

Matt DeCoursey of Full Scale-Startup Hustle podcast

Speaker1: [00:00:04] This is the Investor Connect podcast program. I'm Hall Martin. I'm the host of the show in which we interview Angel Investors, venture capital, family offices, private equity, and many other investors for early stage and growth companies. I hope you enjoy this episode. Investor Connect is a 501 C three nonprofit dedicated to the education of investors and startups for fundraising. Please consider donating \$100 to the program to help others in their investor and entrepreneur journey. You can find the donate button on the Investor Connect org website.

Speaker2: [00:00:44] Hello, this is Hall Martin with Investor Connect. Today we're here with Matt DeCoursey , co-founder and CEO of Full Scale, the host of the Startup Hustle podcast, top selling author of The Million Dollar Bedroom and Balance Me, as well as co author of The Realist Guide to a Successful Music Career. Matt, thank you for having me on your show and thank you for joining us today.

Speaker3: [00:01:03] Yeah, I'm excited to chat it up, so I'm just waiting on your cue and we'll dive right in.

Speaker2: [00:01:08] Great. So where are you calling from today?

Speaker3: [00:01:11] I'm in Kansas City.

Speaker2: [00:01:12] Great. Great. And so currently in the startup world, we're seeing the great resignation play out as we come out of the pandemic and go forward into the new normal that we're seeing come together. How do you see the great resignation playing out in the startup world? What impacts are you seeing there?

Speaker3: [00:01:29] Well, a couple of things. So for those of you listening as the CEO of Full Scale, we help people build teams of software developers, and we do that with hundreds of employees that we have in the Philippines. And I'm seeing two completely different sides of the great resignation, which is something I've talked about on the Startup Hustle podcast a lot lately. So it's affecting our business in a couple of different ways. First off, overseas, we have the lowest churn rate we've ever seen. Now, on the flip side of that, a lot of our clients, which are

primarily North American software companies, are seeing the opposite. And so that's affected our business in well, in positive ways and meaning, like we have a lot more client inquiry because they're having a hard time finding people to fill the roles. I think that a lot of the quote, great resignation affects and results are really coming to the forefront because so many businesses were prior to the pandemic, were so reluctant to embrace remote work culture. Now, having worked in and around startups, I think that well, there's a couple of things. First off, big tech, which largely exists on the coast. I mentioned I'm from Kansas City, the 28th biggest market in the US here. Economies and cities and communities like Kansas City have always complained that they referred to the brain drain and that's big tech in big cities, pulling your best minds out of the market. That got worse because of the remote nature I have. I'm going to use Google and don't get mad at me Google because if you do, that would not be great. But you know, like companies like Google or Facebook or whomever can, you know, once they said, oh, you don't have to be here in the valley or near or adjacent, they started hiring in a lot of places. And now that part did have an effect on us overseas and has I've been seeing an increase in competition, competitive job offers occasionally and the general rise in wages both domestically and overseas.

Speaker2: [00:03:32] Great. Well, as we come into a new normal here and people can work from anywhere and do anything they want, what do you think is the most important lesson we're finding here today, especially with the startup world?

Speaker3: [00:03:44] I think that as an employer that the market dictates the norm, meaning the hiring market and the job market, not the other way around. And I'm going to give you a very unscientific stat here, because I didn't research it, but prior to the pandemic, one in roughly 60 jobs in the US was a, quote, remote job, and that has gone down to a single digit number. Like I said, that's kind of a moving target. I don't get too wrapped up in statistics that I read because there was a ups that used to say we need to work at the speed of business. But, you know, so the stats are always changing and hard to keep up with. But overall, I think as an employer, as you know, at any company, your people or your most valuable asset and when other opportunities are drawing them in, you need to adapt and change if that's what it calls for.

Speaker2: [00:04:38] Right. As we came out of the pandemic, what's the one thing you didn't expect that did happen?

