

John Maddox

Announcer: Welcome to the Eventual Millionaire podcast – with your host, Jaime Tardy. Real talk and real advice from real millionaires, with a sharp focus on you – the Eventual Millionaire.

Jaime: Welcome to Eventual Millionaire. I'm Jaime Tardy and I am really excited to have my friend John Maddox on the show. He is CEO of Serious Startups, he's also a serial entrepreneur and has an awesome podcast called Let's Talk Serious Startups. We were chatting quite a few months ago about the cool stuff that he's been doing and I'm so excited to have him on the show today. Thanks so much for coming on.

John: Thanks so much for having me. I apologize for our last attempt at the interview – I'm a tech guy and I couldn't get my camera working so I apologize for that.

Jaime: I know how it us; don't feel bad at all. I apologize that it took eight months to reschedule you.

John: That's alright, we're all buys.

Jaime: Exactly. We're here now and that's all that matters. We were just chatting off-camera about some amazing stuff that you've been talking about but before we jump into that tell everybody what Serous Startups is so that they have an idea about what you do.

John: Serious Startups actually shifted model – like most startups you have a time where you pivot. It originally started off as a deal filtration process and I really wanted to leverage my experience from my previous company in the interactive development and marketing world to solve a problem I had seen with so many startups which was 'Hey, I have this fantastic idea. I can't raise investment capital to build the prototype until I have a prototype to convince the traditional investor that it's a great idea and they should give me money,' so we were the bridge. I joked that we were the Alexander the Great, solving the Gordian knot conundrum of raising seed stage capital for specific tech startups. If you needed to raise money you would hire people like us to build the thing out and I thought we could accelerate the entire process, fast forward it and then let's go for scale capital after idea validation and market viability has been proven and at the same time mitigate risk for everybody. We made a slight pivot earlier this year when we joined forces with another group with a very similar model and I actually shifted the Serious Startups brand and I acquired a startup-focused publication which we ran under Serious Startups and we've turned that into more of an educational platform for entrepreneurs. Our podcast is the Let's Talk Serious Startups: The Nuts and Bolts and I've been able to shift this whole model into like what you talk about with the people you interview all the time – 'Hey, guys, success doesn't just have to be a dream'. There are lots of great things that happen once you achieve success but there's also a heck of a lot of nuts and bolts that you have to account for beforehand. You're getting punched in the face a bunch and oftentimes people give up on entrepreneurship when they get hit that first or second time so a lot of what I've been doing is forming partnerships with different experts in different fields so instead of just being purely inspirational and esoteric all the time we talk about the real deal of what it takes to be successful and the crap that we've gone through but at the same time end with 'This is going to happen to you, just prepare for it but get up and go again because you can overcome these hard times.' That's what it's kind of shifted into and now we're expanding that whole model in several different arenas to try

to accelerate the success of startups. In my opinion, one of the biggest issues with startups I've worked with or am invested in have on a very regular basis, especially the ones where it's first time starting a business, is that they become so focused on the short term, like 'Oh man, I've got to account for all of this stuff,' and they forget to think about the big picture at the same time – marketing and gaining traction, their customer acquisition strategies and all of those kind of components are punted down with 'We'll deal with that later.' Guys, if you start a company, how you get customers from day one is kind of a big deal. I know that doesn't seem like rocket science but it fascinates me how many startups I've worked with just refuse to accept that reality. That's something I've really been trying to focus on. Let's really address this and not just tell everybody that it's going to be hunky dory and you're going to capture the unicorns and it will all be fantastic. This is the real deal.

Jaime: I think that's so important. I was chatting with a friend the other day, a super smart guy, and he was like 'I'm thinking about getting investors for this idea,' and I was like 'Awesome!' He gave us the whole outline – me and another guy that I've interviewed on the show, Billy Murphy – and we were like 'Do you have a marketing plan?' and he was like 'Well...' Before investing, you need to figure that out, because that's what investors are going to care about. They want their money back and they want to see exactly how they're going to get their money back. It's funny how a super smart guy was just like 'Well... but my numbers look really good!' They do, they look really good, but how do we get these numbers? That's really important.

