

Matt Bowles: Hey, everybody. It's Matt Bowles. Welcome to *The Maverick Show*. My guest today is Mark Podolsky, aka The Land Geek. He is a location-independent entrepreneur, real estate investor, and the founder and owner of Frontier Properties, which has completed over 5000 raw land deals since 2001 with an average return on investment of over 300 percent on cash flips and over 1000 percent on financed deals.

Mark has also built an information product and coaching business around his land investing techniques where he trains and mentors students on how they can replicate his methods. He has automated his land investing processes, and he has built his company with a completely location independent infrastructure so he can run it from anywhere in the world. He hosts *The Art of Passive Income Podcast*. And he is the Author of the book *Dirt Rich: How One Ambitiously Lazy Geek Created Passive Income in Real Estate Without Renters, Renovations, and Rehabs*.

Mark, welcome to the show.

Mark Podolsky: Matt Bowles, it is always a pleasure to speak to you. It's been way too long. Before we start talking, I told you there's been that void in my life. And now that it's been filled, I can't tell you just how grateful I am to spend some time with you.

Matt: It has been a void in my life as well, my friend. You and I have known each other now – I wanna say it's been at least four years. I have been on your podcast a couple of times. I did not have a podcast the first time you invited me on your show. And so, I am now super excited for my audience to meet you because you are really one of the guys in the real estate space that's really, really doing impressive things. And you're one of the most impressive entrepreneurs that I know as well. And so, I'm super excited to dive into both of those things today. So, thanks for being here, my man.

Mark: Yeah, my pleasure, my pleasure. Thank you.

Matt: Well, just to set the context too in terms of where we're doing this from, I am currently on the west coast of Africa. I'm in the city of Dakar in Senegal. And where are you today, my friend?

Mark: I am in a ball of shame because I'm in the most miserable place on

the planet right now, Phoenix, Arizona, where it's 115 degrees. And I would just like to live vicariously through you. Is that asking too much?

Matt: I definitely have more ocean and more beach next to me at the moment because I am right on the coast. Although, it's pretty warm here as well, my man. But I know you have a long-time connection to Phoenix, right. Can you talk a little bit about it? Let's just start off sort of with your background in terms of where you grew up and what your life trajectory was like when you stumbled upon this whole land investing thing.

Mark: Yeah. So I was working in investment banking with private equity groups, working with – doing mergers and acquisitions with these private equity groups, mid-market stuff, nothing crazy, \$5 to \$500 million in enterprise value. And, Matt, I hated it. I really, really just hated it. I had a 45-minute commute to work and back. I was micromanaged. It was long hours. Not a lot of control. And it really started to eat away at me, just the fact that all I was doing every single day was making rich people richer. And so, it got so bad that I wouldn't get the Sunday blues anticipating Monday coming around. I'd get the Friday blues anticipating the weekend going by really fast and having to be back at work on Monday.

So my firm hires this guy. He's telling me that as a side hustle he's buying up raw land, pennies on the dollar. He's flipping them online. And he's making an average return on his investment of 300 percent. So I'm looking at companies all day long. And a great company, Matt – a great company has 15 percent EBITDA margins or free cash flow. Your average company is at 10 percent, and I'm looking at companies all day long less than 10 percent. So I don't believe him.

And I've got \$3000 saved up for car repairs. We go to this tax deed auction in New Mexico. I do exactly what he says to do. I buy up 10 half-acre parcels, an average price of \$300 each. I put them online, and 10 days later, they all sell at an average price of \$1200 each, 300 percent. It worked. So I took all that money and went to another auction in Arizona, and this is where I live. And, again, this is the year 2000. There's no one around. It's a real small room. I'm buying up lots. I'm buying up acreage. No competition. And over the next six months, I sold all that land, and I made over \$90,000 cash.

So I go to my wife. I say, "Honey, I'm gonna quit my job, and I'm gonna be a full-time land investor." She's pregnant, and she goes, "Absolutely not." So I said, "Okay. Okay. Fine." So I worked in the investment banking business at the same time as my land investing business and for about 18 months until the land investing income exceeded the investment banking income. And then, I quit in 2001, and I've been doing it full-time ever since.

Matt: Wow. Okay. So let's go a little bit deeper on how this whole land investing thing works. Can you take us a little bit deeper and tactically and how one of these land deal transactions goes down?

Mark: Yeah. Let's walk through a deal together. So, Matt, you're in Senegal. And for our illustration, I'm gonna pretend that you live there a lot. And I go to this county in Texas, and I say, "Oh, there's Matt Bowels. He's living in Senegal Africa. He owes \$200 in back taxes on this 10-acre parcel in Texas. Well, Matt, you're advertising two things to me, 1.) You have no emotional attachment to that raw land. You're in Senegal. The property's in Texas. And 2.) You're distressed financially in some way because when we don't pay for things we don't value them in the same way. And you haven't paid your property taxes.

As a result, the county treasurer has been sending you tax notices every month saying, Matt, if you don't pay your taxes, you're eventually gonna lose that property to a tax deed or tax lien investor. So what I'll do is I'll take a look at the comparable sales on that 10-acre parcel. And let's take the lowest comparable sale, and all I'm gonna do is divide by four. And that's gonna get me what Warren Buffet would call a 300 percent margin of safety.

