
Johnny: And he fought this guy named Big Boom and all I could remember was, "I can beat this guy." I immediately was like, "You know sign me up. I'll fight this guy next week." I just thought I was like, "This is going to be easy." I got in the ring and I'm like, "Okay, I'm going to do this. I'm going to do that and then I'm going to win." And none of it worked out. He started punching me and kicking me and then all your whole game plan goes out the window. And by round two, I'm exhausted. I'm so tired and I just thought, "Oh, my God, get me out of this ring" but you can't.

Announcer 1: This is The Maverick Show where you'll meet today's most interesting real estate investors, entrepreneurs, and world travelers and learn the strategies and tactics they use to succeed. And now, here's your host, Matt Bowles.

Matt Bowles: Hey, everybody. It's Matt Bowles here. Today, I am with Johnny F.D., who's a location independent entrepreneur who quit his corporate job in 2008 to begin traveling the world working as a scuba diving instructor and fighting professionally in the sport of Muay Thai kickboxing. Since then, he's made hundreds of thousands of dollars building and selling online businesses and has been featured in Forbes, Business Insider, Fast Company, Entrepreneur Magazine, and the BBC.

He's the author of two books about his experiences. The first one is called 12 Weeks in Thailand, The Good Life on the Cheap, and the second is called, Life Changes Quick, Simple Tips to Getting Rich, Fit, and Even Finding Love. Johnny is the host of two popular podcasts – Travel Like a Boss and Invest Like a Boss. He's also the founder of the Nomad Summit, an annual event in Chiang Mai, Thailand that attracts over 400 location independent entrepreneurs and digital nomads from around the world. The event just ended and I was honored to be a speaker at it this year. So, Johnny, thank you for having me as a speaker and welcome to the show.

Johnny FD: Thank you, Matt. I'm very impressed with this studio setup that I cannot believe you carry around with you in a carryon luggage.

Matt: That's one of the things I have worked hard at figuring out how to do. So, I wanted to be able to do a podcast with nice, quality gear. So, as you can see here, I've got a Heil PR 40 microphone, with a pop filter and a shock mount, and boom arm, and a mixer, and all of that kind of stuff. But the reality is that it does not take up that much space if you condense it and pack it properly. So, one of the

things that I offered to the attendees of the Nomad Summit was access to a video on how I pack for traveling the world for a year plus with carryon luggage only, which includes a mobile podcasting studio.

Johnny: And I'm very impressed because not only are you traveling that light but you also always look good. Every time I see you, you look like you're a professional. You don't look like a dirty backpacker. You're always looking fresh. Today, when I walked into the studio, I was like, "My mind is blown."

Matt: Oh, thanks, brother. I appreciate that – many years of experience trying to figure that out. You know I left the U.S. not quite as long ago as you did, but I left the U.S. in about 2013. So, over the last five years, I've lived in 45 different countries and – over the course of that time – like when I left the U.S. for the first time and I was going to go live abroad in other countries for a while, I went to Buenos Aires for a few months and then I went to Egypt. I lived in Cairo for a number of months. I packed an enormous amount of luggage. I mean it was just crazy you know giant, checked bags, and I was bringing all this crazy stuff with me.

And as you go and you travel around trying to carry that amount of luggage, you're first of all like, "This is hell on earth, checking this luggage, carrying this luggage, lugging it around." And secondly, I was like, "I'm not using an enormous amount of the things that I have brought" right? And so you kind of very strategically – or at least I was – quickly incentivized to figure out how to get down to the things that you really need and then how to pack strategically. So, I put a video together on it. We'll link to that video below in the show notes, but I offered it to your audience there at the Nomad Summit.

There were over 400 people and it was interesting because when we went to the Q&A, some of the first questions were about the packing stuff, right? I was talking about how a lot of my clothes are made out of merino wool. It has very unique properties for travel purposes anyway, right? So, one is that its temperature regulating so when it's hot outside, it helps you get cooler. If it's cool outside, it helps you be warmer, and it's also anti-microbial and it doesn't retain odor, right? So, I was saying to your audience from the state you know in terms of some travel hacks, the proposition of these merino wool clothing companies, you can wear a shirt for 40 days in a row and it doesn't retain any odor.

So, I was explaining all my running gear, my socks, even my dress shirts are made out of merino wool. So, it was funny because at the Q&A – even though I talked about all of this entrepreneurial and business building stuff and everything – people were like, “Where do I buy that merino wool stuff?”

Johnny: Yeah. I think it’s really interesting because I think a lot of the people at the Nomad Summit – who obviously everyone is already in Thailand or already in Chiang Mai – so they’ve taken that big, first step already. So, a lot of them already either have a source of online income or they had a particularly good idea of how to make money while traveling and a lot of people are getting to that next level now. They’re like, “Okay, Chiang Mai is great. I love it here. But I want to explore the rest of the world, but I would love to do it in style.” I think that’s where you came in.

Matt: Right. Well, I loved that when we went out for that speaker dinner at that nice restaurant, you were wearing a merino wool shirt from Libertad, which was the exact same shirt, but in a different color that I was wearing on stage at the Nomad Summit.

Johnny: Yeah and what’s even cooler is the guy who invented that shirt or the creator of that company, Kyle, is from – He’s not from Chiang Mai but is a Chiang Mai digital nomad and I was friends with him before he even made that shirt and I only bought it – I had no idea I would even like a merino wool shirt. I literally just bought it to help support his Kickstarter and a year later when it finally came out, I was like, “This is a great shirt.” So, I’ve been wearing it ever since.

Matt: Yeah. It’s a really nice shirt. One of the things that I have found in trying to buy merino wool gear, I’ll use a company like Ice Breaker is probably where most of my stuff comes from, but that’s like my t-shirts and my running shirts and my socks and my long sleeved base layers and that kind of stuff. But when you want to get nice looking clothes – like, a long sleeved collar shirt that looks good – that’s the part where I’ll order stuff from some of these merino wool companies or try it on and it just is not in any way stylish. It doesn’t fit very well and, for me, anyway it just hasn’t been really up to par.

And so the proposition of the Libertad Company, they make one thing. I mean at the time that you and I are recording this, they literally have one product, which is one shirt that comes in four colors. That’s all that they have, but they put an enormous amount

of time into the design of that shirt and the fashion element of that shirt, in addition to the material that it's made out of and I think incredibly worthwhile. I've definitely got a couple of those and wear them all the time.

Johnny: And what I really like about that is this really kind of shows digital nomad 2.0 where it's no longer just about living cheaply in countries like Thailand, building a small business where we're just getting by off of the lowest cost of living. This really reflects kind of the growth and the maturity of the digital nomad movement where people like you and me – but also all the customers of Libertad – are starting to kind of demand higher quality life choices, you know, where we're still traveling, we still want to be minimalistic, we still want to pack light, but we don't mind spending more money for better quality experiences and gear.

Matt: That's the main thing, right? I think that the concept of minimalism, for me anyway, is if I'm going to have fewer things, those fewer things can be nicer things. Do you know what I mean? So, I will absolutely spend that extra money. The Libertad shirt that we're talking about I think probably cost \$125.00, right? But because it's a merino wool shirt and because of all this other stuff, you don't need an entire closet full of shirts. So, you have much fewer shirts, but they're nicer shirts and you're going to pay that much to get the quality and look that you want.

Johnny: So, for anyone who's shaking their head right now saying, "That is stupid. I will never spend \$125.00 on a shirt" or you might be saying, "I can't afford a \$125.00 for a shirt." I want you to ask yourselves these couple questions. Actually, you could just do this exercise. Pause this podcast, go into your closet right now, and just quickly add up the cost of everything that's in your closet – all the shirts in your closet., just quickly on your phone calculator – and see how much that cost you when you had bought it.

Even though a lot of the shirts you bought, you bought on sale for \$15.00 or maybe even \$8.00. There are a couple items that were \$30.00, \$40.00. I guarantee you by the time you add it all up – even if you just added up the shirts that you actually don't wear very often – if you just took all the shirts in your closet that you haven't worn in the last month, I guarantee you it's gonna be hundreds of dollars. I want you to think, "What if I just never bought these other items in the first place? What if I had just bought the couple of really quality items that I knew that I would keep forever?"

Matt: Right. In that sense, the concept of minimalism, for me, has been you can get actually higher quality stuff, right? So, you were saying I mean you can look a particular way, you can dress a particular way, and you can have higher quality stuff because you have less of it. So, you can literally have the same budget for clothes. You don't have to change your clothing budget, you're just buying less, and therefore you can buy nicer stuff. So, yeah, so it was really interesting.

I mean I literally – when I came down from the stage after my talk and we were on the break – I literally had five guys standing around me who had approached me – audience members – and they were like, “Can I touch your shirt?” I literally had five guys say, “Let me see what that merino wool feels like.” It was a nice button-down dress shirt. They're like, “Merino wool. Let me see what that feels like” because it's a non-itch. I mean it doesn't, you know? So, it was kind of hilarious that that was the sort of auxiliary travel tip that I had at the end of my talk on building a location independent business and yet, that was the thing that all these people latched onto.

Johnny: Yeah. I love it. If you guys want to see the talk, we're going to put it on YouTube for free. Just subscribe to The Maverick Show and I'm sure you'll have a link to it.

Matt: Yeah. We'll put it in the show notes. By the time we publish this episode, it'll be out. So, we'll put it in the show notes.

