneurs, but if you think about what was going on in America at the time, 1850 to 1870 we were on the cusp of the civil war. We were trying to abolish slavery. Women were marching in the streets to get the right to vote. It was the first really counterculture period in America. A lot of the writing had to do with trusting yourself, rely on yourself. You're enough now. You can make your own decisions. We're all connected and that we need to have faith and trust in ourselves, but we also need to have empathy for other ideas and thoughts.

John Jantsch: I just think that if that doesn't sound like what it means or what we need to do as an entrepreneur, particularly in today's climate, I don't know what else does. I dove very deeply. These are not Instagram and Pinterest quotes from Walden. I dove very deeply into some of the works that people know that we were all asked to read, The Scarlet Letter, Moby Dick, Little Women, Walden, but I also dove into and discovered little known authors and dove into their letters and their journals.

John Jantsch: To produce an overarching theme for the book, I use the readings from those works as the anchor and then as I said, I try to make it relevant based on my experience for each day. It's not meant to be a book that somebody just picks up and reads cover to cover. It's more of what I would call a practice book if some of the ideas appeal to you about building deeper self trust and about finding purpose in your work and about what it takes to be resilient and to think about the impact that you want to have on the world, I think that's something that we just have to go to work on every single day. And at the end of the year we might find that we've made some amount of progress.

Kelly Scanlon: You talked about the parallels and there are so many parallels between mid 19th century society and today when you really start digging into it and thinking about it. What were some of the themes? I can't even imagine how many passages you must have had to curate in that whole body of literature, but what kind of themes were you looking for?

John Jantsch: There were a lot of themes in this book and, actually, if you Google the term self-reliance today, you're going to find some people that will teach you how to build your own house or make your own furniture, your own clothes and this idea of going it alone. And actually, I think that what the writers of this period were actually talking about was more of this idea of self-reliance that realized that the mind, body and spirit connection was huge. They were I think some of the first American writers at least that were writing about that and that how we think, how we enter each day has an impact on our physical being, that we go out there and show the world. That having this level of trust that you were not going to allow other people's thoughts or other people's ideas or opinions influence what you did or how you acted and that you were going to realize that you didn't have to control every situation.

John Jantsch: I mean, I think things along those lines come up all the time and that this idea that not only mind, body and spirit being connected, but that we as individuals, we're all connected. A lot of times when people think about this idea of, "Don't listen to anybody else," what they were really saying is, "Realize you're enough now that you have what it takes, that you have a unique gift to bring, and that there's actually a much more empathetic idea to that. That a lot of what our job as entrepreneurs is, is not to prove that we're right all the time. It's actually to occasionally prove that we're wrong and to listen to and accept and experience and maybe change our point of view about something because it no longer serves.

Kelly Scanlon: Yeah. And I'm really glad that you made that point because a lot of people could see the title of your book, *The Self-Reliant Entrepreneur*, not really a read the subtitle, and think that you're isolating yourself, that you are putting yourself on an island, basically, and shutting others out because you're just relying on your inner strength. And you need to rely on your inner strength, but as you said, there is that connection to the natural world, there's the connection to the community in which you're doing the business and you depend on that. I'm glad that you made that clarification. Going back to the themes a little bit more specifically, you've organized the book according to some major themes. Can you talk about it?

John Jantsch: It might have been partly a practical nature. I started out doing the research by just reading things and thinking, "Oh, that's a good idea. That's a good idea." And then I realized, "Wait a minute, I'm going to have a bucket load of ideas. How do I wrangle this into something that I can organize?" It came to me that, and I've always thought that there's a seasonal aspect to being an entrepreneur as you evolve and, obviously, the metaphor was there with the annual calendar to dip into seasons. I first organized it around when we're planning, then we're

discovering, then we're evolving, then we're growing. Those are, to me, are the seasons.

John Jantsch: And then each season actually has three themes for each month. Every month has a bit of a theme. I mean, it's not overt like every reading you know exactly it's about love or freedom or failure, but it's essentially organized around that. And what that allowed me to do is, I think, give the entire book a bit of an arc, but it also helped me organize. I could actually now go out and look for readings that fit the theme. It really streamlined the process of research as well.

