

Mark Hayward of Absolute Business Mindset 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. The Investor Connect is a 501 C three nonprofit dedicated to the education of investors and startups for fund raising. 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. Hello, this is Hall Martin with Investor Connect. Today we're here with Mark Hayward , host of the Absolute Business Mindset podcast. Mark is a podcast host, business mentor and leadership coach who helps clients turn an idea into a successful and sustainable business. He helps them through the early stages of a startup, showing them the building blocks of a business. Mark, thank you for having me on your show and thank you for joining us today.

Speaker2: [00:00:59] It's my absolute pleasure. Thank you so much for having me. I'm really looking forward to this conversation.

Speaker1: [00:01:03] Great. And where are you calling from today?

Speaker2: [00:01:05] So I'm actually in London. I'm in west London, very close to the river, a little bit out of central London. It's a really nice, really village feel, although we're outside of central London. So absolutely loved my area and just just love the community we've got there.

Speaker1: [00:01:22] Right. Well, tell us more about your background. What did you do before this?

Speaker2: [00:01:26] Well, so I worked in corporate for 14 years. I worked in their tech department where I was a business analyst, project manager and sales and implementation manager. We built software for corporates regarding their tax problems. So it could be a a an issue with equity sharing equity with their talent of their businesses. Equally, we worked where pre-COVID there was a lot of short term business visitors as well. And we we had tracking tools that were able to calculate were the days that you were in each country and then you were then the tax that you needed to pay in each of those countries.

Speaker1: [00:02:09] Great. Well, you're an experienced real estate investor as well as running a podcast agency. Tell me more about the podcast agency. That sounds like a very interesting project there.

Speaker2: [00:02:20] Yeah, it's a really interesting niche part of the business. I run. I run a podcast for four and a bit years. I've done 365 364 episodes. And one of my guests, we start we really struck it off and we started communicating email and calling every so often. And he said to me that he had an idea about matching people who wanted to be guests on multiple podcasts. And I said, I know that business model. I've experienced it from the podcasting point of view. And I thought it was it was something that that although there were there are other companies doing this, we could do a very a USP is that we're extremely professional and both had corporate experience and we would bring in a very focused on the business side and entrepreneurship. And so we've created this business. We're building the client base using sales and marketing techniques to be able to build our client base. And, and for me, I work mainly on the client engagement stuff. So I do the onboarding calls, I do the monthly calls. I work with our team to make sure that our clients have everything they need. When my business partner George looks after the sales and marketing side. So it's, it's, it's not the it's not the most innovative business, but it's a really niche business which is growing, which is fantastic and building the client base, which is obviously a massive priority for us this year.

Speaker1: [00:03:51] Well, you mentioned the word niche, but it seemed like to your point it is growing and it's certainly coming into its own as a standard sector itself. How fast you see it growing right now.

Speaker2: [00:04:02] Well, it's interesting you say that. So so podcasting took a huge spike through COVID because people were at home a lot more and they and they had time on their hands between calls and things like that to listen to podcasts. And what we found with my podcast and looking at the industry, the trends are that there is an increase in people generally listening to podcasts. You can listen to them on the go commuting, traveling, driving, running, gym, cooking, replacement of of TV or radio. And that on demand, that radio show interview is just really growing fast. And we're finding what we found through COVID was a lot of people started podcasts because they thought it was the cool thing to do and a lot of those people

have dropped off. They did a season or two through COVID and haven't stuck with it. So but the actual business of podcasting is still increasing. There are probably when you compare it to YouTube, YouTube is quite a saturated market at the moment because there's just a lot of channels, a lot of people fighting for the the eyeballs and the interest on YouTube where podcasting is coming from.

As it comes from the blogging routes. And so people have transitioned often from blogging into podcasting. So you've got great deal of interest and what's, what's the great thing about it? It's a devolved medium. You can do it in your house, you can do it at home. You can do it in studios. Absolutely. But you can do really high quality podcasts in a in a relatively cheap price to actually do it. And what your the other thing you're finding about podcasting is that there are some super niches. I've got a friend of mine who who had a car wash podcast and he made some really good money from from click ads and sponsorship deals purely because he was the go to person in that niche. And he had great connections with suppliers and people that he managed to build a really successful business out of his podcast from such a niche area. So really inspired by that. I think it's great that people you talk about innovation and building businesses on your podcast and so there are so many different topics and areas that podcasting can go into and there is a market for it.

Speaker1: [00:06:29] Great. Well, I've often found that podcasting as a lighter version of video actually had quite a few advantages. It's easier to put together, it's easier to consume. If you receive a video, you have to stop what you're doing and watch the video. But with podcasting, you can just put the headset on, listen to it as you drive, bicycle, walk, whatever you want to do. And so it's a lighter version, so it's more ubiquitous for that reason. What advantages do you see in it?