Johnny: Awesome.

Matt: Yeah. Cool. So, Johnny, let's talk about your journey. I did a bit of an overview in the bio there, but let's talk a little bit about that in more detail and let's go back to 2008. You were in a corporate job. You were living in California. There may be a number of people listening to this podcast who are currently in a corporate job and they may be making decent money or whatever, but it's not entirely fulfilling to them and they may be learning a little bit about the digital nomad lifestyle or the concept of creating location independence.

Obviously, for me and you, we were very influenced by Tim Ferris's book, The Four Hour Work Week, which really popularized that concept. But that came out 10 years ago, right? So, take us a little bit on your journey from your corporate job on

your trajectory that got you here today.

Johnny: Yeah. So, I actually started kind of late 2007, beginning 2008 – actually before the big crisis. So, it was actually a weird time to go because everyone was like, “Why are you leaving? Life is great. There’s all this money everywhere.” Everybody was super generous. I literally remember any time we would go to a bar, I would have friends fight for the check, just say, “It’s on me. It’s on me.” Everyone thought I was insane for leaving to go to Thailand at the time, but I just wasn’t very fulfilled. I had a decent corporate job. I had offers to invest in all these crazy things to make money, and literally, it seemed like everybody was making money.

People were buying houses, taking out a loan on the equity, and just cashing out 30 grand just for really doing nothing. I had a good life, you know. I was living in LA at the time and it seemed like everything was great, you know? But deep down inside, I was using external factors to try to make myself happy. I would buy cars I couldn’t afford or just try to make the payment on. I was living in a house that probably cost too much for what I was actually earning at the time. I was buying a lot of clothes. I spent a ton of money on clothes you know trying to impress other guys, but also girls, right, like, “Hey, look at me. I’m cool. I’m sticking out and I’m living the LA life.”

A lot of that led to kind of just a life of just insecurity and unhappiness. So, that led me through a whole bunch of self-help books from all things like The Game, trying to learn how to pick up women, but then to The Secret of just saying, “Okay, maybe my mindset’s not right. I have to start thinking more positively.” Then, luckily, it also led me to Rich Dad, Poor Dad, which got me to start thinking about buying assets instead of wasting money on liabilities. Also, luckily, it led me to the Four Hour Work Week. I happened to read that book on the plane going to Thailand on my first vacation ever to Thailand.

Matt: Wow.

Johnny: And that’s what kind of set the whole scene. I got to Phuket and I was with my two cousins and we were wearing \$2.00 t-shirts, \$3.00 flip-flops, a pair of shorts, and I was like, “This is the life. I’m happy.” I didn’t want to go back.

Matt: So, you came here, you vacationed, you saw the lifestyle, you saw the opportunity, but you still had your job. You still had the

income stream. You needed the income to cover your lifestyle expenses and all of that. So, you had sort of a framework. You had read the Four Hour Work Week for what was possible, but then how did you structure your transition?

Johnny:

So, in my last week in Thailand – on my last week of vacation – I went scuba diving for the first time and I had such an amazing moment just jumping that water. It was like jumping through Stargate into this other world and I just remember thinking, “Why didn’t anyone tell me about this sooner?” I was angry because I was like, “Other people must have known how cheap and easy it is to go on a dive.” I was just annoyed that it seemed like this impossible task that was reserved for millionaires or National Geographic explorers and I thought, “Hey, there was a big chance I would have gone my whole life without ever doing this and that would have been the biggest shame in the world.”

At that moment, just on that dive boat, I asked for a pen and paper and – just from memory – I started writing out everything in the Four Hour Work Week worksheets – the deal, especially the automation part, the elimination and the automation part – where I thought, “Okay, what can I get rid of? What can I automate? And how much would it cost to live here and how long could I last?” So, I thought, “Hey, if I sell all my stuff – if I sell my furniture, if I sell my car – and I use what little savings I have, I could probably stay in Thailand for six to 12 months without having to work and then I can always go back, get a job, and then figure it out from there, but it never happened.

Matt:

Wow. So, you planned all this on the dive boat which, I agree, is an amazingly inspirational thing. For people who have not been scuba diving or have not been scuba diving in Thailand, it’s a really special place and it’s much less expensive I’ve found. So, I had gotten certified actually in California, in LA. I got like a Groupon you know for a scuba cert thing so it was like half off whatever. So, I got the basic scuba cert there and I’ve been scuba diving a couple times in my life, you know?

But then I came to Thailand and they have the international – you know the PADI and everything. It’s all internationally certified and stuff, but it’s much less expensive to get that. So, I decided, “You know what? I’m going to get my advanced cert” because I was in Koh Phangan last year on the island living on the beach. So, the dive shop is right down the road. So, I’m like, “Yeah, I’m going to get my advanced cert here for pretty much less than I could do it

anywhere else in the world” and you get to go out on these amazing dives and, sure enough, we go on a dive and then there’s a whale shark that comes over and we swam with this whale shark for 10 minutes.

I mean it was just totally epic. I mean a lot of people come to Thailand to try, to hope, to possibly maybe see a whale shark and it happens. It’s a very rare thing. I mean these are enormous like super-friendly animals and they’re just extraordinarily beautiful and amazing. And so it was like I mean I did a few dives in Thailand and, all of a sudden, I saw the whale shark and it swam with us for 10 minutes and people were like, “I’ve been coming here for months and months and months and I’ve never seen one.” So, it was amazing.

Johnny: Well, it took me 300 plus dives before I saw my first one.

Matt: Wow.

Johnny: But it made it that much more.

Matt: Yeah.

Johnny: Seeing them in the wild when you’re scuba diving is an epic experience. You know there are places in the world like the Philippines or in Útila where you can chase them down on a boat and jump in and snorkel with them, but it’s different. When you just see one in nature, in the wild, it’s not like going to a zoo. It’s not like going on some package tour where they guarantee it to you. It’s like being in the woods and having a moose walk up to you or a panther or something. It’s really a beautiful experience.

Matt: Okay. So, you wrote down your goals and your strategy and your plan and then how did you execute and what were the next six to 12 months like for you?

Johnny: Yeah. so, funny enough, I was so sure I was going to go back to the U.S. that – because my lease was running out on the house I was renting – I asked my landlord if I can sign another year before I left – even though it wasn’t actually due until a few weeks after I would return. I just didn’t want it in the back of my head thinking, “When I come back, I don’t want him to say, ‘Oh, I’m not going to renew you for another year or I’m going to raise the price.’” So, I just wanted it out of the way. Unfortunately, I had basically signed my life away for another year. I also had two cars at the time. I had

a kitchen full of appliances and a house full of furniture.

I thought, “Okay, the smart, prudent way to do this would be to give myself six months to a year to transition, slowly get rid of everything, and take it from there.” After about two or three weeks, just kind of telling a few people about my plan, I just got bombarded with negativity, reasons why I should go, and excuses, and a lot of it was scary, you know? People would ask me questions I couldn’t answer like, “What are you going to do about healthcare or visas or something?”

Most of the people that were really negative had nothing to do with my life, you know? They weren’t close friends, they weren’t close family members. They were just people that I wouldn’t even take dinner advice from yet they were bombarding me with just reasons why I shouldn’t do this, why it was a bad idea. I knew that if I didn’t go right away, I would never do it. So, I bought myself a plane ticket for three weeks out and I said, “I’m going to figure it out. I’m going to do whatever it takes, get rid of whatever I can, and I’m just going to make it happen.”

It wasn’t easy. You know I’m sure I didn’t get as much for my cars as I could have. I’m sure I didn’t have everything planned out, but it all worked out.

Matt: And so let’s talk about that trajectory. So, then you sell your stuff, you come to Thailand, you’ve got some level of a plan for how to subsist for a particular period of time. So, you know you’ve got a window to basically figure out what you’re going to do to take you on this next path and get you to the place that you want to go for lifestyle. Somewhere in that time – as we read in the intro – you started with the Muay Thai kickboxing. So, can you tell how that came about?

Johnny: Yeah. So, my first job was as a dive master. I went there without any formal training. I just had my open water, actually, but I had this commitment. I said, “I want to go from open water to dive master. I have a thousand bucks or 1300 bucks.” During that portion, I think I worked as a dive master for about a year and I really enjoyed it, but I was kind of missing some of the fitness aspects because – even though being in the water you think is like swimming or it would be good exercise – it really is not. You’re just kind of hanging out under water. During my off days, I thought, “Hey, why don’t I try this Muay Thai thing just for fitness because it looks fun.”

I don't know if it was fortunately or unfortunately, my ego got a hold of me. After about a month, I was watching one of the Swedish guys at the gym actually have his first fight and he fought this guy named Big Boom and all I could remember was, "I can beat this guy." So, my Swedish friend, he lost and I immediately was like, "You know sign me up. I'll fight this guy next week."

Matt: Wait a minute. You had been doing Muay Thai boxing just for a month?

Johnny: Yeah.

Matt: And you had never done it before?

Johnny: I had never done it before. I never did any real fighting, martial arts.

Matt: Wow.

Johnny: I just thought, I was like, "This is going to be easy." I think a lot of people go through this when they're watching sports. They're like, "Oh yeah, I could have beat that guy." You know? And luckily, luckily, it was the best lesson I've ever learned. You know I got in the ring and I'm like, "Okay, I'm going to do this. I'm going to do that and then I'm going to win." And none of it worked out. He started punching me and kicking me and then all your whole game plan goes out the window. And by round two, I'm exhausted. I'm so tired.