John: I know exactly what you're talking about – it's really interesting to me how many startups come to pitch and one of the first questions is going to be 'What's your revenue model? How am I going to get my ROI?' If it's an angel, they want 5x, that's just the truth, and they're like 'We haven't really decided on the revenue model yet.' Okay...

Jaime: Let me put my money in a trashcan because I think that's a good idea too!

John: We were talking about this before we started, about the whole startup cult component, but there are startups in the valley and around the country that occasionally get big dog investment and they have no revenue model whatsoever, they've got some users and that's about it, but they're about one out of 100,000 ideas that are pitched that happen to fall into that category and very often they've already gained traction before they raised that money. To make a long story short, if you're going to pitch to somebody or try to raise that capital, baseline business logic like customer acquisition strategy, revenue model, potential profit margins, secondary revenue models – this is stage one, this is stage one, here's how we're going to sell it and here's our profit margins, we're going to have a loss later – whatever it might be, you still need to have stage two somewhat accounted for. Even if you don't have it completely detailed, at least have some sort of plan in there so that, from an investment standpoint, people are looking at you, saying 'Huh, I like this guy/girl, they actually thought more than one step ahead.' In business that is such a big deal. Do you have to be focused on the here and now? Absolutely. But if you're so consumed with it, when those unexpected punches to the face come, now you're completely toast and it's panic stations.

Jaime: It makes a huge difference. The people that really pay attention to this are like 'Yes, I got punched in the face. Where's the next one? I'm waiting for the next punch. I know there's going to be a next one. Please, sir, may I have another.'

John: Speaking about punches, I joke about this all of the time, but in my early days of entrepreneurship, and I still do this occasionally, when I'm going through a down period, I'm not feeling hyped up, something bad has happened, I have this whole ritual where I go on YouTube and Google the Rocky V end fight scene, where he's getting his butt kicked by Tommy Gunn and he gets knocked down and he's having the vision of all his previous fights and Mickey comes to him and he's like 'Get up, Rocky. I didn't hear no bell. Give him one more round!' And of course he gets up and he's like 'Hey, Tommy, I didn't hear no bell. One more round.' And of course he wins. I kid you not, I still do this. I'll watch that four or five times and be like 'Alright, I didn't hear no bell. Let's go again.'

Jaime: That is genius, because everybody has those moments. I was trying to explain to someone the other day that that's normal, even when your business is successful. There are just these moments.

John: You have employee issues, the random client that turns into a complete A-hole and you want to kill this person but you can't, there's a contract. That's just blunt reality. That's the point I try to make on the nuts and bolts of business – you get that fantastic employee who gets offered \$30,000 more than you're paying them and you don't have the money to pay them more. It's a major gamble – all of these things just happen every day in business and it's better for us to just accept that reality and look to the future and get up and keep going.

Jaime: That's amazing. I love that and now I want to do it too. I'm a huge UFC fan and when they look like they're going out the comeback just gets you so pumped up and ready to go and I've seen people do this over and over and over again in business, which is awesome. Getting punched in the face hurts but if you can turn around from that crap feeling and pull yourself up, that's a huge skill. Do you think a lot of entrepreneurs have that? Do the successful ones have that over others? What's the difference between the startup guys who don't know what they're doing versus the startup guys that do?

John: Yes, in the context of the serial entrepreneurs. I think once you've faced those down periods or you've failed – I've failed before – and you pick yourself up, you go through that week and a half of feeling awful about yourself, you're depression, then it's 'Alright, time to keep rocking.' If you've had success before and failed this time it's 'Well, okay, but I've done it before. I've been successful before. I can go and do this again.' So to answer your question in the context of a first time entrepreneur, maybe they had a really good job and it's 'Okay, so I'm making six figures and I may jump out of this,' you're stepping outside of your comfort zone and one of the things I tell to startups that I mentor, I say this on a regular basis, is that entrepreneurship is jumping off a cliff and you may or may not have a parachute but, at the end of the day, you have the power to manufacture your own parachute while you're falling so it's really on you to figure things out, be flexible and pivot and make the different types of moves that need to be made to become successful. However, we've been conditioned by society to think that it's so incredibly arduous to be able to make enough money to pay bills and to survive. It's not necessarily how successful you are – becoming a millionaire and all of those components – but if somebody else sees value proposition in you, do some basic math, how much does the company you work for charge people for the services that you offer? If they're charging for the services that you offer, which you do, you have a value proposition that you offer to the client, then do some basic math. So if you make \$50,000 a year, so about \$5,000 a month, and the business you work for charges \$20,000 a month for the services that you render, you only need to get one client to make up that difference and when you make that

