



Kelly Scanlon: Joining us on this episode of Banking on Kansas City is Angela Hurt, the founder and CEO of Veracity Consulting. A firm that offers customized IT solutions that bridge the gap between business and technology, primarily in the government and commercial sectors. Welcome, Angie.

Angela Hurt: Thank you, Kelly.

Kelly Scanlon: I just have to get it out here right now. Huge congratulations in order. I saw recently that Veracity made the Inc. 5000 list, and I believe that's your first time on the list.

Angela Hurt: It is our first time, yes.

Kelly Scanlon: Huge congratulations there.

Angela Hurt: Yes, thank you.

Kelly Scanlon: What an honor.

Angela Hurt: Our team is very excited.

Kelly Scanlon: Yeah, so, talk about the growth. You have been in business now for, what, 13 years?

Angela Hurt: 13 years today, actually.

Kelly Scanlon: 13 years in business and you have had phenomenal growth, obviously, you make this list, but tell us about the path, the journey, the growth journey. You started out virtually. Let's start there.

Angela Hurt: Sure, so my thought process on that was, as the type of business that we are, we're primarily serving our clients, which is onsite at their space. We really didn't see the need of that extra overhead. I think it's a trap that a lot of entrepreneurs -

Kelly Scanlon: Agreed, yeah.

Angela Hurt: ... The first thing is where am I going to get my office? I always think, well, do you even have any revenue or know when your revenue is going to come in?

Kelly Scanlon: Right, yeah, but I can afford the pool table.

Angela Hurt: That's right, exactly, do that. Well, you can go office someplace that has a pool table, right? That might even be a bar. I mean, I'm telling you, we had meetings everywhere. The coffee shops didn't have the the pool tables.

Kelly Scanlon: The amenities, yeah.

Angela Hurt: Yeah, but they had great coffee. We really did start in a lot of meetings at coffee shops. Of course, we're meeting people where they are, whether it is clients, we'd go to them. If it's potential employees, we're making it convenient for them, and so we didn't really need that space.

We've really evolved from completely virtual, to having a space in the cross roads that was just a big open space, collaborative, to this last year actually building out a more formal looking, I would say, office space with all the amenities that one would expect.

Kelly Scanlon: Yeah, you have some great amenities. I've been to some events there and you have, in the lower level especially, it's a very nice for event space. You've got a built in bar and tap, taps too.

Angela Hurt: Yeah, local breweries there on tap.

Kelly Scanlon: Right, yeah, so fun place to work. Obviously that helps the culture, but how did you manage to create a company culture when you had people all over the place? They're onsite clients, but as a company, how were you able to create cohesiveness and family and so forth?

Angela Hurt: It's something that has evolved, because number one, we've really hired liked valued people, and so we like to spend time together. A lot of our events for team building would be around giving back to the community. It might be around wellness walks, things of that nature.

We are very, very intentional of connecting people. When I started the company it was me really wanting to do the right thing for people, the right thing for our clients, the right things for our employees at the same time. In that, with that connection, it just came natural, because it felt like family, because we were always doing the right thing, if that makes sense.

Kelly Scanlon: Oh definitely, which leads right into your name. Veracity is a little bit of an unusual name for an IT company. Why did you name it that? How does that personify your business philosophy?

Angela Hurt: Our vision is to lead with the truth and always do the right thing. The name veracity, the word itself definition is the propensity to tell the truth. When you come from a consulting background, and I think that sometimes people fear a consultant walking in as much as a woman might fear walking into a car dealership or a mechanic, right?

That we're sometimes at the mercy, because we're hiring folks, because we don't know exactly what we need. Maybe we don't have the expertise to do what we need to do. I felt like it was important for that name to state the obvious, right?

That you can trust us. Of course, being a small company and not having the big five name, we're constantly building relationships and building trust. We wanted to lead with that, if that makes sense.

Kelly Scanlon: It makes lots of sense. That leads me right into the next question is how are you different from other IT companies? There's lots of IT companies out there, but if you had to differentiate yourself, what would that point of differentiation be?

Angela Hurt: Here in Kansas City, so we're Kansas City based. We do business across the nation, but we really say we're Kansas City focused. Even the clients that we have in other States really develop because of relationships just right here from KC.

What we love about that is that we are the hometown consulting firm. There's not another Kansas City based consulting firm. There are a lot of IT staffing companies. Those folks don't invest the time and resources that it takes to develop truly customized solutions for our clients.

A lot of our opportunities that we have and that come to fruition are because we have invested significant time of white boarding and developing a solution that is truly custom to what the client needs and their problem they're facing. There's just not a Kansas City company that does that.

Kelly Scanlon: Yeah, it sounds like you embed yourself within the company essentially.

Angela Hurt: We do, we really do.

Kelly Scanlon: Become a part of them. Again, obviously technology space, it's a rapidly changing market and lots of innovation that is occurring. How do you cull ideas in such a rapidly changing environment? How do you know what is just a flash in the pan, or what's going to be a lasting trend? How do you help your clients weed through all that as well?