Speaker3: [00:04:43] Yeah, that's a great question and one that I haven't really given a lot of time to thinking about because, well, I think that the pandemic for businesses or anything we saw this in 2008. I think I realized one thing I didn't maybe expect was to realize how old did I am now and how that has affected my thought process on a lot of stuff. And I just say that because regardless of whether it's a pandemic or a financial crisis or geopolitical conflict or changes in politics, one thing you can count on is that business cycles become Darwinists and they kind of shoo out the companies that didn't have the cash flow, the capital or a lot of different things. And I think that I didn't expect to see such profound changes. I think in many cases tech companies, startups and the world of software development. I didn't think we would accelerate as quickly as we have into this fully remote culture. Now, by nature, my entire business is remote. So for us, one of the things that that did is we had people still coming to our office every day and now they are fully distributed and remote. So I think it happened a lot faster and was adopted on a wider scale than I expected.

Speaker2: [00:06:01] We helped place employees and startup founders. What's a common myth about your job or field of expertise you often have to dispel with others?

Speaker3: [00:06:12] So a couple of things we started full scale to you get a full scale IO if you want to learn more about what we do. But we started the company to solve the problems that North American software companies are having with offshoring. And they're all the same things. They're all related to time zone meaning like communication time that they're available and lack of critical thinking. That said, I think that one of the things that I spend way too much time doing is convincing people that you can't pigeonhole a billion person countries based on your experience with 12 people or something like that. And I spent a lot of time talking to people about that. I mean, really in the end, there are smart, brilliant people everywhere. You just have to have a strong understanding on how to find them and employ them and keep them employed. And, you know, overall, I think too many people just often come in to the situation of feeling that people in other countries or places aren't for some reason aren't going to do a good job until you actually experience it now. I mean, you can run into as many people that are going to do a crap job here as other places. So you run into a lot of preconceived notions that don't really have a whole lot of science or fact to support them.

Speaker2: [00:07:36] Right. So what online information source do you find most helpful in your work?

Speaker3: [00:07:41] I mean, honestly, I the one I find to be the most reliable still still good old tried and true. Wall Street Journal. I read it every day, and it's not that. It's because I'm looking for investor advice. I think it does a pretty good job of of staying non-political with, you know, a lot of stuff. Now, some people may agree with that or not, but that's where I kind of look for the change and wins and certain things, not necessarily online, but I rely on our own podcasts and my experience that I have with our guests. So our show comes out five days a week, which means we talk to a lot of people and that is very insightful both before, during and after the recording, as far as like gaining insights and opinions for what they see happening. And the same thing goes with when it comes to once again, I know you asked online, but I often refer to myself as the tech weatherman because we get so many inquiries about our services at full scale that you can literally see things beginning to change and what people are asking for, like primarily related to the technology that they're using.

Speaker2: [00:08:52] If you could start a business tomorrow, what would that business be?

Speaker3: [00:08:56] Let's start a lemonade stand because it has the least amount of responsibility needed, I think. I mean, I got to put lemonade into a cup and wait for someone to come by. Right. That's probably not too far off. If I had to start a business again, one of the things that I've come to realize as I've gotten older and maybe more experienced is appreciating businesses that have a narrow scope of what they do, but do an A-plus plus world class job at it. And I think that that's something we're in this golden age of entrepreneurship and technology where so many tools and companies and service providers exist to solve hyper specific problems for people in the marketplace. And I know you do a lot of investment stuff, too. It's like so many people make the mistake of trying to be good at six things or companies do and trying to be good at six things before they're really good at one.

Speaker2: [00:09:51] Well, that's great. Well, your podcast show has 2.8 million downloads. What do you attribute your show success to?

Speaker3: [00:09:58] Just keep doing it on some days. You know, honestly, with this show, it's been out for four years. And we're I mean, that's when I think about 2.8 devices or people or whomever playing and listening. It's humbling because people can do any number of things that they want. So if they're going to spend any time paying attention to what you're doing, you should have gratitude for it. Consistent when it comes to podcasts, you need to be consistent. You need to plan your content and it can't be crap. And you need to also assume that if you want it to ever be. So this morning where I'm not a chart watcher, but we were in the top 30 for entrepreneurship podcasts on Apple, which is reasonable. I don't expect to be number one. That's a tall company, but we've kept with that. You need to be ready to promote what you do because the organic climb, it can happen, but it's a lot longer climb. So and then really like, I don't know, just like I said, I think is finding a standard for your brand like we do. Our shows are the same everywhere, you know, every day. Like we have more than one host. So that's not all me, but we also for us it's I think having structure but also not having it. So we're a conversational format, so you never know what's going to happen on the show. So I think that there's a lot to be said about that. It's for some listeners and not for others. So but really consistency and quality are the two main things.