It was more difficult than running three tough [inaudible] [00:23:06] back-to-back and I just thought, "Oh, my God, get me out of this ring" but you can't. I mean unless you physically throw in the towel, there's nothing you can do. So, I basically just took it on the chin, literally, and said, "Okay, well I signed up for this. let me just do what I can." I lost that first fight, but I immediately was like, "You know what? That was the best ego check I've ever gotten in my life. If I am going to do something, I'm going to have to train for it. I'm going to have to work for it. I can't just think my way into it. I can't just talk my way into it. I actually have to become that man."

So, I decided from that point on I said, "You know what? I'm going to do this again. I'm going to have a rematch with this guy, but I'm going to give myself a few months to train and I'm really

going to do it right.”

Matt: And so you were still a dive master – that’s how you were generating your income – and just on the side you had been doing the Muay Thai stuff. But then you took it and you wanted to go to the professional level and start doing – Basically, were you able to make money from fighting?

Johnny: Yeah, actually. It was not the best life. it’s not like Mayweather money or anything, but eventually, the gym sponsored me and gave me a free place to live – or at least a discount on a place to live. I got free training because I was representing the gym, you know, and I would get 5,000 baht per fight, which is 150 bucks, but it was enough to live off of. It was enough to eat cheap Thai food. All of a sudden, I found myself just being a professional fighter. I was living in a literal bamboo hut with a mattress on the floor – not even a mattress, like a pad on the floor – I had an extension cable running into the window so I could plug my things in and a fan. That was it.

I had no chairs. I had no furniture. It was just me in this hut – Oh, and a mosquito net as well. That was the luxury highlight of my combination at the time, but I loved it. I really enjoyed it. I did that for a few years as well and, luckily during that whole process, I had been blogging about it. I started a blog that’s now no longer updated. It’s My FightCamp.com. I just wrote, “Today, I woke up at 6:00 for this run. This is what I ate. This is what I had at training. This is how much it all cost.” I kind of just documented my whole journey – especially while I was bounced around reviewing different gyms.

I talked about the journey of preparing for a fight and then how it felt afterward. That kind of just kick-started the whole online business part of it even though –when I started the blog – I had no intention of actually making money from it.

Matt: And so how did you come to the consciousness or strategy and develop the idea to start monetizing your block and how did that evolve? I mean one of the things that you’re certainly well-known for is documenting your journey and documenting it with a high level of transparency – the good, the bad, the ups, the downs – and so forth. So, how did you transition that into an income generating venture?

Johnny: Yeah. so, I wish I would have known this earlier because I had

blogs about everything in my life. Sometimes it's embarrassing to go back and find blogs that I wrote 10 years ago when I was some insecure guy out of college trying to figure out life, but I had no other choice. I was like, "All right. Well, all I have is this blog. I don't really have any other skills. I don't want to go back to the U.S. to get a job. What can I do with it?" Doing some research and asking around, I realized a lot of people turn their blogs into eBooks. So, I thought, "Okay, let me find the best posts, let me just put it together."

But throughout that process, I ended up rewriting 90 percent of that book because I realized I needed to go into chronological order. I can't just copy and paste it, but it was a good framework. So, I had the ideas already. I had a lot of the photos already. I had a lot of the raw data, the numbers, like cost of living and information about getting visas and all that stuff. So, I wrote my first book, 12 Weeks in Thailand, The Good Life on the Cheap.

I put it on Amazon and I started making a couple hundred bucks a month, which wasn't enough to live, but it was a huge start. I thought, "Hey, if I can make 200 bucks a month from writing this one book, I can figure out how to market it better or I can write two more books. And if I can make \$600.00 a month, I'm set. I'm staying in Thailand forever."

Matt: So, let's actually divert a little bit from your story and talk a little bit about Thailand, the living expenses here, the concept of lifestyle arbitrage, and all of that because for folks that are not familiar with Thailand and have never been – maybe never been to Southeast Asia, maybe they're from a major city in the U.S., LA, or something like that – and they understand that cost of living.

I mean I'd be interested for you to just, one, to contextualize and explain what the cost of living actually is in Thailand to live reasonably well, but then also I would be interested in hearing your take on Chiang Mai, the situation here, and how it has evolved since that time that you've been here just to kind of contextualize where we are. We're, obviously, in Chiang Mai right now, but just to contextualize this because this is pretty extraordinary. So, I want you to paint that picture for people who have never been.

Johnny: So, the nice thing is everything in that book or everything that we just talked about is still pretty on par. I think there are a lot of times you read something or you hear about something and you're like, "Oh, I'm too late. I missed it by a decade where prices have gone

up so much that it's just no longer the same." Luckily, in Chiang Mai, things have gone up maybe a few percent – maybe 10 percent – but it's still relatively the same and it's still probably the cheapest place in the world that I would actually want to live.

Matt: Well, that's the thing, right? The value proposition is cost of living to quality of life ratio, right? So, one of the things that I've been amazed about is just the caliber, for example, the coffee shop culture here. I mean this – in my opinion – is on par with any western European capital city in terms of how seriously this coffee shop culture is and that kind of stuff in addition to the restaurants and the quality of food and just the overall quality of living. It's incredible.

Talk a little bit about the cost of living though. When you throw out those kinds of numbers, I mean let's be specific about what the numbers are. What do you need to rent a furnished apartment and to live off of because sometimes people who haven't been here are just going to find it unbelievable? So, I want you to be clear about what it is.

Johnny: So, I'll tell you what I've spent so far today, all right?

Matt: Yeah.

Johnny: So, this morning, I woke up and I went for this beautiful hike and then I had breakfast, I had lunch, I had two coffees, I had a cookie, and it's now about 4:00 or 5:00 p.m. now. The hike was free. I rode my scooter there. if you want to rent a scooter, it's about \$100.00 a month. It's about 3,000 baht a month, but the travel hack is if you're here for two months or longer, you can buy a scooter and then you can sell it back for the exact same price. I've done this now probably 10 times. The nice thing about scooters is they don't lose any value, especially not within a year or two. So, I bought mine for about 600 bucks and I'll sell it for 600 bucks. So, that's pretty much free.

But if I wanted to, I could have taken a local shared taxi. They call them songthaew. They're these taxi trucks that have two rows of seats in the back and that is 20 baht per ride, which is about 60 cents. Currently, it's about 31 baht to the dollar. It's convenient. You just walk out, flag one down. You give them your 60 cents. They take you anywhere in the city. Ubers are sometimes even cheaper, but what's really nice is a 20 minute Uber ride will probably cost you less than \$2.00, which is amazing because the

same ride in really any other city is going to cost you ten, 15 bucks, which you wouldn't think is that bad, but here it's just so cheap that it's convenient to do so.

Matt: It's amazing. And the food is unbelievably good in Thailand. I mean this is an incredible cuisine and most people have probably eaten at a Thai restaurant, so they have a sense of what that food is like, but here – obviously in Thailand – it's pretty much better than anywhere else in the world where they try to reproduce Thai food. So, it's amazing, but the cost is just unbelievable. I mean you can get a seafood entrée – like a shrimp curry with rice dish – for between two and three dollars U.S.

Johnny: Yeah. Well, I mean, for example, I went on this hike. It was beautiful. And then I had a coffee on top, actually, at the temple and I think it was 40 baht, which is \$1.29. It was a decent coffee. It wasn't the greatest, but it was at a temple on the mountain. I walked back down and I had a Thai breakfast – which is basically fried basil leaves with pork over rice – and I got two eggs with it and that was 57 baht, which is \$1.83. So, imagine sitting down in a restaurant ordering your favorite Thai basil dish and getting two eggs on the side for \$1.83?

Matt: Yeah.

Johnny: Right next to it, there was a coffee shop that happened to have some really good books. All the books were in English. So, I read the Lonely Planet Guide to Nepal. I sat there, ordered a coffee, and it was 45 baht, which is \$1.45, but it was the best Americano I've actually had anywhere in the world – better than San Francisco, better than Los Angeles, better than New York.

Matt: Yeah. The coffee culture here is unbelievable and, as a result, you're getting very high-quality coffee beans and they have very high-end espresso machines and everything else. I mean the baristas do all the different pour overs and the different types of making coffee and everything that you can do. So, the coffee, I mean you oftentimes could have a coffee that's more expensive than an entire meal because if you go to a high-end coffee place, but that is available here.

I mean so the caliber of the food and all of that stuff is just incredible. But then, I mean, accommodations, this is what's going to blow people away, right? I mean you can get a decent accommodation – a furnished apartment for a month – for what?

Johnny:

So, here's the thing. It's almost kind of unfair to compare it because in the U.S. wherever you are, it's not going to be furnished. You're still going to have to pay – Imagine if you wanted to stay somewhere just for two or three months. It's just not even possible. You'd have to go out and buy furniture. You'd have to hook up your water, your cable, your internet. You'd have to pay a couple months' deposit, go through security checks. You'd have to do all of this stuff and it wouldn't even be an option. so, the only real option in the U.S. would be to get an Airbnb or to get an executive apartment and just get ripped off on it.