So let's say that the lowest comp is \$10,000 for you 10-acre parcel. I'm gonna send you an actual offer, Matt, of \$2500 because I don't wanna be in the appraisal business saying, "I'm interested in buying your land." You're like, "I'm interested in selling my land." And now, we're in a negotiation. I'm sending you an actual offer of \$2500. Now, you accept it because this asset has now become a liability for you. Now, in reality, 3 percent to 5 percent of people accept our quote, unquote top-dollar offer of \$0.25 on the dollar.

So, now that you've accepted the offer, I'm gonna go through due diligence or in-depth research. I wanna confirm you still own the

property. I'm gonna confirm back taxes are only \$200. I wanna have my team in the Philippines tap into the American Title Company and do a title check, make sure there are no liens or encumbrances, no breaks in the chain of title. I wanna find all the maps and look at the GIS map, plat map, the aerial maps.

And while we're doing all this, we're actually creating our marketing package for our buyer. So we'll go through our checklist. Everything checks out. We buy the property. We give you a check for \$2300. We pay off the \$200 in back taxes. We own it free and clear. And then, Matt, I'm gonna sell this property in 30 days or less. Now, I have a built-in best buyer. Do you know who it is?

Matt: Who?

Mark: The neighbors. The neighbors. So I'm gonna send out neighbor letters saying, "Hey, here's your opportunity. Expand your holdings. Protect your privacy. Protect your views." And often times the neighbors will then buy that 10-acre parcel. Now, if the neighbors pass, I'll go to my buyers list. My buyers list passes, I'll go to a little website you've probably never heard of called Craigslist, 10th most trafficked website in the United States. I'll go to an even smaller one, Facebook buy, sell groups and Marketplace. And then there are the lands. There's landmodo.com, landandfarm.com, landhub.com, landflip.com. There are all these platforms where people buy and sell raw land.

Now, the way that I'm gonna sell it is where the magic happens. I'm gonna ask for a \$2500 down payment. So I wanna get my money out on the down payment. Or I might go out six months. And then, I'm gonna make it a car payment. Let's say \$449 at 9 percent interest over the next 84 months. And essentially now, I've actually gotten my capital out, and I've created a passive income stream of \$449 a month over the next 84 months. And, Matt, no renters, no rehabs, no renovations, no rodents.

And because I'm not dealing with a tenant, I'm exempt from Dodd Frank, RESPA, and the SAFE Act, all this onerous real estate legislation. And then, the game that we play is can we create enough of these notes where our passive income exceeds our fixed expenses. And then, we're Matt Bowles. We're working when we want, where we want, with whom we want, and have total

freedom.

Matt: I love that. So you're able to build the business and run it completely location independent, from anywhere. You're able to create in a time asynchronous lifestyle and work when you want. And I love the way that you have developed that. I wanna go a little bit deeper though and talk to you about how you actually develop your buyer list and how you are confidently able to consistently sell this land once you acquire it. How do you do that?

Mark: So, essentially, the buyer's list is a typical opt-in on our website that says, "Hey, your coupon for \$250 off your first piece of property as well as how to avoid the three fatal land buying mistakes. And in exchange for that email, I'm gonna give you this coupon and this valuable information to make you a better land investor." And once they give me their email, I start nurturing them through a email autoresponder series. So we kinda get to know each other first before I ask for anything.

I explain to them that this is gonna be the simplest, most transparent real estate transaction they've ever had. I'm gonna explain to them we have an A-plus rating on the BBB. I'm gonna start building trust. I'm gonna show them testimonials. I'm gonna explain to them some of these common mistakes we see and how to avoid them, and make them smarter, and more educated, again, building trust. I'm gonna explain to them why land is the best investment. It's the only thing that lasts. It's gonna out live them. It's gonna outlive everybody. It's a generational asset. And you don't have to maintain it, nothing to protect. And start building that trust in that sense.

And then, after seven to 10 emails, I'm gonna ask for something. I'm gonna say, "Hey, look, this is our deal of the week. All you have to do if you wanna start owning what I consider the best asset on earth, and here's all the proof why it is, go ahead – and with a clear call to action – click on this button, learn more, and we're gonna take away all the risk because we never want anybody to buy property site unseen. Make your down payment. Lock up that parcel. In the next 90 days, go out there.

If you don't love that property for any reason. I'll exchange it for property you do love or I'll refund you. You have a 365-day exchange guarantee. So, now, it's so irresistible from a pricing

standpoint. We've removed the risk. And there is just a lust for land in this country, Matt. And that's how we sell property so quickly.

Matt: So, in terms of being able to liquidate these assets for 300 percent return on what you bought it for – let's stick with the original example. You bought it for \$2500, and then you're gonna sell it for \$10,000. The person that buys it for \$10,000, if they're not a neighbor, right, and they're not just personally expanding their holding and making their yard bigger and that sort of thing, what is the investment play for someone that is gonna buy it from you for the \$10,000 price? What is their motive? What are they gonna do with it?