Speaker2: [00:11:28] Great. Well, you've written some great books with great success there. What inspired you to write those books?

Speaker3: [00:11:35] I was re-inventing myself on the first one or the first two actually, which so I wrote two books at the same time. One I had had stewing inside me for about a decade and wrote it, and it came out about four months before my second book. A lot of people are like, Why did you write two books? I said, Well, because a lot of people have written one, but it really did start with a desire for reinvention and rebranding. I had owned a highly successful high volume ticket brokerage for a while and we wanted to do something different. So I decided to do that as part of my brand. My third book, which was the real estate just successful music career, was more of a pet project and is actually the book that sold the best so far. So it was a lot of fun. I worked in and around the music industry for over ten years, so and I was able to write that book with actual rock stars. Now I'm not that kind of rock star, but overall, like, don't write a book because you think you're going to make a bunch of money on the book. It's honestly pretty hard to do now write the book because it's something you've wanted to do.

Speaker3: [00:12:37] It's something that you're passionate about doing, and because you realize that you can have a sense of satisfaction from transferring that knowledge to someone else, which is a powerful feeling. So the first time someone reads one of your books or listens to your podcast or whatever and comes back and says, You know what, we were a lot more successful. Or I took a certain I did a certain thing different than how I would have done it. Because I read your book talking about what a disaster it was for you. So the thing is, is there's no way to ever track that. There's no KPI associated with it, there's no analytics tool, there's no conversion rate, which is honestly great. I'm okay with that, but do it. I think the key is once again, you got to produce quality and if you are going to write a book, you've got to find a good editor. If I hear one more person say they're going to edit their own book, I'm going to slap them with one of mine. You can't do it. You can't write a good book and edit it yourself. You get too close to it. So those are some of her replies.

Speaker2: [00:13:39] Who is the primary audience for the book that's called Million Dollar Bedroom.

Speaker3: [00:13:44] I refer to that book as an educational narrative. So I started a business in the extra bedroom of my home. I had no experience. I had no money. I had no connections. I had a credit card with a very small limit on it and managed to figure out how to do over \$30 million in revenue off that business, which became the DNA for everything else that we do. It has roots in what later became full scale, what became Giga BBC.com. So with that, it's people that I've had. It's primarily written for people that want to start a business and learn more about it. So I tell my story of how we did that along the way and our wins and losses and all of it. And also with briefly and I say briefly because no one wants to read 38 pages about how to make a business plan, but talk about the things that we like, the why of it like, I mean, a simple thing and like a couple of paragraphs explaining why different business entities matter, why you shouldn't be a sole proprietor or certain things in there and, and do it within the context of the story and keeping it moving. Because that's really the main thing is if you give someone a chance to put the book down, they will. So it's like, how do you tell it? In a conversational tone? So many. Probably the number one feedback I got from that book is people telling me I just felt like I was sitting on my back porch having a beer or catching up with an old friend who was telling me the story of how I built a business. And that's why people make it through the book really fast. So yeah.

Speaker2: [00:15:18] Great. What surprised you most about that book? Either writing it or publishing it?

Speaker3: [00:15:23] I'd say the different phases of how hard it is to I mean, so both of my books. All three books have sold enough at some point to rise to number one and multiple. All of them have been number one in multiple categories on Amazon, but none of them stayed there that long. So I think that as far as books go for in those categories of entrepreneurship, startups, small business, that kind of stuff, I have a newfound respect for the writers and authors and content creators that have the stuff that is perpetually like on the chart. Like there are literally still books in the top 20, top 50 that were there when mine came out four or five years ago. So I mean, that speaks to the volume, but that's the quality of the message in the utility. So and there's a lot it takes a lot to, by the way. 1.4 million new books come out every year. So if you talk about total addressable market or what you're competing against and all that, like, I mean it's like and then you have the history of literature. Also on top of it. So 1.4 million is a drop in the bucket compared to everything else that's come out. So think about that, people. That's what you're competing with and that's what you're up against when you when you want to write a book.

Speaker2: [00:16:45] Well, in the process of writing the book, how did it change the way you think about it? Did it modify your perceptions of it, or did it just confirm everything.