Speaker2: [00:06:54] Well, as I say, it's gym walking, driving, commuting. These are all things that you you can plug into your ears and you can then do something whilst listening to it. And I often find when I walk my dog and listen to a podcast, I go to the gym. And what I sometimes find is because I want to soak up the information of people that are that are further ahead of me in whatever industry it is. I sometimes stop. I sort of take a video, a voice, a message, or write a few notes to be able to to build up that knowledge. And I think interacting with podcasting and stopping and thinking about or at the end thinking about what you've listened to is a really good way of being able to build your knowledge, build your skillset, or by learning

from people that have either more experience or a greater level of, of, of knowledge in your or your particular area. And the other thing is that's great about podcasting is that I can listen to a business podcast and learn something. I equally can listen to a sports podcast and be entertained. So there is a great expanse of being able with the education as well as the entertainment part of podcasting.

Speaker1: [00:08:08] Well, it certainly takes advantage of that niche aspect of the long tail where there's so many different applications and sectors to go after that you can do many things with it. But then now you have the issue of discovery and you have the issue of matching speakers with podcasts and so forth or guests with podcasts. And so it sounds like you're solving that problem. What is the challenge you face in putting that program together?

Speaker2: [00:08:32] I think it was start. What we actually did was we we got some clients very quickly and one of the things that I like to do is test the market before you go all in on these sorts of businesses. So so we got four clients in the first few months and I said to my business partner, George, I said, Look, let's just stop. Let's service those clients monthly and build up their their client base and build up their experience as being podcast guests. And so that was one of the sort of enforced challenges that I put on our business to make sure that there was it was able to build and grow. So after about three or four months working with these people, that enforced restriction that we put on it, qualified it in the market, people were happy with the service that we were providing. There were entrepreneurs, there were business owners, there were authors that were in that initial sort of beta stage where you've got you've got a small client base. We got feedback from that client base. What did they like doing? What didn't they like doing? How could we improve the service? And and after that short period of being able to work with four clients, we've then been able to grow from there. And I think it's probably from the tech background that I've had, it was very much I'm very much create an MVP, create something that can be tested and checked, that it's actually going to work in the market. And then you start growing. Then you really put into the sales and marketing to be able to to build up that client base. So I was very much it was almost a restriction I put on on the business initially from from my point of view to say, look, let's not, let's not go down a rabbit hole where we it doesn't work because we don't work as as founders or the concept doesn't work or the price point is wrong. So I found that really useful. And from the side where I help the clients whilst they've once they've joined us, it gave me the insight into those specific things and then I

could then tweak my messages on onboarding and the monthly calls that we have with all of our clients. And that meant that, that now we've been able to grow a lot faster and with a lot more aggressive sales and marketing, because we know that it is validated and tested in the market and there are people that want this service. And so, yeah, we're expanding very quickly now.

Speaker1: [00:10:54] So what's one thing you didn't expect when you put this together that happened?

Speaker2: [00:11:00] Oh, that's a good question. I think what we've experienced in the last sort of four, four or eight months is that we thought our primary business was going to be in business and entrepreneurship. And it's interesting that two fold has happened. Now people are coming to us and seeing our marketing and they want health and fitness or nutrition and spirituality, and they want that that expanse. And sometimes entrepreneurs, they after they've done 12 odd podcasts, they might just want a break from entrepreneurship. And talking about entrepreneurship and perhaps fitness is something that's very important to them. So that was something that I kind of thought everyone wanted to sort of build their brand, to build be a thought leader. But actually the fun element of being on a podcast is massive. And the other thing that we're working on, which is really starting to gather momentum, is actually working with on a B2B basis. So we actually work with companies that that might buy multiple podcasts per month and then supply that to their clients, their customers. They are people who are affiliated to them as well. So that's another area which I didn't think was was the model that I understood and I sort of signed up for was that it was going to be authors, entrepreneurs, business owners that were going to be our core business. But actually, this, this expansion into working with perhaps publishing companies that have authors on their books, PR firms, people who provide other services that support our business. That's really, really starting to gain momentum at the moment. And that is really exciting because I don't think and I can't say for all of our competitors, but I'm not sure the other competitors are actually leveraging that at the moment. So we're working very hard on that B2B business as well.

Speaker1: [00:12:51] And what's a common myth about your job or field of expertise? What are you correcting people about all the time?

Speaker2: [00:12:59] Correcting people? Then we're not radio shows. It's everyone. Everyone kind of starts with that premise of. Of radio and actually. There's something very intimate about podcasting that that I think is more than YouTube and video is that you can really you're making a connection with someone even if they are in the gym or walking the dog or cooking. There is actually something very intimate about having your your ear connected to your brain and either being entertained or educated. And and that's something that I've experienced and I've learned from, is that that really is something that you that that connection that you can have with people as a host and you'll know this whole as a host, you are almost as important as the guest because people will come back to you, your podcast, because they like your questions, they like your the way you approach situations. And that was something that I never thought about in probably, I don't know, like 200 odd episodes. And I never thought that I was that important. I thought I was there to showcase the guest. But actually what the reports say and when you look at the statistics and there's a lot of statistics that are out there that people are being providing about podcasting now and actually showing that the host is equally as important as the guests are.