Mark: So often times, they wanna use it for recreational purposes. Or they wanna use it as just – they just like the way it feels. Sometimes, I'll refer to it as man jewelry. They just like to go to their neighbor and say, "Hey, I just bought 10-acres for \$10,000," because most likely where they live that's not possible. So it's the feeling of getting this great deal, and I own a real asset that one day I can improve, I can go out, I can use, I can develop, whatever I wanna do with it. And the taxes are low. And so, it's just something that a lot of people like to own.

Matt: And how are you finding those people? And then, as your students come up and develop their own businesses, how are they finding the same types of people? Are these mostly geographically specific things where someone says I'm gonna buy land in this one particular area, this one particular city, and they're trying to find those investors that they're gonna resell it to in the same local area? How are you developing that – the sort of exit strategy in terms of finding those people?

Mark: Yeah. We wanna market to people who are about two to three hours from the property and hit those biggest cities because we want the biggest buyer pool. And then, we also want to just use basic marketing techniques. So, in every ad, we're gonna have urgency, scarcity. We're gonna have a clear call to action. And we're also going to have an anchor.

So what I mean by an anchor is we're gonna have the original price – let's say in our example it was \$12,900. We're gonna cross that out. That's our anchor. And now it's \$10,000. So in our minds, we

can't unsee the \$12,900. And we immediately think, oh, this is a great deal. And it is a great deal because I already made my money on the buy, and I'm leaving enough money for the investor or the person to use it through time that that property is worth what we're selling it for. And so, they have instant equity from day one. And we kinda walk them through that as well, showing them the recent comps and using that as an anchor as well.

So the beautiful thing about land is that this is one unique piece of property. There will never be another one just like it. And so, here's your opportunity. So we create that urgency. We create that scarcity. And then, we show them how easy it is to make a down payment with our software. We use a software called geekpay.io. And we can get into this, Matt, because everything I do – I have the philosophy I can always make more money; I can't get more time.

Q\ So the business is 90 percent automated with software and inexpensive virtual assistance. So using geekpay.io, it's a one-time set-and-forget-it system, where we collect the money and then we start getting our monthly payments via ACH, their checking. If the checking fails, then it'll hit a backup payment for the credit card on file. So our default rate went from 8 percent to 4 percent just using software.

Matt: Wow. Okay. So let's talk about the automation piece of it. Can you explain when you went about automating your business, what were the different pieces of it that you automated? What order did you automate them? And sort of take us through what that process was like when it was fully manual and then how you automated it to the extent that you have now.

Mark: So when I first started, it was fully manual, and I didn't have a mentor sort of telling me, "Hey, Mark, you don't have a business. You are not an entrepreneur. You think you're an entrepreneur. But what you have here is you've built a job for yourself because you are personally doing all the work. And so, for the longest time, I was just so happy to be out of my investment banking job and just making money it never really occurred to me that, oh my, this is not really a business in the traditional sense where I'm making money in my sleep.

And then, once I realized that, I started taking apart every piece of

the business that I was personally in, and I was either delegating it, automating it, or eliminating it. And so, the first piece of this is county research. There are 3007 US counties. Which county am I gonna go to? And so, I created a standard operating procedure on this is how I've done this for the past few years. This is what I look for. This is where the deals are happening. And that way, I can bring in an acquisition manager, and they can do the county research.

And then, from there, I said, "Okay, we have to get a list of people that own real property in that county." Well, let's go ahead and standardize that. This is how you get the list. And then, we would go to fiverr.com and find an excel ninja, and they would scrub out the list of people that have commercial property, residential property, industrial property. So all I was left with was vacant land. Then, we would batch that list by size. So I'm not gonna send somebody the same offer with 40 acres as somebody with 1 acre. Person with 40 acres is gonna send me glitter back of the mail.

So then, we batch the list. Then we price it. Here's how you get the comps, and then all you're gonna do is divide by four. And then, we upload that into our software. So, in the very beginning, I had Janie in South Carolina manually doing the offers and doing a lot of the front end of the business. And then, as the software started to develop, we created our own proprietary software system where we can then just upload the list and press a button. And using an API with lob.com, they would do address verification and send out our mailers for us. And that's really just the front end of it from there.

Now, once the mailers come back, we started using automation with RingCentral combined with Zapier and Fancy Hands because, often times, Matt, they would be confused or they'd be mad and they'd wanna call and talk to me and yell at me. So we would screen the sellers first before they would even talk to our acquisition manager using that automation piece as well. So then, the intake manager would take notes. If they are a real seller, it would then go to the acquisition manager. The acquisition manager will then contact them, explain the closing process, and then buy the property.

From there, we would then use a software called simplifile.com to even record the deeds online. We could just scan the deed and

upload it. We didn't even have to go to the recorder anymore in these Simplifile counties. So that was another big piece of it. And then, automating the neighbor letters, teaching a virtual assistant how to go to GIS maps to locate the neighbors, make that list, upload that again into our software, and send out those neighbor letters.

And then, from there our acquisition manager would start the marketing process. We use software called postingdomination.com/thelandgeek that automates Craigslist postings and Facebook postings so I could create 80, 90 ads just by pressing a button. And then, from there, the acquisition manager would work with the buyers and then close the deal with software like geekpay.io. So, everywhere along the way, I would see what am I doing. I would record it. I would make a training video, a standard operating procedure. I would test it. I would refine it. And then, I could get myself out of it.