But here, you could literally just show up, walk around, and if you wanted a studio apartment – something basic, almost like living out of a hotel room, but it's clean, it's furnished, it's in a good location – you can get it for 200 bucks a month. Nowhere in the U.S. can you do that and that's the thing. Actually, that's probably my most popular video on YouTube is when I just filmed my \$200.00 a month apartment because I was so excited. I wanted to share it with everyone and it's a great location. It's pretty much the equivalent of living on Third Street Promenade if you're in Santa Monica or living in the East Village in Manhattan.

That one square kilometer – which is half a mile – a half a mile block you have probably 20 coffee shops, 30 restaurants, two co-working spaces, two malls, a movie theater, a couple different gyms and it's a prime location for 200 bucks a month if you want a basic place or if you wanted a penthouse – you wanted a luxury condo that has a doorman, that has a gym, that has a sauna, a swimming pool, and you wanted a big space, you wanted a separate bathroom, separate shower, separate bathtub, you wanted king sized bed and separate living room – you're paying less than 1,000 bucks a month and that is – to a lot of people – I either get one of two things.

I either get people from places like the U.S. that are like, “That is a steal. I can't believe you're getting that for less than 1,000 bucks a month” but you also get people who are like, “Oh, my God, I can't be paying \$1,000.00 a month in Thailand.” There are places you know I'm only paying 150, but it's really what your priorities are. If you wanted to live a suburban life in Chiang Mai and you don't mind being 10 minutes out of the city, you can get a four bedroom house for 300 bucks.

Matt: A month. Yeah, that is unbelievable and so I think that's really the cost of living because there's a number of cheap places in the world that are inexpensive to go to, but the quality of life here to the cost of living, that ratio, is perhaps the most optimized that I've seen anywhere in the world, which is probably why this has blossomed into probably the number one – certainly one of the top, but probably the number one – hub for digital nomads, people that either are or want to become location independent business owners.

Johnny: Yeah. It definitely is number one. I mean people keep saying there are other places or better places and I've been excited to find it because I like variety and I also wanted an alternative just in case I don't want to come here anymore or Thailand doesn't want us here anymore. So, I've been to all those places. I've been to Berlin. I've been to Bali. I've been to the Canary Islands. I've been to Austin, Texas. Pretty much anytime someone says, "Hey, this is the next Chiang Mai" or "This is better" you know Saigon, there are literally dozens of places now. I go and like, "Yeah, it's okay, but Chiang Mai is way better."

Matt: So, talk a little bit about how Chiang Mai has evolved into that since you've been here because you've been in Thailand for over a decade now or based here or spent a lot of time here. So, what have you seen in terms of the evolution of the digital nomad scene here and paint a little bit of a picture of what the actual community dynamics are like here because that's one of the things I've been most impressed with?

Johnny: Yeah. So, none of that existed when I was first here 10 years ago, I'm sure there were one or two people somewhere, but there was no term, nobody talked about it. It wasn't really until 2013 I had written the book, 12 Weeks in Thailand, and I just decided to join a co-working space because it has just opened – it was the first one in Chiang Mai – called Punspace – which we're actually just one block away from right now as we're speaking. It was the first one and they had 10 members and that was it. That was pretty much the extent of the digital nomad scene in Chiang Mai or maybe even Thailand.

You know maybe in total there might have been 20 people, but it was small and we didn't call ourselves digital nomads. We tried to call ourselves location independent entrepreneurs. It never stuck – too long of a name – but it was fun. It was just a couple of us hanging out trying to figure out "How can we make enough money

online or location independently where we can continue living a good life?” A lot of us started with e-commerce. We started selling physical items in the U.S. even through the Dropship model. Some people were starting to get into Amazon FBA, just all sorts of different types of businesses.

But it wasn't really until a lot of people like me started talking about it really publicly that people started finding it. People started coming. I started my podcast, Travel Like a Boss, and that's now been three years and people – 189 episodes now – a lot of it was in Chiang Mai and a lot of people from the early days they heard the podcast or they watched my videos on YouTube or they found my blog and they thought, “Wow, Chiang Mai looks pretty cool. Let me come and check it out.” It's kind of a weird thing because it's like the chicken or the egg, what came first? Because there's such a good community in Chiang Mai, anytime someone new would come, they would just fall in love with the community.

They were like, “Okay, this is the best place. Let's stay here. Let's invite our friends. Let's tell everyone how great it is” versus there might be a great place somewhere else in the world – for example, the Canary Islands is great – but because there isn't a huge community there yet, people are like, “I'm excited to go there.” They get there, they don't meet that many other people and it just doesn't take off. So, by far the community is probably the strongest point of Chiang Mai and it just happens to be a great place to live as well. So, it's kind of a mixture of both.

Matt:

Yeah. You know I was totally amazed because I had never been here before I came to speak at the Nomad Summit a few weeks ago and I decided that if I'm going to go to Chiang Mai, I'm going to stay for at least six weeks and hang out and check this place out. When I came, I was just welcomed in and just invited to all kinds of stuff and I was amazed to see the infrastructure that there is in Chiang Mai. So, there is every Monday night there is a board game night and there are 40 plus people that turn out to play board games at this one café every single Monday night.

Then, there's the nomad coffee club every Friday and they have skill shares and people that are teaching folks or sharing how to do things and whatnot and there are networking events and there's a YouTuber video meetup every Wednesday night or there's this, but it's so structured and it's so welcoming and inviting and publicly available to be included. I had people just reaching out to me saying, “Hey, we'd love to have you come out to dinner with this

group of people” or “Come hang out with this group” or whatever.

So, I had all of these lunches and dinners and meetings and stuff and some of it was business-related stuff like, “Hey, let’s talk about this” or “I do this” or “Maybe we could do this together.” Some of it was just like, “Hey, welcome to Chiang Mail. There’s this music festival this week and I’m DJing” or this or that. “Do you want to roll with us?” or whatever. So, it was just an amazing sort of welcome into the city. I was totally blown away.

Johnny: Yeah. The best way to describe it is it feels like the first year at college. Everybody’s open to meet each other and everybody’s willing to hang out. Not everybody’s going to have a positive experience. There are some people that just hate it. One out of 500 people would be like, “Oh, Chiang Mai is terrible. I don’t want to go there.” But hey, if it’s not for you, it’s fine, right?

But what’s nice about Chiang Mai is that there’s so much happening. People are really open, really inclusive. So, if you go out of your way to look for events, I mean nobody’s going to come knocking on your door and say, “Hey, come to this meetup,” but they’re available. You just search on Facebook or really anywhere or just ask around and just say, “Hey, what’s happening?”

Matt: Yeah, yeah. Amazing. So, okay. So, let’s go back to your journey there. So, we left off you had found out how you could turn your blog into an eBook. You started monetizing that and it gave you the aha moment that your content was delivering value to people. There were people that would pay for it and if you continued to deliver value and that sort of stuff that you could continue to monetize that. So, where did that lightbulb moment then take you? What was your next trajectory after that?

Johnny: Well, throughout my life, I’ve come across a couple forks in the road and a lot of them had to do with, “Should I publicly share this or should I just hold this information for myself and not create competition or not put myself too out there?” One of them was when I first started my drop shipping store and I started making money from it. I thought, “This is great. I’m making a fulltime U.S. salary with the equivalent of – while living in Thailand I’m working from my computer. This is amazing. I love it. Should I talk about this in my blog?”

Matt: Before you go on to tell us what your decision was, can you just explain what drop shipping is for people who aren’t familiar with

that business model?

Johnny: Yeah. So, drop shipping is a fulfillment model where – instead of physically buying inventory up front and physically having to ship it to a customer when they purchase – you make a deal with a supplier or a distributor and you basically become an authorized dealer for a product. So, have you ever seen a website that says, “Manufacturer direct” or “We ship.” Actually, you know what? I think probably most things you’ve bought online nowadays have either come from a drop ship supplier or from Amazon. It’s pretty much the only way to buy things online anymore.

Very few people have their own warehouses anymore. Very few people are packing something from their office and shipping it to you when you buy it. Pretty much everything is sitting in someone else’s warehouse and shipped out when you buy it. So, it’s an easy way to be able to sell physical items without first purchasing the inventory upfront, which is a big burden of costs and storage, but also a way where you don’t have to be there to ship it or even accept returns because someone else is doing it for you, which makes it easy or possible, at least, to do it while you’re in places like Thailand.

Matt: Okay. So, the concept would be let’s say I had a t-shirt. Let’s say the t-shirt that you’re wearing right now – the Digital Nomad Nutritional Facts – which is an outstanding t-shirt which would probably appeal to a lot of digital nomads. So, let’s say if I wanted to sell that t-shirt to digital nomads and I said, “Okay, cool” and I get an image of that and I run a Facebook ad in front of a bunch of digital nomads and a bunch of people say, “I want to buy that” and they click on it and they say, “I want to buy it.”

Then, I could just have the t-shirt company fulfill the order. I would send it to them and they would send it to the digital nomad. So, all I’m doing is basically marketing it, identifying a cool product, identifying the audience that would want to buy it, selling it, creating a margin in there, and then somebody else fulfills it?

Johnny: Exactly. And you can do this. The beauty of it is you don’t have to do it with just t-shirts. You can literally do it with anything in this room. So, we’re sitting in a conference room and there are office chairs. A lot of people don’t think that you can sell leather office chairs because you’d have to spend a lot of money buying it or they’re too big or heavy to ship. But what you can do is you can figure out who makes office chairs. You could identify the brand.