Speaker3: [00:16:54] Of the book or the content?

Speaker2: [00:16:56] The content.

Speaker3: [00:16:57] A lot of it. There are so many people that will tell you that teaching anything increases the quality of your own grasp on the subject matter. And so there was parts of that. And then so million dollar bedroom was just as that book poured right out of me, there was very little resistance to creating that. And people will say, Well, why? What was my story? It didn't require a lot of computation, calculation or consideration. It was what it was. Balance Me, which is a realist guide to successful life, required a lot more research and fact checking and then and that's it's funny because some people like oh, is that a book about life balance? No, it's

a book about how life balance doesn't actually exist because it doesn't it's ever changing. So with that was trying to give a lot of that one required a lot more consideration, mainly for the fact that my view of certain things was certainly not the only one and how to kind of widen the lens.

Speaker2: [00:17:55] Based on those experiences. What are you considering to write next?

Speaker3: [00:17:59] Nothing. I don't know.

Speaker2: [00:18:01] Why is that?

Speaker3: [00:18:03] Well, I say that, you know, it's funny because no one believes that I actually have been tinkering and researching. I'm really fascinated with the who, what, where, when, why, how of what makes people do genius or elite things. So I have really actively and aggressively over the last couple of months, but actively over the last couple of years, finding myself in conversations with people about that subject and some of it. And I say aggressively lately, because it's taken a lot more shape and form. So genius is something that I think is very misunderstood. A lot of people, they're like, Oh, that's genius. So people overwhelmingly confuse talent and genius. So talent is being able to hit the target regularly that everybody sees. Genius is being able to hit the target that no one even knew existed. And I'm looking at it. So right now, over this last couple of months, I've had oh, man, a dozen or maybe a dozen and a half very in-depth calls with rock stars, because, you know, these are people that do elite things that. So some of the question is is also is like on any given Thursday at 930, 7:00 PM, you have to flip that switch or turn that dial.

Speaker3: [00:19:15] And that's actually what I've been traveling through. So how much of that is preparation? How much does that as other things? And I've really gained some amazing insight from speaking to high level performing artists about how they do it, because I want to be able to turn it on and off like they do. And I've I've learned that with that. It's not a switch and it's not a dial. It's actually more of a spiral that you ascend up through because a switch and a dial are both linear on like a 2D plane. And as people we have a lot more depth to us and a lot more complexity. So now there's a whole lot to it. I could go on and on about that, but I've had several people ask me if that's turning into they're like, Is this really a book? And I'm like, I don't

think so yet writing a book, it is a ton of work and it's a labor of love. So like I said, I mean, don't write a book because you think you're getting rich, right, in the book.

Speaker2: [00:20:06] Gotcha. Well, this is fascinating. In the last minutes that we have here, what else should we cover that we haven't?

Speaker3: [00:20:13] If we wanted to kind of continue on what I just said, I think something to be included when it comes to doing genius or elite things is the misunderstanding by a lot of people that geniuses are born and not made. They are very much made. Some of us enter life and find ourselves able to do certain things a little better or easier than others. But really, in the end, that's not what leads to doing genius things. So basically my thesis statement in my book *Balanced me* was that success requires payment in advance and there's no way around it. And I have yet to prove that wrong, by the way, because even some of the people that I talked to and I mentioned like a rock star, for example, these people will tell you they're like, Yeah, a lot of people just think I'm talented, but I don't think they know the tens of thousands of hours that I've played practice and prepared for the moment that they're like, Oh, that guy's a genius. So, I mean, success really does demand payment in advance. And if you're not ready to start writing checks in that regard, you're probably not going to find success the way that you want it or hope you can.

Speaker2: [00:21:17] Great. Well, how best for listeners to get back in touch with you?

Speaker3: [00:21:21] I'm pretty easy to reach. I mean, if you like anything that I said, you could also check out the *Startup Hustle* podcast. It's pretty much available anywhere you could find a podcast. I'm available. You can find me on just about any social media, mostly responsive everywhere from LinkedIn, Facebook, all of it. I'm out there, Google map decor and there's a sea of places you'll find our content or my contact info. Great.

Speaker2: [00:21:47] We'll include those in the show notes. Want to thank you for joining us today and hope to have you back for a follow up soon.

Speaker3: [00:21:52] Thank you all.

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