So now, today, I work two hours a week in Frontier Properties just talking to the team and then looking at the numbers. How many offers went out? How many deals are pending? How many deals did we close?

Matt: That is awesome, man. Can you talk a little bit about, now, your hiring process? So once you have built the systems, you've written the processes, you've created the trainings, what is then your process for hiring staff to run these systems? And maybe just take us from the very beginning when you started hiring people and then all the up through building out the full team that you have today.

Mark: Sure. When I started hiring people, I wanted to tap into global talent. And, luckily, there are platforms out there that make it so easy for you. So, when I started, it was odesk.com, which is now upwork.com, which is a combination of Elance and oDesk. Fiverr.com was really a great place to find global talent. And then, once the people would pass sort of my tests – and, Matt, the way I like to hire somebody is I don't even bother with an interview, honestly, because I have confirmation bias. I really just wanna see how they do the work.

So we'll hire three, and then we'll keep one. And, essentially, we'll just give them a test that is impossible to complete. And I wanna

see will they think for themselves. Are they gonna come to me and say – and just throw up their hands and say, "This is impossible." So that's really the test that we try to give them, is something that they have to really think and try to solve and problem solve in a really unique way. And then, we know, okay, this is an A player. And then, we get rid of the other two.

So we want global talent. We want inexpensive global talent. And then, we start filling in those positions with the emphasis being that it's not the person that's so important as it is the process. The process should be so strong, so simple, so bullet proof, that if that really valuable virtual assistant ends up leaving, whatever it is, changing, whatever, we're not vulnerable. And that takes years and years to develop. But once you do it, you're really free.

Matt: And can you talk a little bit about your management process? And let's just – both personally, you as the CEO, business owner, your personal leadership style, I would be interested in hearing about, and then also how you structure your management systems to do project management for all your staff and internationally distributed team.

Mark: Yeah. So my acquisition manager manages the team, and then I just have a weekly meeting with my acquisition manager. So I give them a lot of leeway. I don't wanna micromanage. So, from the get go, I sort of set the tone with what I expect. And then, they just go out and execute because they care. And they want to get the best people on their team because they're incentivized to do it. The more money that the company makes, the more money they make. And so, really, my management philosophy's very similar to a Warren Buffet in the sense that it's really close to just abdication. It's really, really decentralized in that aspect.

So I can be traveling around the world, anywhere in the world, and I can just Vox my team if I need to. Email is fine. A Zoom call – but we don't really need to meet physically very often. And we only need to meet once a week maybe 30 minutes. That's it.

Matt: Awesome. Can you talk a little bit now also about how you expanded your business and added additional streams of revenue? So, once you automated and systematized the land investing process, what then did you do from there?

Mark: So from there I really wanted a new challenge. And I had somebody call me up and say, "Hey, Mark, will you teach me what you do? And so, I said, "Well, I don't teach this." And he said, "Well, what if I pay you this amount?" I said, "Oh. Okay. Well, maybe I can teach it then." And I spoke to my wife about it. I said, "Honey, I'm gonna train somebody how to do what I do." And she said, "Well, that's dumb." She's like, "You're gonna create your own competition."

So I said, "Oh, yeah. You're right. That is dumb." Let's look at it from an investment banker's standpoint. How big is the market? And what we realized was, after doing a little bit of math, the market is massive and that you, me, millions of people could be in this niche. We're all gonna run out of money before we run out of deal flow because, if you go on HGTV or the DIY Network, it's all about flipping houses. Nobody even talks about land. So it's the most unsexy niche out there. So there's virtually no competition. And then, there's no big money in it, no hedge funds, no private equity groups.

And so, that's really why I started teaching people because – Frontier Properties is great, man. It really is gratifying for me, and it helps my family and my customers love it. But no one who ever bought a piece of land from me said, "Hey, Mark, you changed my life with this land purchase." But now that I'm teaching people how to create total freedom and real wealth via this land investing model so that they can quit their jobs, spend more time with their families, travel around the world, do whatever they wanna do, that's been the most gratifying thing I've ever done professionally.

And, really, I feel like I can die in peace because, every single month, somebody's emailing me or calling me and saying, "Mark, you're not gonna believe this, but I did this and now I can quit my job. And – or I can cut back on my job. Or my spouse was able to quit her job, and now we're spending so much more time with our family," with the ultimate goal being let's eliminate this big bucket of stress in our lives that we call money. And if we can eliminate that, then it's gonna free up oceans of energy to do what we really wanna do in life.

Matt: That's awesome. But why do you think that those big institutional investors are not coming into this space? For example, 10 years ago, when the real estate market crashed, we saw institutional

investors for the first time coming in and trying to buy up thousands of single-family homes and getting into these industries that they hadn't really been in before. If the returns are the way you're describing them, why are the institutions not getting into the land investing game and using the model that you're using and trying to do it at scale?