You can basically just call up the supplier and say, “Hey, I really want to sell your office chairs on my website. Can I become an authorized dealer for you?”

If you can get approved as a dealer, they’ll give you their wholesale price list and you’re like, “Okay, this makes sense. Let me start running ads for these chairs.” Somebody goes to your site, they buy the chair. They pay you first, so they pay you the full retail price – which might be \$299.00 – and you get the order. You get the \$299.00 deposited in your bank and then all you do is you log into your email. You forward that order to your supplier and say, “Hey, this person – Allen G. in Chicago – bought three of these chairs. Here’s the order. Please ship it directly to him and please charge my credit card the wholesale price.”

So, then what you’re doing is you’re basically just fulfilling that order. Someone else is shipping it out. Your customer, Allen, gets the chairs in the mail. He’s happy and you keep the difference between your wholesale price and the retail price that the customer paid.

Matt: Okay. So, you learned how to do this, looked into how to build a business model where you could do this, and then that was sort of your primary business model that you were putting your attention and your focus into in terms of generating income?

Johnny: Yeah, exactly. So, at that point, I was making between \$3,000.00 and \$7,000.00 a month in net profit from running this physical furniture store business while living in Thailand. I was probably selling between \$30,000.00 and \$40,000.00 worth of actual revenue a month, which is racking up my credit card miles. So, I was really happy, right? I thought, “This is amazing. Should I share this?” I thought, “If I do, I’m going to create a bunch of competition. People might figure out my niche and just start trying to copy my store.”

But I thought, “You know what? I have to talk about this. I can’t just leave it in the dark.” So, I started blogging publicly about it. I started sharing the tools that I use. People would ask you know, “How did you make this website and how did you design it?” I’d say, “Well, I used Shopify.” People would ask, “Why do you use that over WordPress or over Big Commerce or whatever?” Then, I would write articles about why I chose Shopify over these other ones. People would ask, “How did you learn all this?” I’d say, “I took a course. It’s AntonMethod.com.”

Someone would say, “Well, what do you use for your credit card payment process?” I’m like, “I use Stripe.” Basically, I just became kind of the go-to guy online for how to start a drop shipping store – even though I was really just a student. I wasn’t even the guy teaching the course – I wasn’t Anton – but Anton’s a busy guy and he had a paid course. So, if you joined it, you could ask him questions, but for the rest of the internet who is just starting out and they’re like, “Yeah, I don’t really know if I want to dedicate that much to it. I’m just kind of curious what you’re doing.”

That was my blog and what was really good was when people would join this course and start their own stores, they can kind of follow my public journey and then know what I’m actually talking about, know what I’m actually doing.

Matt: Right, right. So, what happened? Did it create competition and people affecting your business or what was the result?

Johnny: Yeah. So, it definitely did, but the nice thing is when you become an authorized dealer for a big brand that’s respected, they normally don’t want to have 20 different internet dealers. A lot of times – as long as you’re selling all the products and you’re providing good customer service – you can just call them and say, “Hey, can you just do me a favor and just don’t approve any other suppliers? Don’t approve any other online-only stores because they’re going to be running the same type of ads as me. We don’t really need the competition.”

They’re like, “Yeah, sure. We’re good. We’re selling on Amazon, we’re selling on your store, and we’re selling to people on a wholesale level or to physical stores, but you can be our exclusive, online distributor or exclusive, online website selling or you and the three other big ones that have been established already.” That was a big saving grace for people trying to come into my niche to try to copy. But, to be honest, I would have made a lot more money if I wasn’t publicly sharing that information because it did create some competition. It created some headaches and also I wasn’t 100 percent focused on just building that business.

I was dividing my time between helping other people get started, sharing the journey openly, and then also running my actual e-commerce business. So, in the beginning, I thought, “I don’t know if this is worth it. I don’t know if I should have done this.” But I

was down the rabbit hole already and I just kept going with it and I'm glad I did because years later I realized – even though it was really exciting for me to learn how to start an online business, how to drop ship physical items – it wasn't going to be my passion for the rest of my life to just run and operate stores.

It was pretty good money and it's something I was really grateful that I did and I would continue doing it today if I didn't have my other businesses happening. I think there are a lot of people who are just 100 percent content. They're like, "I don't need to do anything else. I'm happy making five grand a month doing this. I don't need to start another business. I don't need to start a podcast. I don't need to start a blog. I'm happy." I would say the majority of people that got into e-commerce are in that basket.

But, for me, personally, I'm really happy that I started opening and sharing everything online because that gave me the framework and the formula where I thought, "Hey, if I can share this and then make money – monetize the links, the recommendations with affiliate partnerships and through ads and things like that – I wonder if I can do this in other niches?" I started doing experiments. I thought, "Hey, what if I monetize my Muay Thai blog the same way? What if I do it for my Kindle publishing business and share how I marketed my Kindle book and how I made money from my Kindle book?"

I started kind of just doing that with every source of online income. I started doing that with my investments. I started doing that with really just all aspects of my life and I figured out. I was like, "Man, I can make more money from my blog just being that guinea pig and sharing my journey openly than I can even just running a business fulltime."

Matt: And so how did that manifest? I mean were you starting to develop coaching – clients that wanted to pay you for your expertise – and you were building an audience or how were you monetizing that audience that you were building through teaching what you were doing?

Johnny: Yeah. so, I definitely did get some coaching clients. At first, I was charging 100 bucks an hour and I was pretty much booked up all of the time and I didn't have time for anything else. So, I just kept raising that price until people stopped booking me up. So, currently right now, it's at 175 bucks an hour and I only get like one person a month that is willing to pay that, but that's actually what I want. I

don't really want to trade my time for money. So, if that starts getting booked up, then I'll raise it to 200 to kind of just prevent that. I'm a big believer in passive income – things that you can do once and continue to get paid for.

So, instead, I would film courses. I would just direct people to other courses or create things like my email autoresponder, create videos, and create things that are generally valuable, but also are scalable and repeatable. I think that's the kind of big take away from that is, in the beginning it's good to do the one-offs but – eventually if you want to free up your time and be able to get to the next level but also create multiple streams of passive income – you really have to take yourself out of that equation or at least do things where you can automate it.

Matt: So, you created basically information products that you were then able to sell, which then didn't take up your own time because you already put your own time into creating the info product and then that could just continue to sell itself and residualize income for your expertise?

Johnny: Yeah, exactly. To give people a clearer picture, from 2013 to 2015 – for those first two years – I made pretty much all of my money through actually running the business, you know? So, I made probably actually closer to I would say between 50,000 plus a year just from actually running my drop shipping businesses – which was kind of what I made back home at my corporate job. So, it was awesome. I was able to do it from Thailand. I was able to rack up all these credit card miles. I was really happy with it.

And then in 2016 I think – just a year or two ago – when I started transitioning away, I made 91,000 from my actual drop shipping store where I was actually running that business, but then I made \$201,000.00 from my info products.

So, that was the big shift where I was like, “You know what? \$91,000.00 is great. I'm really happy to be able to make 90 grand, but that's me trading my time for money and that'll probably never grow past that. But if I can make 200,000 doing things that are scalable and repeatable and really things that I enjoy more – you know I really like helping other people get started. I like sharing information. I like creating info products and creating ways that people can learn and grow themselves – I'm going to focus on that.”

Matt: So, what were your information products that sold \$200,000.00 that year?

Johnny: So, what was great is that a lot of them weren't things that I made myself. Actually, most of the info products I made myself were free giveaways for if somebody used – For example, if you wanted to sign up for Shopify and used my link Shopify.com/JohnnyFD.

Matt: Got it.

Johnny: Not only would you get 20 percent off but then I'll give you access to this free guide or course of how to set up your Shopify store.

Matt: So, you would incentivize people to use your affiliate links for various different products and services and then your content would be free and then you would get paid by the vendor because somebody used your affiliate link?

Johnny: Exactly. Here's kind of the second hack for it. Instead of me paying for hosting of these free courses, I would just put them on Udemy – which is a free course creation template software online marketplace – where anybody can create a course. They make it really easy. They don't charge you anything, but they take a percentage of sales. So, I put all these courses on Udemy and sometimes people just find it and they would just buy it. So, then that was another stream of income.

But what I really used it for was I can say, “Hey, if you use my link AntonMethod.com to sign up for Anton's drop shipping course and you forward me the receipt, I'll give you access to this \$50.00 course that I made.” I think, actually at the time, I had it set at like \$100.00 or whatever it was. This is a \$100.00 value and I say, “You can get this jumpstart course for free that just walks you through the best ways and what I've personally learned in my experience on how to go through the course, how to have the best chance of success and how to not waste time, how to goal set.”

A lot of it was more goal setting and mindset versus the teaching behind it because I figured instead of me creating a course on how to start a drop shipping store – which would take me literally months to create because there's so much information –why not just refer them to the expert that taught me how to do it and then give them an incentive to use my link so not only do I get credit for them signing up, but also they can have a bonus where they actually have access to someone who's been successful through the

course and they can get some insights on how to be successful themselves.

Matt: Okay. So, you have multiple streams of income going on and you've established a whole series of different information products or affiliate relationships, as well as your drop shipping business, all of which were generating income. So, you were diversified through a lot of different streams. So, then let's talk about how the podcasts plural came about. First, let's talk about the Travel Like a Boss podcast. How did you decide to start that and explain to people what the framework is for that?