mental paradigm shift it opens people's eyes to 'Oh my goodness, this isn't as hard as I thought it was.' You have to be smart about cash flow and all of those kind of components, of course you do, but the most important thing is to overcome those times that you fail or go down, especially for first time entrepreneurship. Having that mindset, creating that nugget in the back of your head of 'I do have value, I do bring something to the table,' and it's just a matter of being able to communicate the value proposition that you bring to the potential customers. I deal with them on a daily basis – that's what I do for a living – I deal with these people every day, I know how to talk to them. It's just a matter of making that mental shift. I went off on a tangent there, I hope I answered the question.

Jaime: No, that's awesome. When I quit my day job I was making six figures and I was like 'Well I can do that but I don't know if I can this,' and at the beginning I was like 'If I could only make \$3,000 a month part time, how awesome would that be?' I just did an interview for Fox in Vegas and they asked me a bunch of questions and I never in a million years, at my day job, would have thought that I now, seven years later, absolutely love what I do and make a heck of a lot more than I ever did in less hours – because I used to work 60-70 hours a week. How amazing is that? And yet nobody told me that I could do that. It took me a really, really long time. It took me interviewing millionaires, which was three or four years in, to really understand what the possibilities were. So why do you think people don't understand that?

John: There's a societal conditioning against the whole premise of entrepreneurship. It's talked about publicly as being cool but the real essence of it is not translated. It drives me bonkers when people are getting a degree in entrepreneurship at a traditional college. What the hell is this? You're not in the real world! I'm not saying you can't learn good things about business but the true aspects of running a company you don't realize until you're in the real world. I may sound arrogant to some people but that's just true in my opinion. What really sparked this thought that I'm on now is that last year I did some mentoring and advising. Did I tell you what happened to me two years ago?

Jaime: You told me but you need to tell everybody else.

John: Well the short version is that, 20 months ago, I found out on a Wednesday that I was having a massive brain hemorrhage. A day and a half later I had emergency brain surgery that saved my life. People with hemorrhages the size of mine have a 98% fatality rate. The majority of the hemorrhage was where verbal communication happens in your brain and somehow I still manage to run my mouth way too fast and go off on tangents. To make a very long story short, while I was in recovery from that I had gone from running 1,000 miles per hour every day, running a multimillion dollar company, to being under orders from doctors to not run too fast for the next three months or I might die. So I'm sitting on my porch, twiddling my thumbs, watching cars go by, bored senseless, so I called my neurosurgeon and said 'Hey, Arthur, am I allowed to run my mouth as long as I don't run too fast?' and he was like 'Yeah, sure,' so I posted online and said if you have a tech idea, if you're a business owner looking for advice on XYZ, I'm literally sitting around with nothing to do – call me. What really surprised the heck out of me is that in two months I talked with 167 people from around the planet.

Jaime: What? That's insane!

John: A significant proportion of those people were college kids or young professionals and a trend that I noticed was while, from the outside, it's theoretically cool to be entrepreneurial, what these

kids were dealing with was that, although a lot of them had really good ideas and they were intelligent, good people with good understanding, they were being ostracized by their family and their friends, being told they're so out there, this will never work, you need to get a day job, so ultimately our society has conditioned people that entrepreneurship shouldn't happen until you're older, until you've had experience, until you've done all of these things. I think a lot of your listeners are probably dealing with what I'm about to say – 'I've got a wife, husband, kids, the mortgage, car payments, my kid's about to go off to college,' and you fast forward to your mid-30s, early-40s and yes, you have all of this experience, but you also have all of these responsibilities and it makes making that entrepreneurial leap that much more difficult. So I go back to the younger generation – people in their early 20s, or their 20s in general and, from a traditional investment standpoint, we're told to take bigger risks in our younger years, investing in the stock market and whatnot, because, guess what? If it goes down, you've got more time to make it up. Well it's the same thing with entrepreneurship – take that leap when you're young, get out there, take the punches to the face, you have more energy, less to lose, and so forth, and if you fail, guess what? You can always go back to find a job. The value proposition that you bring, in my opinion as an employer, from those who have at least tried, that's a lot of value proposition to me as an entrepreneur myself. At least you had the stones to go out and try this. I've hired people that didn't have the same qualifications as others but I could see that they had the mental mindset of being innovative, forward thinking, aggressive and all of the components that go into success in business and I wanted to have them be a part of what we were doing.