Mark: They might do it – let's say Ted Turner or Jeff Bezos, they might buy up productive farmland or timberland. That's an 8 percent bond. In my model, it's too much money, Matt. You couldn't deploy \$50 million overnight, or \$100 million. It's just too much money. So, for them, they need to deploy so much capital at scale that they need to do these bigger deals. They need to buy a tranch of \$500 homes to deploy that much capital. If they bought 500 land lots at an average price of \$10,000 each, that's not gonna move needle for them at all.

Matt: Right. That makes sense. Can you talk a little bit about the risks in land investing? What is the wrong way to try to invest in land and what do you do for mitigating those downside risks?

Mark: Well, the big risk is not knowing what you're doing and over paying. That's No. 1. The other big risk is screwing up your due diligence. If you buy in an area that's called a superfund site, that could bankrupt you. So this is why I avoid the East Coast. I won't buy land in, say, New Jersey, where – or Pennsylvania, where there could be a superfund site, an environment mess. So, really, screwing up due diligence, not going on, let's say, epa.gov and figuring that out.

But other than that, you really can't get knocked out of this game because we're not talking real money here. And what I have found is that there is a pig for every barn. I bought property that I personally would never want to own, but I'm not the market, Matt. And there are people out there that wanna be 20 miles from town, military, people that don't like people, preppers. So they really like that land. I personally wouldn't want it, but they do. And so, we're just providing a market for those people.

Matt: And can you talk a little bit now more about your coaching and mentoring business, and the way that that evolved, and the way that you built an information product and service business?

Mark: Yeah. So, when I first started, I just really didn't really think about information product business in sort of the traditional way where you build a funnel, and you create these emails. I really just started podcasting and talking about what I was doing and creating value that way. And that was really it. Or I would make these videos on YouTube. And people would just stumble upon me. And I would say, "Hey, look, here's the this course that walks you step by step through what I do, and you can start there if you're a do it yourself person. And a lot of people are like, "Well, this is a simple model. But like anything in life, it's not easy, so can you give me additional help?" And I said, "Sure, I'll help you."

And then, from there, my star students became coaches because they were so good at executing on my model that they could teach and help other people. So, again, I wanted to create an information business that provided freedom for me so I was it solo-economic dependency, which means, if I wasn't working I wasn't making any money. And from there, everything became evergreen. So, all the trainings became evergreen. The coaches would record their calls, and we'd make our coaching even better. And we could add more products, add more services, and step-by-step really solve every pain point in this business. And that's what we've done.

Matt: Now that you've been in the information product and service business for a while, and you've obviously studied a lot of other people that are in it, and you've built yours as effectively as you have, what are your sort of reflections or tips on what makes a great information product business? And for people that are looking to get into that space, what tips do you have for them?

Mark: I think the biggest aha moment for me was you can't give out enough information. And you need to have this abundance mentality that the more you give, the more you get. So give out your best information for free. Let people work on it. Let them decide for themselves, and they'll come back to you. And have faith in that. And so, I like this quote, "Be impatient with your actions, but be patient with your results." And once I started to let go of that, things really took off.

Matt: I like that. That's awesome. Well, let's definitely talk a little bit about the podcast. You mentioned that you started that as one of your mediums. And I obviously, as we mentioned at the beginning, was a guest on your show. You've been doing it now for many,

many years. So maybe just start off with talking about your podcast and what people can expect when they come and listen to your podcast, why you started the show, and what you're doing with it now. And then, I wanna go a little bit deeper into that. But then, tell people a little bit about your podcast show.

Mark: So, I have three podcasts. I have the *Land Geek Podcast*. I have *The Best Passive Income Stream Model Podcast*. And the current one is *The Art of Passive Income Podcast*. And all three have a different soft of bent to them. The *Land Geek Podcast* was all about land investing. And then, I thought, well, I'm kind of bored of just talking about land investing. I wanna talk to a guy like Matt Bowles. How do I do that? So then, I started the best passive income model podcast where I would just interview experts from all walks of life, walk them through my model, and ask them, "Do I have the best passive income model?"

And then from there, I thought, well, I've got this star student, Scott Todd. Wouldn't it be fun if him and I started talking about land investing and interviewing experts like you? And so, that's when we started *The Art of Passive Income Podcast*, which is a hybrid of both those podcasts. So, once a week, we interviewed an expert. And then, once a week we do a roundtable where myself and our coaches discuss a pain point in the land investing business and just mastermind it and discuss it.

Matt: I love that. That's awesome. So in your years of podcasting – and you obviously listen to a lot of other podcasts, and you've done a lot of different things with your podcast – can you talk about some of the lessons, reflections, and what for you really makes a great podcast? Again, sort of with podcasters or aspiring podcasters in mind, what tips do you have for really building a great and effective podcast?

Mark: I think the best podcasts get guests that are interesting and can provide value to the audience. But you, as a podcast host, need to provide that environment, if you will, of good questions. And I'm selfish about it, Matt. I'll ask questions that I wanna know. And I won't go through a formulaic way. It's more organic. As I'm listening to my guests, I'm getting more and more excited about what they're doing, which leads to more and more questions. So I actually just do a free flowing podcast, very similar to what you do, instead of just formulaic sort of – okay, what are your favorite

books? What do you do here? What do you do here? And it's the same questions to every – I'm not that interested in that. So I really wanna talk to people that I find interesting and ask them questions that I find interesting, and hopefully the audience will as well.