Johnny: Yeah. So, while I was doing e-commerce, I just randomly met this guy that had a podcast called I think Build My Online Store and he was like, "Oh, you do e-commerce. That's cool that you do it while in Thailand. Can I interview you?" I thought, "Yeah, sure." I thought it was going to be a big deal going into a studio or something and – when he pulled out his laptop and he was like, "All right, let's do it upstairs" – I thought, "Wow that was easy. That was fun. I want to do that too." I never really thought about how to make money from it.

I just thought it would be cool to share these experiences because I was in this very unique situation before digital nomad was a big term of meeting people who were actually doing it and I wanted to be able to have an excuse to sit down with them for an hour and ask them all of the questions that I was curious about and how they make money online, how they travel, and I wanted to be able to share that. That's how that podcast started.

Matt: And you interview location independent entrepreneurs on the podcast. You've had a lot of very interesting people on that podcast. You and I, obviously, basically had our first extended conversation when you invited me as a guest on your podcast and then, from there, you invited me to speak at the Nomad Summit and all that, and now we're here. Then, one of the amazing things – when I got to the Nomad Summit and I was speaking with all these attendees at the Nomad Summit – you know I was asking people like, "Where are you from? What do you do? Why are you here?" kind of thing and just to get peoples' stories.

They were all very interesting. But a number of people were from I mean all different places. I mean from Alaska or from Iowa or from places outside the U.S. like in the Middle East. There was someone from Iran that I talked to. I mean just all over the place

and I said, “Well, how long have you been in Chiang Mai?” A number of these people said, “Well, I just got here a couple weeks ago, came in for the Summit, and I’m going to plan to stay now that I’m here and try to build my business or figure out what I want to do and all that.” I said, “You’re from – fill in the blank place – that’s really far away from here. How did you learn about this and how did you come all the way here?”

I mean I talked to people like, “I work construction in Alaska.” And I’m like, “You’re here. How did you figure out about this?” They said, “Well, I listened to Johnny’s Travel Like a Boss podcast and every day when I’d go to work, I would listen to the podcast. So, I learned about Chiang Mai and I learned it was a digital nomad hub and this is what I want to do and I want to figure out how to build a location independent business and how to get out of the geographically restrictive thing that I’m currently in. So, I have some time off. It’s offseason now.”

“So, I thought I would come here, come to the conference, and basically see if I could try to stay for a few months and see if I could get a path towards that out of the community and the inspiration that is in Chiang Mai.” So, I mean I was amazed at the people who knew to come to this city just by listening to your podcast from all over the world.

Johnny:

Yeah. And it’s been amazing meeting these people in person – especially the people who come back to me – year-after-year. They’re like, “Yeah, I’ve been to this Summit now three years in a row. When I first came, I had no idea what I was doing. I made some friends, ended up partnering with somebody who I met who was sitting next to me. Now we have this business. Now we’re traveling the world and I just come back every year just to be here.” It’s really inspiring how podcasts like yours and the Travel Like a Boss just can reach people all over the world who normally wouldn’t have anyone to talk to about this subject.

I bet a lot of you are shaking your head right now and you’re nodding along saying, “Yeah, I can’t talk to my other friends about this because they think I’m crazy. All they want to do is go out and drink. All they want to do is talk about the news or what’s happening in the world or about Donald Trump and nobody wants to talk about business, nobody wants to talk about location independence, nobody wants to even talk about alternatives to life. People’s idea of a vacation is one week or two weeks, go to Vegas, party it up, or go to some all-inclusive vacation somewhere.

Nobody's talking about pay. It's cheaper to live in Chiang Mai and run a fulltime business than it is to just be in the U.S. even."

Matt: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's amazing and when you do those interviews, I mean you get to speak to people who are location independent but all over the place. I remember when you and I did our interview, I was in Tokyo and you were in the Canary Islands. I mean that's just an incredible way, I think, to learn from other location independent entrepreneurs. Where are they? What are they doing and all this kind of stuff?

So, we're definitely going to put the link to that podcast in the show notes. Speaking of which, you also are not just based in Chiang Mai fulltime and you live here and stay here, you actually are pretty itinerant in terms of where you spend time and that kind of stuff. So, can you talk a little bit about your personal travel lifestyle and how you structure that?

Johnny: Yeah. So, for many years, I was just in Chiang Mai or just in Thailand and I loved it until I started making enough money where I was like, "You know what? Europe is nice in the summer. Let me go check it out." I realized, "Hey, Europe's a big place. Let me explore a bit." I would say – as of two years ago – that's been my yearly pilgrimage, I guess, to Europe where there are just so many places to check out. And the thing is if you've been to a couple of these places on a vacation, it's so different than living there for a month or two.

That's my new goal – what I've been doing for the last couple years – is I will go to a country and stay there for two months, stay there for three months – really, as long as I'm happy. If I start getting bored or if I want to move on, I'll move on. But it's a nice balance between staying in one place year-round or just bouncing around all the time and just being exhausted traveling. You know I think the every month move for me is a bit much. I really like developing a routine. So, for me, it's perfect to go to a place for two months.

For example, this year I'm in Chiang Mai for two months, Nepal for one month, and then I'll be in summer in Europe for the whole summer – maybe four months. I'll probably spend a month in Greece, a month in either Poland or Lithuania or something, maybe a month in Spain, and then a month back in the U.S. to see some friends and family, and then maybe two more months back in Chiang Mai or something like that. That's been a really nice kind

of schedule for me. Actually, if you're really interested in it, I do these year-end roundups of every country I went to month-by-month. So, I just wrote my 2018 one. You can go to JohnnyFD.com and just look for that. Sorry, 2017 wrap up.

Then, I had one for, I think, last year I went to eight countries and then, in 2016 – two years ago – I actually went to I think it was something like 13 countries and it was fun. This is a lifestyle that I don't think would have been possible in our parents' generation or our grandparents' generation. So, we really should just take advantage of it because we can.

Matt: It is amazing, yeah. I agree with you on the length of stay and that kind of stuff. I mean most of the places I go, I try to stay for at least a month or two, right? Chiang Mai, I'm probably going to be here almost seven weeks, right? I definitely plan to come back. I mean this is an incredible place, but I agree. I think you get very different cultural experiences.

Last year, I was in South America for about five months you know in different places. That's a very amazing, but very different, cultural experience than you get in Asia, right? Then Europe, I as well am going to be over in Europe floating around a good bit for the summer and you and I are both going to be – Are you going on the Nomad Cruise?

Johnny: Yup and the reason why I say I'll be somewhere in Europe for four months is because I'm going to leave it open ended, you know? That's what's cool about this lifestyle is whoever I end up meeting or hanging out with on that cruise, I'll just end up just traveling with for a month or two. Who knows?

Matt: Yeah. We'll drop a link in the show notes for the Nomad Cruise, but they do it basically I think twice a year they're trying to do it now.

Johnny: Yeah. So, now they're doing a shorter one in Europe that is about 10 days or so. And then they're going to have a transatlantic cruise I think somewhere in November or something that goes from Europe to South America.

Matt: You know that's just incredible to see the proliferation of those types of events and those types of opportunities and the integration of that with the lifestyle. If you do it right, you can likely write that off as a business expense if you're building business relationships,

presenting, developing clients, or whatever it may be, right? So, they're structuring these really incredible things that integrate with the types of lifestyles that people are looking for. These types of things just continue to proliferate, right?

When you were in the Canary Islands – which I heard is also an upcoming hub. I've never been to the Canary Islands. I've lived in Spain for about three months, but those are still on my list to hit. But I've heard about this Nomad City. Where you there for that?

Johnny: Yeah, I was there. So, that was – I don't know if it was their first or second year doing it – but it was just a way to get people to come, give people an excuse to go to Grand Canary – which is the kind of nomad island of Spain. It was just perfect because it was right before the Nomad Cruise left. So, people would kind of have this excuse. I'm going to go there a few weeks early. I'm going to check out Grand Canary, see if I like it. I'm going to go to this Nomad City event and then I'm going to go to hop on the ship for my cruise and go to South America.

That was the reason why I went to Grand Canary. It's not even because I was going to either event. It was really just because I knew all my friends were going to be there. so, I ended up going to Nomad City. I didn't end up going on the cruise at that time because I really liked Grand Canary. I wanted to stay and I was, honestly, a bit tired from traveling. The last thing I wanted to do was move again, but there are so many cool things. I mean put it on your list, put it on your calendar. I'm going to go on Nomad Cruise. There's Nomad Train now, which takes you across Trans-Siberian Railroad and then, of course, go to the Nomad Summit.

Matt: Yeah, for sure. It's amazing how these communities sort of interlink. So, we just mentioned we were both at Nomad Summit here in Chiang Mai and we're both going to be on the Nomad Cruise. And there were other speakers at the Summit who are also going to be on the cruise and certainly participants who are going to be there. So, it's very interesting how this international community of nomads they're creating events and annual things where you can continue to see the same people on different continents or at different experiences. It's incredible.

Johnny: And what I really like is the type of people that go to these conferences and everybody willing to spend their time and their money doing so. They are the people you want to hang out with or at least the people that I like hanging out with – people that are

positive, that have abundance mindsets, and that are fun to be around. There's so much negativity online nowadays and, unfortunately, some of that even trickles down to places like Chiang Mai where there are people that can't afford to travel so they just say, "Oh, all that stuff is a waste of money. it's overpriced." There are always reasons or excuses to nitpick and say, "Oh, you know, that's terrible. This is terrible."