Jaime: When we talk about this it just brings me back to when I quit when I was 24 – I had a \$250,000 mortgage, I'd been married for three years and I was trying to get pregnant with my first son and I was \$75,000. That was dumb – no offence to myself but that is not the way. I had spent my 20s trying to get material items so that I was like my parents – I had a house and two cars and I thought I was successful. Miserable but successful.

John: The whole 'like your parents' thing I also see as a huge problem in our society. We become so obsessed with materialistic things but at the same time the number one cause of divorce in the United States is money. 'I want to be like my parents' – you know what? Your parents spent 20-30 years getting to this point, why in the hell are you trying to recreate the same lifestyle in two or three years and then wondering why your life goes kablooy when you can't pay the bills and the only phone calls you get are collection agencies trying to come after you?

Jaime: That was me. I was 19 when I bought my first house.

John: We've been conditioned by society to do that, though.

Jaime: Yeah, because if you're living in a basement that's kind of crappy and you're working on a startup people are like 'He doesn't have a job. Look, he's barely making it,' and that's not good, but if we have the house and the car and everything else it looks like we're amazing and wonderful but, like you said, it makes it so difficult to make that transition. I agree with you 1,000%. What should somebody do right now? Because a lot of the listeners have this stuff so what do you suggest they do? We were just talking about how, yes, we can make a lot more money than you think, which is great, but there's definitely a ramp-up time to making the money that you want, so where do we have that transition point? What advice can you give on that?

John: A lot of people think that you have to just go one way or the other. I have to quit my job and go and do this or vice versa. If you have a good job, here's some rocket science – save a little bit of money, get two or three months of your baseline expenses covered while you're putting together all of the business logic and the business plans and all of those components. As a random aside on business plans, do not get overly obsessed with the business plan, especially if you're going after investment capital – all of the investors that I know and have conversations with, every single one of this is like 'I'm so sick and tired of these 15 page business plans. I only read the first page,' and those kinds of things.

Jaime: I love that you said 15 pages because, back in the day, they used to be 100 pages and now you're annoyed with 15 pages.

John: It's a case of instant gratification on both sides of the equation. I think the most encouraging thing I can say is to prepare yourself mentally for the arduous undertaking in which you're about to engage – take the time and it through. Secondly, stop being obsessed with not tilling anybody your idea. That drives me insane. People come to talk to me about their concept and say 'Hey, John, what do you think about this idea? Do you think you and the people you associate with would be interested in investing and help us take it to the next level?', 'What, you're not planning on seeing anybody else?', 'No, I'm afraid somebody might steal my idea.' Okay, let's get real here – the vast majority of people, who might think your idea is awesome, they're also in the same position as you, to not be able to go and make it magically appear, so why are you worried about them stealing it when they have the same barriers to entry that you do? At the same time, when you share your idea, you have no idea who you might run into that could become a great business partner or ambassador for you. They may be somebody or they may know somebody who would go 'My goodness, that solves a massive problem for me. I will invest in that,' and they can take it to the next level, or 'I know so-and-so who you need talk to about this concept. He/she was just saying to me the other day, 'I wish there was a way to solve X.' Those are the kind of things that I think are very, very important to do in the early stages. Get out there, spread the word and one of the key parts, outside of the stuff that I was talking about, is that you will be amazed at the fantastic additions to your idea that can come to you for free. There's an article that I read the other day about a guy who has a startup out in San Francisco – he drives for Lyft and he talks about his idea all the time and he gets valuable information for free.

Jaime: And he drives for Lyft so he's getting paid while he's doing that!

John: He's getting paid for market research instead of paying for it.