Speaker1: [00:14:32] Well, I've heard other podcasters echo that comment of the connection between the podcaster and the audience, because unlike radio, where it's just a broadcast medium, one to everybody, podcasting, because you put the headsets on, you know, your voice is in their head and it almost appears like a 1 to 1 conversation. And so there's a very strong bond there that people get because they like what they hear, they like the people, and they get to know them very well. They're very familiar. So that connection is is truly unbreakable in some sense.

Speaker2: [00:15:05] Absolutely. 100% agree. And as I said, I think that connection that you have, like I've got my style of podcasting where I like to hear people's backgrounds before they get to the business. But a lot of people spend time just on a podcast area. As you do a whole, you go into an area, you go deep into an area that you you're fascinated by your interest in and you're asking questions about. So and I think that's something about a podcast host, which is a little bit different to say other channels is you've got to have a curiosity about people and about their industry and about their area of expertise. Because as an interviewer and this is something I learn on the job, like doing the interviews that you have to have that deep sense of curiosity and finding out about people. I have got access to people who would never pick up the phone if

I called them just on a sort of cold call. But because I've struck up a relationship with people and I connect with people like you whole, you've invited me onto your podcast. So there is a connection with you and the audience, but importantly for a podcast host as an interviewer, it's the connection with the guest, which is really, really powerful as well. Great.

Speaker1: [00:16:28] Well, you have quite a successful podcast show itself. What do you attribute your this show's success to?

Speaker2: [00:16:34] Consistency. Consistently producing my podcast every week. I think that is so. I actually teach people how to a course on how to become a podcaster. It's a three hour course as well, and that is probably the killer point. Everyone thinks the equipment is the most important thing. Yes, obviously it is important to have the right equipment, but having the right idea, having the right fascination, being interested and being consistent on delivering your podcast. Four and a bit years in, in, in the grand scheme of things like where you compare to a Joe Rogan or a Tim Ferriss is not that long. But as I said, a lot of people do ten, 12 episodes, do it maybe even two seasons worth, and they never go back to it. So for me, I think the success that I've had from my podcast is just consistently producing material which adds value and fascinates and interests my listeners.

Speaker1: [00:17:38] Right? And so what online information source do you find most helpful for your work in the agency and the podcasts?

Speaker2: [00:17:45] What source of information? Well, to be honest, I think. I think one of the important points for me is that that connection with other podcasts and listening to podcasts, I'm also a big fan of Audible as well, listening to to books as well. And I think that's actually being a fan of podcasting and actually see the value of podcasting and audiobooks. I think that's probably the the biggest point that I love doing it and I love listening to them and I love interacting with them. So it's one of those things that I don't think I'll stop I like. Obviously, you can never see what happens in five, ten years time, but I enjoy that connection with people and I enjoy I enjoy welcoming people and they're talking about their their experience, their business, what their plans are for the future. I go back to a little bit on their upbringing and their education as well. There is a structure to the podcast and I just think it's because I love it myself. It just means that I will want to keep on doing it and I will consistently deliver that because to

build up a connection with an audience, you have to deliver, whether it's a couple of times a week, twice a week, once a week, whatever your regularity is. And I would say not doing anything less than once a week is where you're really getting the sweet spot, because that consistency of people knowing that you release on a Monday and every Monday morning, they can download it and they listen to you.

Speaker1: [00:19:18] Great. Well, in the last few minutes that we have here, what else should we cover? That we have it?

Speaker2: [00:19:25] I just if anyone's interested, the podcast agencies called podcast introduction is podcast instruction. Com if you want to reach out to me. That's mark at podcast introduction com or look me up on LinkedIn. I'm quite active on LinkedIn as well, so it's just thank you so much. It's been really fascinating and it's an area podcast and podcast agency which I'm hugely passionate about and hugely. I feel privileged to be starting businesses after after 14 years in corporate and understanding that business very well, to be able to be doing things that are genuinely love doing. And there isn't anything, including the real estate, the property stuff, which I don't enjoy doing. So I just feel very privileged and very lucky to be doing this full time now.

Speaker1: [00:20:15] So how best for listeners to get back in touch with you?

Speaker2: [00:20:18] Well, as I say, it's like you can email me, mark at podcast instruction, you can go to our website podcast introduction as well. Or, as I said, LinkedIn is another place where I'm very active. So you can you can connect with me and drop me a DM.

Speaker1: [00:20:33] Great. I appreciate you sharing that information with us today. We'll include those contact details in the show notes. We hope to have you back for a follow up soon.

Speaker2: [00:20:41] Oh, anytime. It's been it's been really, really great speaking to you again. And yeah, great. Great podcast you've got.

Speaker1: [00:20:52] Investor Connect helps investors interested in startup funding. In this podcast series Experience, investors share their experience and advice. You can learn more at

Investor Connect dot org. Hal Tim Martin is the director of Investor Connect, which is a 500 1c3 nonprofit dedicated to the education of investors for early stage funding. All opinions expressed by hall and podcast guests are solely their own opinions and do not reflect the opinion of Investor Connect. This podcast is for informational purposes only and should not be relied upon as a basis for investment decisions.