But the people who come they're like, "This is awesome." And what's amazing, I see it firsthand. The people who come have a much better chance of being successful the next year because – not only are you learning information that is new and relevant in person versus watching an old video online while you have another window open and you're on Facebook – but just being there.

Then getting to meet the speakers afterward and just seeing they're real people, asking them the questions you want to ask them. And more importantly, being surrounded by other people who are in the same boat, meeting the other attendees that are open-minded and wanting to better themselves, wanting to learn, willing to invest themselves, those are the people you want to be around.

Matt: Right. So, let's talk about how the Nomad Summit evolved, how you decided to start that, found that, build that, grow that. Take us from the first ever Nomad Summit and to what it is today.

Johnny: Yeah. so, four years ago, I was in Chiang Mai and – even though I had my group of friends – there wasn't a really easy way for all the nomads in Chiang Mai that had started coming to really meet each other. It wasn't until some random – I don't even know who it was – someone was like, "Hey, let's all get together at this bar. We'll have a nomad party, right?" I was like, "This is great. There are 50 people here. I'm meeting all these nomads I didn't even know were in Chiang Mai. This is amazing." The only problem was it was really loud because it was at a nightclub and everybody was drunk.

So, I was like, "I don't know if we're going to remember anything tomorrow, but this is a cool concept." I just thought, "Hey, how cool would this be if we had this somewhere quiet – so, somewhere people can actually talk to each other, somewhere people can actually share ideas?" I think that's actually when I started with the Nomad Coffee Club where I was like, "You know what? Let me just make a deal with a coffee shop and say hey, can we just come? We'll buy coffee and I want people to be able to share ideas and have it be free so people can go."

That's still going strong. It's been four years. Every Friday, people still meet in Chiang Mai, teach each other what they have to learn, meet each other. It's amazing. At the same time, I thought, "You know it would be even better if we rented a seminar room or something and gave people a projector and really just made it easy for people to learn and teach and share what's working." I was like, "You know what? Let me give this a shot." I had no idea if anyone would come. I had no idea if anyone would even pay for it. So, I put the deposit for the seminar room on my credit card and I was like, "Let me take this chance."

Luckily, that first year, 120 people showed up and we did it again. We had 240, so it doubled. Last year, we had 350 show up, and then this year, we had over 400. We had 407 people show up and it's just growing bigger and bigger and getting better and better every year. It's against all odds, too. It's one of those crazy things where now it's really like a self-fulfilling thing. I mean we've had people buy tickets now for 2019 already because they know they want to come back.

Matt: Amazing. Yeah, I was thoroughly impressed with the caliber of the organization, the caliber of the speakers. It was a real privilege to be included among the group of speakers there. I've remained in touch with most of the speakers, as well as a bunch of the attendees that I met. It was just a super inspiring event. I mean really, really great.

Johnny: Yeah. Thanks, I appreciate that. The feedback has been great. I mean we put a survey out there and it was something like 80 percent of people said that they either would recommend it to a friend or already had. To me, that's the ultimate feedback. That's who we really want to please. Then, there are all those people that are like, "Oh, this is great. I don't even need to fill out the survey. Don't change anything." So, I'm really happy. So, I would hope to see all of you guys 2019 Nomad Summit.

What's really cool – as Matt mentioned earlier – is people kind of use it as a marker or an excuse to say, "Okay, I have a year to get my life in order. I have six months to figure things out and I'm going to be in Chiang Mai no matter what. I'm going to make the move. I'm going to spend two months. I'm going to spend January and February there or December, January, and February or whatever. I'm just going to – no matter what – I'm going to be there."

Matt: Yeah. It's great. I think the Nomad Summit – for a number of people that I talked to there – it was kind of like this benchmark for them where they knew about it a year in advance, right? Because that's the one thing I like about what you guys are doing is you've already got the 2019 dates, right? I mean can people even buy tickets already?

Johnny: Yeah, NomadSummit.com/tickets and I mean, if anything, when you buy a presale ticket that kind of just forces you in the back of your mind to be like, "Okay. Well, I have a year to figure this out."

Matt: Yeah. And so you've got all the time until next year's Nomad Summit to figure out and then – when you come – how long can you stay for? So, whatever that duration of time is, but by starting your immersion into Chiang Mai with the Summit, you get to just meet tons of people and you get to seek out experts in whatever space it is that you're trying to move forward in, whatever type of business model you're trying to do or things like that.

There are people there most likely who have done that, are doing it, and can give you some tips on that, as well as the whole lifestyle design transition. I mean I literally met and just had wine last night, in fact, with young entrepreneurs – I mean early 20s – who are here in Chiang Mai and are starting businesses. One of the businesses that someone is starting who I was hanging out with last night is basically helping people to transition to Chiang Mai.

So, basically, putting together a package where "We'll help you get your housing, your scooter, your WiFi, your all this stuff set up and how to get to Chiang Mai and get situated in the right neighborhood, in the right area, and plug into all the Nomad social networks." They're basically putting together a package and it's amazing. I mean these 23-year-old entrepreneurs are here doing that kind of stuff.

Johnny: Yeah, definitely. And you know I mean there are so many things you could do. Honestly, things like that like I think that's going to fulfill a need for a lot of people who don't want to try to figure it out themselves but – at the same time – I actually encourage people to figure it out yourselves. Show up, get a hotel for three days, and just hit the ground running. Figure it out yourself because you will learn so much from grinding your teeth as well. So, at the end of the day, everything is possible and it's a magical place – and not just Chiang Mai – but really this whole lifestyle is

magical. So, whatever it takes.

Matt: It's incredible to see how the movement is growing and proliferating and all of this stuff and the intertwining of the network. Okay. So, let's also now you did a second book and you launched a second podcast. Can you talk about that evolution of those two things?

Johnny: Yeah. So, my second book is called Life Changes Quick and that was really about my journey from – The first book 12 Weeks In Thailand was about how to live cheaply in Thailand – \$600.00 a month budget, how to follow your passions – whether it's Muay Thai or scuba diving. The second book Life Changes Quick was how to set goals to get to that next level. My goal at the time – which I thought was going to be impossible – was to save up \$30,000.00 because that's a Thai million dollars and I knew if I can get that – if I can become a Thai millionaire – then I can basically live in Thailand for a long time without stressing about money.

I didn't know how I was going to get there, but throughout that book – because it's kind of the journey of setting goals, figuring it out – and it ended up not just being with money. It was just getting in shape, figuring out how to follow a routine, and that was that big turning point. Now, looking back, it's crazy because 30,000 to me now really isn't a lot of money anymore.

Especially because last year when I was really working hard, I would sometimes make \$30,000.00 in a month in profit, but I'm so glad that book exists because if you told me that two, three, four years ago like, "Hey, 30 grand's not a big deal. Oh, I made that in a month." I not only would really believe you, but I also wouldn't know how to get started to even get to that point. So, I'm so happy I documented that whole process of saying, "This is how you go from basically zero." I had less than \$1,000.00 in the bank. "How do you go from zero to that big, first hurdle?" because once you get over that hurdle, it becomes so much easier.

Matt: Right. And then the second podcast that you launched, Invest Like a Boss, talk a little bit about what that entails and how that evolved.

Johnny: Yeah. So, what's really amazing about having the podcasts, having the Nomad Summit, just really blogging everything really openly is it invites in a network of other successful people because they

know you, they trust you, they see that you're giving so much value, and they want to be a part of it. So, I had this buddy of mine, Sam Marx, who sold his company for close to \$100 million – tens of millions of dollars – and he said, “Hey, Johnny, I’m trying to figure out how to invest my money and all the information I’m getting from my financial advisor and online just sucks. I want to start a podcast so I have an excuse to call up experts and just interview them and just ask them questions I want to know.”

He said, “You have a podcast. Can you help me out with it?” I was like, “Yeah, sure.” So, in the beginning, I didn’t expect anything in return. I was just giving him advice on how to start it, how to edit, what equipment he should buy and he just said, “Hey, why don’t you just co-host this with me. Why don’t we just become partners on this?”

All of a sudden, I have a multimillionaire who has his own huge network wanting to do a joint venture with me and that has opened my world to not only having access now to all of these investors, CEOs of these big companies, and people that are worth tens of millions of dollars, but it’s given me access to information on how to invest my money that – now that I’m making a lot more and I have money to create passive income through investing, which is really the ultimate source of passive income.

Matt: Right. You had me on the Invest Like a Boss podcast as well, which was great because when we were starting getting to know each other and you understood what I do you’re like, “I want to have you on both the Travel Like a Boss podcast and the Invest Like a Boss podcast.” So, I was on there and we talked a lot about The Maverick Investor Group model of helping people to buy turnkey rental properties in different U.S. cities so you’re actually owning the hard real estate and you can do that from anywhere in the world, right?

Johnny: Yeah.

Matt: So, I want to definitely throw in a link to that episode. We’ll put that in the show notes so you guys can hear – if you want to hear Johnny and me – talk more than we have right now, you can hear us talk on his shows both much more about the location independent travel stuff on the Travel Like a Boss episode and then much more about the real estate investing stuff on the Invest Like a Boss podcast.