Matt: Right. And do you have any tips for building your podcast audience and expanding awareness of your show and really building a listenership?

Mark: I think it's consistency, honestly. It's a slow drip. You just have to keep showing up. And eventually it'll start building. There's so many ways now to repurpose content. You can use a Buffer or a HootSuite. You can take your podcast and you can transcribe it, make it a blog post. You can put it on the social media. But all those things, it's just a slow build, kinda like climbing a mountain. And then, all of a sudden you get up to the top of the mountain, and you've got that momentum, and everything just seems a little bit easier on the downside of it. And you just have built this platform. But it always takes longer than what you think it should.

Matt: So, you mentioned here some forms of content marketing that you've done, so the podcast being one of them, which is totally free for people to listen, and consume, and find you through that. You mentioned some YouTube Videos where you're putting out content and value and people are stumbling upon you and finding you that way. What other marketing tactics are you currently using today? Are you doing paid advertising? What platforms are you using for that? What types of marketing techniques are working well for you right now, today?

Mark: My favorite marketing technique is what I'm doing right now, which is talking on other people's podcasts as a guest because a paid ad I have no trust. I have no – nothing there. It's a really difficult way to start nurturing a lead. And you can do it, but it's very expensive and it's very time consuming.

But if I get on somebody's podcast like yours, I get instant credibility from the host. And then, I get to spend time with somebody who might be on a work commute. And they get to know me. They get to know my personality. If they like what they're listening to, they can consume a lot more content and really determine if I'm their guy or not, as opposed to a quick ad that's interrupting them in, say, a Facebook feed or a Google ad where

they – they're typing land investing, and they see that keyword. And I'm sort of competing. I don't wanna be – I wanna be that blue ocean. No one can out compete me on being me. So, where I can be me, I wanna show up and be me.

Matt: That's an awesome tip. All right. I wanna ask you about the book now. The title is *Dirt Rich: How One Ambitiously Lazy Geek Created Passive Income in Real Estate Without Renters, Renovations, and Rehabs*. That's an awesome title first of all.

Mark: Thank you.

Matt: Can you talk a little bit about the book and what people can expect from the book?

Mark: Yeah. I really enjoyed writing the book and telling my story, kind of being vulnerable about all the mistakes that I made, especially the ones where it was personal mistakes. Or I had Parkinson's Law of money, where the more money I made, the more money I spent in this kind of ego-driven thinking of, well, if I look wealthy, I'll feel wealthy. And, really, it didn't work. And it really hurt me. It hurt my family. It hurt my children.

So I talk about that, and then came to the conclusion about what really is important to me in life, and how the land investing business helps me really do the things in life that money can't buy, which is having time to develop my relationships, having time to workout, being fit, meditating, and of course having the time to move up Maslow's hierarchy of needs into self-actualization. What do I really want to do with my life? And without having that time, I won't be able to explore all those things for myself. And that's really what I kinda talk about. And then, I talk about, obviously, the business model and how to do it as well.

Matt: Can you go a little bit deeper on the part about making mistakes? And I'd love to ask you about your experience with the – what all business owners know as the entrepreneurial rollercoaster, which goes up, and it goes down. And so, I wanna ask you about that, either in terms of mistakes that you've made or in terms of challenges or set backs along your business journey, anything that you can share as an example and then how you overcame it, what you learned from it.

Mark: Yeah. I think the biggest mistake I made when I first started was just flipping for cash because I didn't know any better, instead of really thinking about passive income. So that was the first big mistake. I think the second big mistake was not surrounding myself with people smarter than me. And once I solved that issue by getting a smart mentor and smart mentors, and having them look at my business with fresh eyes, I was really able to get to the next level so much more quickly and not have to do everything trial and error that I was doing before. So I think those were the two biggest mistakes I really was making from the onset.

Matt: And when you experience business setbacks, or financial challenges, or other types of major life challenges that bring a lot of stress into your life, what types of techniques have you developed for stress management just personally? How do you handle really challenging situations when they befall you?

Mark: Well for years now, I've been a meditator. And I really love meditation in the sense that, every single moment, I have an opportunity to get out of my head and be in the present. And just remembering that and practicing that day in, day out, each moment, you realize that there are no problems. So I can prove it to you right now. What problem do you have at this moment? You don't have any problem at this moment. You and I are just having a conversation.

But if you start thinking about the past, or you start projecting into the future, none of those things are real. The only thing that's real is right now. And if we have a problem right now, we can solve it. Otherwise, we're always sort of stuck in our head, and that's what stress is. Stress is that feeling that you're here, but you wanna be there. And you can't be there because there isn't there. It's an illusion.

Matt: Right. Can you talk a little bit about your meditation practices and any other mindfulness practices that you do? And, also, do you have sort of morning routines? Do you have evening routines? I'm really curious about your day structure and how you integrate that into your life.

Mark: Yeah. So, every morning, I wake up, and the first thing I like to do is spend some time with my wife. And then, after that, I want to meditate for 20 minutes. I like the Headspace app. I like the

Waking Up app with Sam Harris. There's calm.com. It really doesn't matter which app you use. But to really practice day in and day out consistently – I do it everyday, seven days a week, for 20 minutes.