Jaime: It's funny because whenever I'm hanging out with a Lyft driver I end up telling them what I do and they write down my website and stuff. I am collecting new listeners as I use Lyft wherever I go. There's something I want to ask you about specifically – it seems like you're the type of guy who really pays attention to trends in the market, where things are going and technology and all of that fun stuff, so I want to have you help us predict some of the trends coming up that seem to be really exciting so far.

John: Well the thing that has me the most engaged at the moment is the world of crowdfunding, not just the traditional rewards-based funding but, assuming the SEC ever gets off their butt and actually engages the Title III portion of the jobs act, then equity crowdfunding will be open to all the normal

human beings and not just accredited investors and if that happens I think there's a massive opportunity for companies to grow and become successful. The only real barrier to that, that I see, is with the rapid growth of crowdfunding the number of campaigns is getting greater and greater and it's becoming cluttered and noisy so having the appropriate methods to touch base with the target demographic is going to be extraordinarily important but I don't see it going anywhere any time soon. I have this conversation, an argument to be honest, with investors on different sides of the argument. Some of them are crowdfunding for the worst ideas of all time and others are saying 'Maybe I need to start paying attention to this because they're becoming successful and I'm having to come in at the later points which means I don't get as much equity on the front end.' I'm having a lot of conversations with different folks on this and there's a growing trend, still in the early stages, but a growing trend towards wanting to combine idea validation and crowdfunding with traditional investment, with traditional business development resources and let's accelerate the growth of these companies. In the tech space, as an example, the average tech platform has an 18 lifecycle before it's antiquated now. That's miniscule, right? So why are we sitting here wasting 9-12 months just to raise the capital and then another 12 months to build the stupid platform before we even have one client when it's going to be antiquated before we launch? That's awesome! So I'm hoping that the status quo will shift towards acceptance, like 'Hey, Joe Schmo actually has some brain power and can recognize if something is a good idea,' or they see the value proposition and go 'I would buy that, I'll back it.' That's the trend that I see.

Jaime: So then the question is how do you stand out? because even in the podcasting world, and you have a podcast, it's getting more and more saturated, so crowdfunding is too – what are some tips on getting people to stand out from the crowd? Crowdfunding platforms are littered with unfunded things that might have been really great ideas but who knows.

John: What we're talking about now is one of the reasons I'm encouraging guys richer than me to hop on board with this logic – if you invest \$10-20,000 in promotion of a crowdfunding campaign, it's very reasonable that, with the validation of you on board, you're going to get the PR, the doors will magically open if Rich Guy XYZ is associated with this startup that's going to do a crowdfunding campaign. But, secondly, the vast majority of crowdfunding campaigns, the whole reason they're doing crowdfunding is because they don't have any damn money so the entire premise of running a marketing campaign to promote the crowdfunding platform is very, very minimal and then you wonder how the hell does Spike Lee raise \$12 million or Veronica Mars get all this money? Guess what – they spent money to make money and that's a baseline business premise – you have to spend money to make money, that's just a hardcore reality. So, to answer the question, I think the way to really stand out, and this circles back around to the idea that you're saving that money before you take that giant leap – so if you're going to go the crowdfunding model, save up \$4-5,000. One of the things I'm getting ready to test out pretty soon is sponsored podcasts – it's a particular niche of who your customer base is and, to this day, I've never heard of anybody doing that.

Jaime: I've actually been getting approached a lot more than I ever have been before from small companies going 'Hey, you have an audience. This makes a lot of sense now,' where nobody before really got that.

John: Right. Accept the new realities of potential customer engagement and influence and all of those things. Spend the time to reach out to people with influence. It's amazing what could happen

if you get one personal with great personal brand credibility to endorse your business. Magically, the phone rings! With search engine optimization and all of those things being so ridiculously arduous these days, social is the future and we're either going to accept or reject it. Content marketing is extraordinarily vital, especially in the startup space. Perception is reality – if you come out looking awesome with great content, the vast majority of people have never heard of you before anyway so there is no brand credibility, you have 3.7 seconds to establish it, so they land on your site and go 'This looks awesome. These people must be legit. This company must be legit,' and they're almost ready to do business, it's just a minor little hook to close the deal, so take your time, build your branding, build a great website, do great content marketing, take a little time to build a little special influence, connect with influencers and speak to people on a human to human level. That's one of the things that drives me absolutely insane – when folks come to you from purely a sales pitch perspective instead of just 'Hey, I know you're a fellow human being – here's what I'm thinking. What do you think? Do you see the value proposition in this? What are you up to these days?' Just create that rapport as quickly as possible and you'll be amazed at how great things will turn out for you very, very quickly if you just open your mind and become more flexible and more adventurous.