Kelly Scanlon: Some of these themes that you talked about, the mindfulness, the meditation, the solitude that I think a lot of us do attribute to and are very familiar with when it comes to Theroux. You mentioned Walden earlier and so forth. How do those kinds of things serve entrepreneurs?

John Jantsch: Some amount of solitude... We'll make it really practical and we'll call that strategic thinking. I mean, being able to get alone without the phone, without the email, without meetings for extended periods of time. And I mean, I might be talking about a couple of hours, I may be talking about a day or a weekend. That was something that many of the transcendentalists wrote about. That as well as journaling. I don't know that they explicitly called it meditation, but certainly having a time with your own thoughts. I think those are practices that I think a lot of entrepreneurs have at least grappled with at times, but certainly come to realize, I'm not the first person to suggest any of these ideas. I've certainly come to realize that there's value in them, but it's like everything. It's a practice. It's a habit.

John Jantsch: I mean, I think a lot of what we're talking about is developing habits that help you stay more present. Because I think the only stress I ever feel in my business, and I think a lot of people can relate to this, is when I'm worrying about what's going to happen next week? What's going to happen in this meeting? What's going to happen in this sales call? As opposed to being there in that sales call actually actively listening and empathizing with the person that I'm speaking with. We're worried about what happened last time or what's going to happen next week and we kill the moment. Again, I'm not the first one to suggest that, but I do think that it's a hard practice because we have so many inputs coming at us and we developed a habit of not being mindful, quite frankly.

Kelly Scanlon: You talk also though, I mean, let's face it, we have those moments as entrepreneurs where fear creeps in, where failure, the fear of failure, you can combine the two. Fear and failure almost paralyzes you. You get burnt out, you get tired. What would you say to entrepreneurs who feel that way? What will they find in your book that will help them to combat those things?

John Jantsch: Well, I think the first one is this idea of realizing you have everything you need right now. And again, people might be looking around going, "Really? Really?" I think that's the first acceptance that you have to have. I do also think that you have to go out there and experience things to know what it is you want to do, to

know what it is your purpose that you're trying to solve. There's a quote from a wonderful author named Steven Pressfield. He's also a screenwriter. People probably seen The Legend of Bagger Vance. He wrote that as well. But he also wrote a book called the War of Art. He talks really eloquently about this idea that fear is here to tell us something. That quite often the thing that we fear the most, the thing that we fear doing is the thing we absolutely need to run towards because it is just a big screaming signal that that is something that was meant to be in our life.

John Jantsch: Now, I'm not talking about fear of jumping off a cliff or something like that, but, somebody who is afraid of public speaking probably has a gift that they need to get over that fear because it's something that will either serve their business, or more importantly, deliver value to other people. And I think that that's one of the things that keeps people from doing the things that they were meant to do, frankly and I think that we need to have a better relationship with fear, maybe or particularly fear of failure. Because if something really gets a knot in our stomach, use that as a sign that that's probably something you need to investigate.

Kelly Scanlon: Did you have any surprises as you wrote the book?

John Jantsch: I had a lot of surprises. First off, I mean, a couple of them were that I discovered a lot of authors I was not familiar with. Particularly a lot of female authors because let's face it that time and that era, they didn't get pushed forward very much. A lot of discoveries there. I tell you, the other thing that really surprised me is I would read a passage and swear that Theroux was talking about today and not 150 years ago. That he was talking about our frittering away our time on Facebook and not in some other frittering that people did in the 1850s. And that really surprised me. That's why I think this writing is still so relevant today because the human condition hasn't actually changed that much.

Kelly Scanlon: Yeah. At our core, we're still the same people. What would you give as tips, as advice, to Kansas Citians who are trying to develop a national, especially a national personal brand like you have because as you say, you started here in Kansas City and you are not just nationally known, you're internationally known as a marketing expert and that just doesn't happen overnight. And some people never do break out. What would you tell people who are aspiring, not necessarily marketing, but in some other, and I'm talking in particular, I'm not talking about trying to put another manufacturing plant in another location. I'm talking about personal branding here. How do you develop that? Talk to us a little bit about that for a while.