Then, that will connect you in there so you can subscribe to his shows as well because I mean you've got some incredibly high profile guests that come on your show. I mean James Altucher and some of those guys I mean really premium level guests. So, I definitely encourage you guys to listen to some of that. So, Johnny, are you ready to move into the lightning round and kind of finish this up with a few quick, pointed questions?

Johnny: Let's do it.

Matt: Okay. You can take as long as you want to answer the questions. My questions are just going to be kind of short and succinct to you, okay?

Announcer: The lightning round.

Matt: In your time doing the Travel Like a Boss podcast, what is the biggest lesson or takeaway that you've learned from your guests over the years?

Johnny: There have been so many, but basically when you ask the right questions, you get the right answers. For me, my personal net worth has grown because of the information that I asked them on the show. So, when you're interviewing someone, don't just think what your audience wants, just be selfish like, "What do I want to know?" because chances are other people have that same question.

Matt: Okay. So, taking off of that, on the Invest Like a Boss podcast – as you've been asking these investors all of these questions about how to do what they do – what have been your biggest takeaways or most successful investments for you in terms of the advice that you've gotten from all of these experts over the time doing the podcast?

Johnny: The best advice is to be invested and to be diversified as well. So, now I have a nice split of 40 percent indexed funds, 40 percent real estate, and then the rest of it is in just random things that are not correlated with either. That way, no matter if the stock market is going up, down, or sideways, I'm making money or at least I'm keeping my money.

I think a lot of people are going to lose their shirts on being 100 percent invested in Bitcoin or cryptocurrencies and a lot of people are going to miss out on a big opportunity by having zero percent invested in Bitcoin or cryptocurrencies. So, it's one of those things

where you have to have your hand in all pies if you want to really have the best chance of hitting it big.

Matt: What are your top three podcasts that you listen to or they can be YouTube channels or blogs or something like that, but shows or sources of information that you consume that add value – top three?

Johnny: So, besides Travel Like a Boss and Invest Like a Boss and Maverick, I would say the ones I listen to the most is I really like How I Built This, as well as Success How I Did It because these podcasts break down big companies – multimillion dollar companies – and how they started that business. That is what we can learn to get to the next level.

Matt: Okay. When you were on your entrepreneurial journey that we just talked about over the last decade, what would be one book or resource that helped you out or inspired you the most that you would recommend or pass on to other people?

Johnny: It's hard to say because I think I learned something from really every book I read, but I really like Tony Robbins and not just his old books, but his podcasts nowadays, but really his live events. So, I just came back from Date With Destiny – which was a \$5,000.00 event – but it was absolutely worth it. So, I highly recommend that.

I know it's not an easy thing for everyone to get to, but it's definitely achievable, it's definitely a goal worth going to, and I really believe that if everyone in the world went to Date With Destiny and really immersed themselves and went through those exercises, the whole world would be a better place and we'd all be individually happier and more successful.

Matt: Okay. Top two or three travel destinations that you have been to that you would love to go back and spend more time or you would recommend other people definitely check out?

Johnny: So, Thailand is it. I mean I keep coming back every year. I have the option to go anywhere in the world. I keep coming back to Thailand. My favorite places in Thailand are Chiang Mai and pretty much all the islands – so Koh Lanta, Koh Tao is fun, and Koh Pha Ngan. Definitely come to Thailand. As far as scuba diving, my favorite places have been Komoto and also the Sipadan Islands in Borneo.

Matt: Wow. So, I have not been to either of those. So, those are now making it on my list. All right. Bucket list travel destinations for you that you have not yet been to. What are the top three places on your list? I assume Nepal is number one because you're going next month?

Johnny: Yeah so, definitely Nepal. This year, I'm doing Annapurna Circuit. Next year, I plan to go back and doing Everest Base Camp. I'm excited about that. I want to see the rest of Europe. I really want to spend time in every country in Europe. I think that's a big one. Galapagos is definitely up there, but it's one of those things where I figure I can do it anytime. It's no rush. It's not a nomad destination or anything.

Matt: Definitely not. I actually did the Galapagos last year and it was epic. It's definitely a more expensive opportunity because what they do is they limit the number of people that can come in every year and so that lack of supply allows them to charge a very high price and thereby to have a high level of control over the protection of the ecosystem. But we were able to get in on some deal. Somebody organized a group thing and so we got in for a lot lower than you normally can, but it was just spectacular.

If you're interested in going, book in advance, look for deals, all that kind of stuff. We had a four-night catamaran and then we flew out two days before that left and we went scuba diving from the land on the first day because the catamaran was not a scuba trip, right? It wasn't a scuba trip. It was a snorkeling trip. So, we wanted to go scuba diving so we did one day of scuba diving from the land out in back and then we went on the four-night catamaran and that was basically you snorkel every day, right? For half a day you snorkel and then half the day is a land kind of trek and you learn about all the animals and stuff. But it was unbelievable.

I mean one of the things that was insane about the Galapagos was that the animals basically the ecosystem there is so protected that the animals are basically not scared of humans because there's no history of humans harming them at all and the reason is that they basically never had that, right? So, they've never had that history and they've never had to be afraid of that. And so when you go, you are able to swim with sea lions and you're able to swim with sea turtles and they're just coming up to you and they're just swimming around you and they basically want to play with you.

They don't view you as a predator. They're not swimming away from you and that kind of stuff. So, you basically have access to this highly protected ecosystem, which has all of these incredible animals that basically are welcoming you into their ecosystem and just wanting to play with you and hang out with you. So, you respect them and you treat them with care and so forth. They're very clear with you when you go into the Galapagos how to be around the animals and stuff and respect their environment and all of that. And so it continues to be a system where no harm comes to the animals and you're able to just experience them in this incredible, natural ecosystem.

It's one of the most unique places in the world. We saw such a diversity of animals. We got to swim with dolphins. We saw whales from the catamaran. We saw sunfish, manta rays, all this kind of stuff, and you get to see some very interesting and very unique types of animals too. So, for example, we saw marine iguanas, right, which I had no idea what these things were. And so one day, we were just out snorkeling and we had gone on a hike in the morning and went to this island and we see all of these marine iguanas. I don't know if you have ever seen or heard about a marine iguana. I had not.

Johnny: I've only seen it on National Geographic or Discovery Channel, but it would be great to see in person.

Matt: Yeah. So, it's these giant piles of dark-colored iguanas. Basically, most of them are black colored iguanas, and they're just laying on top of each other on this black colored rock and they're just napping there and sleeping and the sun is on them and they just sleep for like half the day. And then, we were snorkeling in the afternoon and what happens – at 1:00 – they get up off the island, they come into the water, and they just swim out. I mean like dozens, like hundreds of them just swimming out on top of the water towards you and then they go straight down to the bottom.

They swim down to the bottom and then they're just crawling around on the bottom and they're just eating food, finding food. They're down there for, I don't know, 15 minutes, 20 minutes, and then they come back up to the top. They swim back across the water to their rock and they go back and they just pile on top of each other and start sleeping again. It's insane.

Johnny: I love it. So, it's definitely on my bucket list – Galapagos.

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- Matt: Yeah, for sure. So, it's amazing. All right. So, with that Johnny, I want to give people a way to be able to find you and to connect with you and also if people are interested in learning from your experiences and that kind of stuff. I know you put a lot of stuff into a new course that you have out. So, give people the information on how they can find that.
- Johnny: Yeah. so, my course has been years in the making and, if anything, it's something that really is focused on people who want to monetize an online brand – whether it's a blog, a website, a YouTube channel, or social media following – and it is the inside secrets of everything I do and everything that helped me make \$200,000.00 last year from my affiliate commissions. It's all there and we have a link for the listeners if you want to go there and check out the course.
- Matt: Yeah. We'll put it in the show notes and you can go to check out Johnny's Income Boss course and then, Johnny, if they want to see your blogs or to follow you on social media, what's the best way for them to get in contact with you?
- Johnny: Yeah, super easy. JohnnyFD.com is my blog, where I hang out. Since you listen to podcasts, just search for both Travel Like a Boss podcast, as well as Invest Like a Boss, and you can subscribe to those shows there.
- Matt: And we'll put the links to all that stuff in the show notes as well. Johnny, it's been fantastic, yet another epic conversation, my friend. I thank you for being on the show.
- Johnny: I enjoyed it. So, yeah, see you guys, hopefully, out here in Chiang Mai in 2019.
- Announcer 1: Be sure to visit the show notes page at TheMaverickShow.com for direct links to all the books, people, and resources mentioned in this episode. You'll find all that and much more at TheMaverickShow.com.
- Announcer 2: Would you like to get Maverick Investor Group's white paper on real estate investing for digital nomads, how to buy U.S. rental properties from anywhere in the world and finance an epic international lifestyle? Just go to TheMaverickShow.com/nomad. The report is totally free and available for you now at TheMaverickShow.com/nomad.
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Announcer 3: Do you want to learn how to travel the world for a year plus with carryon luggage only and look good while you're doing it? Go to TheMaverickShow.com/packing to see a free recorded webinar and learn exactly how Matt does it. He shows you the luggage he uses, the specific items he packs, and the travel brands he likes most. Even if you're just looking to go on shorter trips but pack more efficiently and eliminate your checked luggage, you won't want to miss this. You can watch the free recorded webinar at TheMaverickShow.com/packing.

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