And then, I realize that meditation's the only thing I can do every minute of everyday. So, when I'm doing anything, I really wanna be fully in that moment and be aware of not being aware, which takes a lot of practice. It's very hard. For the longest time, I was just in a dream world lost in thought. And so, through practice, and practice, and practice, now I'm pretty good of just watching the thoughts, getting some space from them, watching the emotions, feeling the stress, embracing the stress, and just watching it like I would watch a football game or a basketball game and not be so involved in it. And then there's just sort of this calm about the day, which is hard to explain unless you're experiencing it.

Matt: Can you talk a little bit too about your fitness philosophies and how you integrate fitness into your life? I literally remember – we have to contextualize this for the audience. I think the last interview that I did with you on your podcast, you were literally walking on a treadmill desk as we did the interview, which was one of the most impressive things that I've ever seen. So I would love for you to just share some of your philosophy on fitness and how you integrate that into your life.

Mark: Sitting the new smoking. I still have the treadmill desk. I actually now have a Peloton, so I love the Peloton. I can do a really tough workout, 30 minutes or less, get a good sweat. So I really wanna workout 20 to 30 minutes a day, six days a week. So I use my TRX. I have that in my office. I have the Peloton. And I have the treadmill desk. And I just wanna sweat. I wanna work out really hard, really fast, and do that, and kind of just get it over with if you will. I don't wanna spend an hour and a half at a gym commuting and all that. That, for me, doesn't really work that well. I kinda wanna get going with my day.

But it is a habit that I won't feel my best – I won't be my best for the outside world if I haven't taken care of myself first. So I think of it like the airplane, when they say, "Hey, look, put on your oxygen mask first and then help the person next to you." So I put on my oxygen mask first by connecting with my loved ones, meditating, working out. And then, I can go out and be the best

version of myself the rest of the day.

Matt: That's awesome.

Mark: Or at least try. I don't always do it.

Matt: A number of the people that I've talked to lately about their sort of morning routines and mindfulness practices have started to mention to me that they have a gratitude practice that they do every single day. Have you done anything with regard to gratitude practices?

Mark: Oh, yeah. I've done journaling. I've done the Five-Minute Journal. But, for me, what I discovered was it was a hollow practice in the sense that I was just checking off the box. And I was thinking, okay, now it's time to do my gratitude practice. And I wasn't really going that deep with it. I'd start off very superficially. So, "I'm grateful for my family. I'm grateful for my family's health. I'm grateful for my health. I'm great" – the typical things. It wasn't until I really truly would be more mindful of every single moment of all the opportunities to be grateful. And now I don't need to write it down. I just need to feel it. So the more mindful I am of my day, the more grateful I feel.

So, just this morning, when I poured myself a glass of water, I was so grateful I didn't have to boil the water. It's amazing! I have fresh, clean water. That's incredible! When I do to my office, it's amazing, and I feel so grateful that I don't have to ever call HR to tell them I'm sick. I don't have to get in the car and fight traffic. So every little moment in my day is a gratitude practice. And so, it's a continual moment-to-moment feeling of gratitude.

Q Even before we started this conversation, I could not have been more excited to talk to a hero of mine. You're living the life that everyone wants to live, Matt. And I couldn't be more grateful that there's someone out there doing all this and inspiring all these people to live their best lives. It's a hard thing to do. And I'm grateful for all these things that go way, way beyond just that sort of superficial, okay, I gotta check off the box. Here are three things I'm grateful for today.

Matt: Right. That makes a lot of sense. And thank you for your kind words, brother. I feel the same about you. I was so excited to have

you on the podcast today because it's always a blast whenever you and I hang out. So definitely was a treat that I looked forward to all day.

Let me ask you this just in terms of your lifestyle design and the choices that you're making as you are automating your business, and having to work less in the business, and recapturing your time, how are you choosing to spend your time? How are you designing your lifestyle?

Mark: So I work three days a week. I work Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Tuesday is my podcast days. Wednesdays are my team meeting days. And Thursdays are when I talk to clients. And then, the rest of the time, I do what I call CEO type of work of thinking, learning, growing. Mondays and Fridays, I call my terminal days. So I pretend, well, if this is my last day on earth – because, look, I know it's morbid. I don't know when my last day's gonna be. Well, how would I wanna spend that day? And, ultimately, it's three simple things.

I wanna have coffee or breakfast with my wife. I wanna spend time with my kids. I wanna hangout with a buddy. I wanna read a good book. I wanna workout. I wanna meditate. And then, at the end of the day, I think to myself, well, if I died in my sleep today, was this a good day? And, well, hopefully for the most part it was.

And that idea that I have in the back of mind – I have a finite number of exchanges in my life. So every exchange I have, whether it's with my wife, or my kids, or my friends, or my colleagues, this podcast, I really want to be my best self and not let these little things or a little argument sort of derail that finite encounter because I only have so many of them. I might as well really make it as impactful and wonderful as I can.

Matt: For sure. That's awesome. All right. Mark, at this point. Are you ready for the lightening round?

Mark: Matt, I'm so ready. I can't even tell you. I'm jacked!

Matt: Let's do it.

Announcer: The lightening round.