Angela Hurt: That's a great question. It's a challenge that we have all the time. I think we're fortunate, because the things that we do by nature, we're naturally curious. Curiosity is one of our core values and we talk about it a lot. Because of that, we're always searching and seeking.

We constantly, from an innovation standpoint, we're looking to see what's next. It comes because of the natural ability of our folks who have laptops on their laps all the time. It's like, "Hey, you don't have to work 80 hours a week. Work your 40 hours a week, but outside of that time is when our people truly are digging in and figuring other things out," because they're passionate about it, right?

Kelly Scanlon: Right.

Angela Hurt: We're lifelong learners. We are fascinated by the technology world. When something new comes in, we spend the time to investigate. We try to understand it really well. Then we educate our customers, and some of our education comes from our customers.

It's great, because we might have one customer doing something new that we can then help another customer, because we've now seen it, right?

Kelly Scanlon: Exactly.

Angela Hurt: It's a give and take relationship when it comes to education for sure.

Kelly Scanlon: You mentioned earlier when I asked you about the culture of the company and how you kept that together in a virtual environment, and you mentioned that you were involved in a lot of community events. Early on, yes you were, but you've taken that to a whole new level in recent years.

You are the chair of some very major events here in the city. You're becoming well known philanthropically. What's behind your decision to lend your time and invest your money in those kinds of causes?

Angela Hurt: I think there's a couple of things, and honestly I have people ask me all the time, how do I get involved? I think that now in the seat that I'm in now, I'm flabbergasted that people don't know how to get involved. I forget back to the time before I started Veracity where I didn't have people coming to me and asking me stuff all the time.

I realized that people want to do good things just given the opportunity and being introduced to it. My introduction into it was truly at the Women's Business Center. When I started my business and looking for help and trying to understand, so I knew exactly what I was going to do.

I knew who my customers were going to be. I understood my price point. I didn't know how to be a business person. I walked in the door there and the opportunities and the education that I received for free from a nonprofit, that was invaluable.

I couldn't have afforded the things that were lent to me in that space. I thought, "Well, people really do this." Then I started asking like, "How are they funded?" Trying to understand that. I felt, in that moment, I didn't say if I make it, I said, when I make it, I will do something back for this community, because this community has already helped me.

That was just a very small thing. It has grown since then. I don't mean my helping the community, I mean, still the community doing for Veracity. It's easy to get started. You get started by attending an event and then finding your passion and then maybe sponsoring an event.

I really feel like it's something that we owe back to our community.

Kelly Scanlon: Yeah, your business allows you that platform and that flexibility. Not everyone knows that you have a background in rugby, so tell us about that and what lessons you learned on the field that have helped shape you as a business owner.

Angela Hurt: I think it's, first of all, I started playing rugby probably 10 or so years ago, way too late. I guess maybe it's 15 years ago, not in college. I did it as a grown adult, right?

Kelly Scanlon: You knew better at that point.

Angela Hurt: I did know better, yes, I say that. I mean, I had a child but it was a way to get organized in a team. It was a way to be part of something that was so team oriented for a goal. When you even take that lesson and you think about your business, it's all about building the right team, building the right structure, finding the different ...

Rugby is a great example, because in rugby, every person ... You would have a spot on the rugby field.

Kelly Scanlon: No I wouldn't.

Angela Hurt: If you look at a body type an athletic type, you're like, "That person would be a prop, that person would be a wing." We are not all alike. We are very different. If you think about making up your leadership team, we are also very different.

Kelly Scanlon: So true.

Angela Hurt: Then the other thing that I learned was getting knocked down. It happened, it's something that you don't want to have happen, but you have to know intuitively that it's going to happen. It's all about how you pick yourself back up. I can't think of how many hard hits I had in rugby, and I've had hard hits as a business owner, it's not always easy.

Kelly Scanlon: Yeah, and invariably you're going to get that hit and you also have to be all in.

Angela Hurt: You do, and the other thing that I think is great, and I know I've told people this before, that when I first started playing rugby, I went to my very first practice and I was like, "Oh, this is fun. This ball handling is great." The coach comes up to me and said, "Hey, I would love for you to play in our match this weekend."

I was like, "I don't even know the rules of the game." He said, "Well, this is how you learn." Truly, if you came to a game today, and I sat there and tried to explain what was happening on the field, you wouldn't get it. You can't get it unless you're in.

I mean, standing in the sidelines does not allow you to truly understand how to do it. That to me is very much like in business, right? Me going to Women's Business Center, however many, 13 years ago, let's say 13 years ago today, they couldn't have taught me the things then that I know now, right?

Kelly Scanlon: Yeah, you learned out on the playing field.

Angela Hurt: That's right, yeah, so huge.

Kelly Scanlon: What's been your biggest surprise, good or bad as a business owner?