John Jantsch: Well, I think first and foremost you've got to have something that's unique that you can bring to the world. And you do. You've got to discover it, I guess, but it's not, unfortunately what so many people do is they look at what somebody is doing, an author, a guru or whatever they want to call them is doing, and they try to imitate them or they're at least they try to read their story and read their advice and say, "Okay, I'm going to do that exact thing and then I'll be the next

YouTube star." I think that's where we get in a lot of trouble because then we're chasing things that are not congruent with what we believe or that are just not going to be something that we're going to put the time in to get good enough at.

John Jantsch: I mean, let's face it, developing a national brand, developing an idea, writing a book, these all take tremendous amount of work. They take a tremendous amount of showing up day after day after day of being resilient. When a lot of times we look at somebody that's achieved some level of success and we think, "Wow, they just had the straight path. Look at them now." We don't get to witness how many times they had to go left and right and veer and changed their mind and pivot and we see the results. We don't always see the work. I think the definition or one of the greatest qualities of success is resilience and that's the piece that I think we, failing and learning from failure rather than feeling like a failure is absolutely a quality that you have to develop.

Kelly Scanlon: If you had to leave our listeners with one thing, what would it be? [crosstalk 00:17:11] You've got a lot to share. I know. I know.

John Jantsch: There is no one thing. No, I think the thing that I will leave it, even though I want listeners to buy this book and I want them to read this book, this book will not tell you how to be self-reliant. That is on you. This book offers some ideas, offers some concepts, maybe gives you questions that you can wrestle with that will help you get to the answer. It's sort of ironic to have a book to teach somebody to be self-reliant. It's a journey. It's something that, that you have to realize is a work in progress and it never ends. That's the thing that I hope, at least for my life, is that I keep doing this journey and experiencing new things until I just can't physically do it anymore because I'm still a work in progress.

Kelly Scanlon: Yeah. It's a wonderful way to live, actually. It really is. Where can we get your book, John?

John Jantsch: You will be able to purchase the book pretty much anywhere. I would suggest if you're a Kansas Citian, Rainy Day Books is one of my favorite bookstores, but you can buy it at the chains as well as on all the online stores. If you want to just find out a little more about it, just Self-ReliantEntrepreneur.com and you may not be able to spell that, but if you get close, Google will help you find it. I read a great, I think it was one of the Bushes, President Bushes, had a quote that said, "The problem with the French is they don't have a word for entrepreneur." Nobody could spell entrepreneur. Self-Reliant Entrepreneur or John Jantsch or Duct Tape Marketing books, you'll probably find me.

Kelly Scanlon: Yeah. Or go out to your website. Give us your website, DuctTapeMarketing.com?

John Jantsch: Yeah. DuctTapeMarketing.com is the website for my business, but the book, if you're just looking for the book, it's Self-ReliantEntrepreneur.com.

Kelly Scanlon: Okay. Self-ReliantEntrepreneur.com, DuctTapeMarketing.com and if you're interested in tips on marketing that you can put to use right away, he has lots of resources on his main website as well. John, thank you so much for being our guest on Banking on Kansas City. We really appreciate you stopping by and sharing some of your wisdom with us.

John Jantsch: My pleasure. Thanks, Kelly.

Joe Close: This is Joe Close, president of Country Club Bank. It's a pleasure to have welcomed John Jantsch for this week's episode. As an author, business owner and entrepreneur, he has empathetic wisdom, a well of valuable insight into what it takes to succeed in the world of small business. As John said, if you're an entrepreneur in search of self-reliance, a philosophy of accepting our lives as a constant work in process is essential to success. The journey of self-improvement and creating a business that not only generates wealth, but brings people value and enhances your life is truly the definition of success. If you haven't, check out John's book, *The Self-Reliant Entrepreneur*. I highly recommend it. Thanks for tuning in this week. We're banking on you, Kansas City. Country Club Bank, member FDIC.