- Matt: All right, my man. What is one book that has impacted you over the years that you would most recommend to people other than your own?
- Mark: I love *The ONE Thing* by Gary Keller. I love that book. I combine that with *The 12 Week Year* by I believe it's Brian Moran. I think those two books could be transformational.
- Matt: Awesome. What is one app or productivity tool other than your own that you are currently using that you would recommend to people?
- Mark: I love Airtable, and I love Smartsheet.
- Matt: Yeah, those are good ones. Awesome. If you could have dinner with one person that's currently living today who you've never met, could be a celebrity, author, public figure, entrepreneur, anybody that's currently alive today, and it was just you and that person for an extended one-on-one dinner, who would you pick and why?
- Mark: Naval Ravikant. He is the CEO of AngelList, and I just find that guy absolutely brilliant. I'd wanna talk to him about so many different things, from meditation, to philosophy, to business, artificial intelligence. He's just a brilliant guy. He's like Business Yoda.
- Matt: That's awesome. That's a good pick. All right. If you could go back in time and give one piece of advice to your 18-year-old self, what would you say to 18-year-old Mark?
- Mark: Start meditating. Learn to meditate. Learn to watch your thoughts.
- Matt: Awesome.
- Mark: Because, ultimately, it all starts there. Right? If your mind is clear and clean, you're not getting lost in those things, every exchange is better.
- Matt: I love it. All right. What is your No. 1, top favorite travel destination that you've ever been to in your life that you'd recommend people check out?
- Mark: My top travel destination, wow. That is a really tough question. I

lived in Australia for six months. I loved Sydney and going all the way up the coast to Cairns. I'd say Fraser Island was amazing. The Whitsunday Islands are amazing. I'd say you could have really incredible adventures in Australia.

Matt: Awesome. What is your No. 1 bucket list destination, somewhere that you've never been, that you would most love to go see?

Mark: Honestly, I want to talk to you about it. I don't think I know enough. You've seen so many things. I'm like, "Well, Honey, Matt said to go here." So, without talking to your first, I don't really know. I'd say that if you put a gun to my head and said, "Here, put this on your bucket list," I might say Japan. But, honestly, you've been there. And I might be – I don't know what I don't know. So I'd rather talk to someone like you who's been everywhere, to say, "Oh, yeah, Japan's great, but this should be a bucket list place to go because of A, B, C, and D.

Matt: Right. And as you know, my friend, I'm at your disposal, anytime, to chat about travel destinations. But Japan is a good one. I spent three months there last year. And it is really, really a very special and spectacular country with a lot of very different, and distinct, and interesting places within the country. So I think that's a really good pick. And the food is absolutely ridiculous. So –

Mark: Yeah. And I'm a huge foodie. I love food.

Matt: Yeah. If you do nothing but eat all day long, you'll have an amazing time. Awesome, man. Cool. Well, Mark, this has been absolutely amazing. It's been a super special episode man. I want you to let people know how they can find you, how they can get a hold of you, follow you, listen to the podcast, read the book, find you on social media. And then, I also want you to let people know if they are interested in learning more about land investing and your techniques in particular. What would be their first step? And how can they learn more?

Mark: So the best place to learn more is we have a \$97 course called the Passive Income Launch Kit. I'd love to offer that to your listeners for free if they just go to the thelandgeek.com/launchkit. And they can get that course for free. And that would really give them enough information to decide if they wanna go deeper into the model if it really resonates with them. And then, as far as learning

more, they can go to thelandgeek.com. And they can find the book on Amazon, and they can also find the book on my site at thelandgeek.com/dirtrich.

Matt: Awesome, man. And the podcast is available everywhere on iTunes, or Spotify, or wherever they go. And can you just say what the name of it is again?

Mark: *The Art of Passive Income Podcast*. Absolutely.

Matt: Cool. So they can just type that into iTunes or wherever and find that. But we are gonna link that up, as well as the book, as well as the link to the free course. And thank you, by the way, for offering that for free for the listeners. So, we're gonna put the direct links to all of that stuff that we just discussed in this episode in one place. You just go to the show notes at themaverickshow.com. Go to the Mark Podolsky episode, and you're gonna have all those links in one place. So, if you're driving your car, or working out, or things like that right now, you don't need to worry about writing it down. Just go to themaverickshow.com. It'll all be there in the show notes.

Mark, this was spectacular, my friend. I really appreciate you coming to the show, my man.

Mark: Matt, I am so appreciative for you, and all that you do, and all the value you give. Thank you so much. Thank you for being you. I'm so inspired by you. And I always kinda go back in the house and remind myself that comparison is the thief of happiness, so I never try to compare myself to you.

Matt: Well, you are an inspiration to me as well, my friend. You actually gave me some very, very helpful, early podcasting advice. You, of course, were podcasting years before I started. And I came to you. You were very generous and gracious in giving me tips on how to start my podcast and how to do it the right way from the beginning. Definitely, you are an entrepreneur that I have been very impressed with. I've been on your email list. And I've been following you very closely and your trajectory for many years. And so, you're someone that inspires me as well, my man. So I appreciate all that you do.

Mark: Thanks, buddy. I appreciate it.

Matt: All right, everybody. Goodnight.

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