Angela Hurt: I think I didn't expect to feel some of the heartache that you get being a business owner. I thought that there would be frustrations and fear and all of these things, but there truly is, it becomes your baby. Inevitably I think there's heartache.

I also didn't think that the joy on the flip side of that, right? Is so extreme, and understanding where vulnerability fits into that on both of those spectrums, right? It allows you to feel them both.

Kelly Scanlon: That's because you're all in.

Angela Hurt: You're all in, that's right.

Kelly Scanlon: Yeah, that's why feel that way. What keeps you going during difficult times, during those periods of heartache? What is it?

Angela Hurt: I think it's the team. It's the overall team and what we're doing for folks and the difference that we're making. It's very important to me and I know that one of

my strengths is around positivity, so even as things might come about, I have this extreme optimism all the time.

I have this little thing that pops up on my phone actually twice a day that says things are always working out for me.

Kelly Scanlon: Oh, I love it.

Angela Hurt: Yeah, it pops up and even in rough times, I'm like, "Oh yeah, we'll get right through this."

Kelly Scanlon: If you had to write a lesson plan for starting a business and running a business, what would you stress the most in it?

Angela Hurt: I think a couple things. I think looking fear in the face and passing through is extremely important. You can't let the fear of some unknown get in your way. I think you get past that and just know that there's a few things that you have to have that you're not going to just go out and hire.

That's your bank, obviously building a great relationship with your bank and building the relationship to where they know your business and understand what the ups and downs you might go through is huge. Having a great attorney is important. Then also building a good relationship with an accountant.

When you're early on in your business, you have no clue what those financial statements really truly mean until you have somebody work with you through that.

Kelly Scanlon: Exactly, and I like the way you talk about getting them on board early, because so often it's when you're in trouble that I see business owners scrambling to go find a bank that's going to extend them a line of credit when they're already in a place where they can't pay their bills.

Angela Hurt: That's right, your financials are looking bad and now you're asking somebody for money, right?

Kelly Scanlon: Right.

Angela Hurt: Yeah.

Kelly Scanlon: Great advice early on.

Angela Hurt: The other thing that I say early on is hire the people you think you can't afford.

Kelly Scanlon: Yes.

Angela Hurt: That's because when you're early and you're looking at revenue or you're looking at income and you think about when you may be hired or when you may start paying yourself, I delayed a lot of things and made a lot of personal sacrifices in order to hire folks that I needed.

There were times that I hired somebody I could afford. That is never a good thing, right? I think that we started seeing growth when I started hiring people that I felt it was going to be a stretch to make happen.

Kelly Scanlon: What do you think will be the biggest challenge for the women who come behind us? I mean, the generations before us set the stage for our successes and we are continuing. We are both, you and I are both involved in women's organizations and continue, but for the women who are coming after us, what do you think is going to be their biggest challenges?

Angela Hurt: This is a tough question. It really is. When we think about the glass breakers before us, right? All the things that they do and they did to get themselves at the table so that now we have a seat at the table. I think the thing that concerns me most with the trends that I'm seeing is I think we've worked so hard to get us all in one room, and that there's not the segregation of the men and the women.

I think that we have to continue to foster that, not fall into the trap of more women only clubs, or women only that, right? I think it's important that we continue to push that. I do think that there might be a bit of a trend that says that we're going to almost segregate ourselves from one another again.

I think that's something we have to be careful of.

Kelly Scanlon: Yeah, we worked really hard to get a seat at the table. Now let's not remove ourselves from the table intentionally.

Angela Hurt: That's right, yes.

Kelly Scanlon: Yeah, so at this point in your life, what's most important to you and why?

Angela Hurt: People, my team is important. My son is greatly important. I think just continuing to make connections, and by connections, one of my personal values around connection is that feeling of belonging. In the constant connecting with folks and doing it in a way that is authentic, not because you might get something of it, that's something that continues to still drive me.

Then the other part of that is giving back to the community is something that I know we've already discussed that, but it's something that drives me on a daily basis of why are we doing what we're doing? How is it going to make an impact?

Kelly Scanlon: If you could leave our listeners today with one message, what would it be?

Angela Hurt: I think it might be do something you think you're not ready for.

Kelly Scanlon: Oh, and go all in?

Angela Hurt: Go all in.

Kelly Scanlon: Yeah, great advice. Great way to end it. Angie, thanks so much for being here today for all you do for Kansas City and much success for the future.

Angela Hurt: Thank you so much Kelly.

Joe Close: This is Joe Close, President of Country Club Bank. When you lead with truth, you build trust. Angie knows that. It's the definition of her company's name and the foundation of her organization. Knowing it and living it are entirely different, and Angie and her team at Veracity live it.

They live it every day. They recognize that people matter and that building trusting relationships is how you build a business. Working hard, being honest, knowing your client's individual needs. That's how Veracity succeeded, how we at Country Club Bank have succeeded, and how we invest into the success of our clients every day.

Thanks for joining us for this episode. We're banking on you, Kansas City.