Jaime: Those relationships matter so much. Can you give us a step by step on that? And can we dive into it a little bit and talk about some tactics or some tools that you can use as you're going through? Because I love trying to be in the top percent for branding but some people are like 'Well how do I do that and what do I do? When I do social what do I actually do for that? Because there are 1,000 tactics out there and I don't know which ones to pick.'

John: I'll give you a quick example – a couple of weeks ago I was a speaker at the LinkedIn conference, the third one they held here in Nashville, and I talked about leveraging LinkedIn as a way to create human connections. This applies to social media at large but I put it in the context of LinkedIn for the conference. We've become so obsessed, as a society, with technology, like 'I'm going to send out X number of Tweets per day, seven of them are going to be links and four are going to be retweets and I need to tweet between 4-7pm on this day,' you know what I'm talking about.

Jaime: I do.

John: But are you thinking about the person you're trying to reach or are you just doing things to check a checkbox? Obviously LinkedIn is fantastic for B2B specifically but also creating connections with who knows how many people. One of the things I love the most about LinkedIn is being able to publish. It used to be limited to only a few key influencers but now they've opened it up to the masses.

Jaime: Did they?

John: Oh yeah.

Jaime: Somebody invited me a long time ago and I was like 'Oh yeah, I should do that,' and I never did. I was elite before and now I'm just a normal person. Tell me more about that, though, because I didn't know what the value was back then. I was like 'Yeah, that's great, I should do that too,' but it was on the bottom of my list and I didn't have a chance to do it so can you tell me about that?

John: Absolutely. So now you have the opportunity to get picked up by categories on Pulse, that they've acquired, but different groups, for example, small businesses and entrepreneurship I think has almost 6 million people following that channel so if you happen to get featured in that channel, at the low end you're going to get 5-600 people read it. Some people get a million people reading their articles, some get 15,000, some get 2,000, it varies dramatically. I read an article about dealing with ego and why I love/hate being a consultant sometimes and they happened to get featured in management consultant category on Pulse which only has 72,000 people that follow it and it got read 5,000 times in three days and that was with only 72,000 following that category. The interesting thing to me about the value proposition of writing articles and publishing on Pulse brings to the table is that you never know what kind of exposure you might get but if you just share your knowledge you have an opportunity to set yourself up as a thought leader which, while in the short term it may be difficult to establish a monetary value on thought leadership, if, over time, you're able to pull it off, then the doors that will open will be interesting. For example, a couple of month's ago, I had a very wealthy man call me out of nowhere. He was like 'Hey, John, what's going on, man? It's Carl.' Anyway, we were talking and it turns out he was one of the original partners of this very large company and he has this new thing he's working on now and he said 'I've been following your articles on LinkedIn for the last three months. I feel like I know you and I want to talk to you about potentially being part of this venture, bringing you on as a consultant as the minimum but maybe a few equity points, etc.' Really? I had no idea who he was, it came just from running articles on LinkedIn.

Jaime: That's amazing, the people that you're touching. I've had millionaires call me out of the blue and I'm like 'I don't know who you are but I should have you on the show!' Who has that opportunity? We would never in a million years have the opportunity for someone to find you like that, super easily, who already know, like and trust you before they even get you on the phone. It's insane.

John: What I really like about it is that, of course, LinkedIn is connected to all the other social media platforms. Let's get real, everyone wants to raise their Klout score, and it's a good way to do it and I've had articles I've written picked up by other publications all over the world. Not a ton of them, just a few, but you never know what might be interesting to folks and, of course, the thing about leveraging that potential power is that if there's something that you do there's a very strong probability that there's other people that do the same thing so even if there's only a few of you you're probably all dealing with the same crap on an ongoing basis so if you're able to get into that whole thought leadership component and talk about your experiences and how you dealt with them and 'What do you guys think?' and all those kind of angles you'd be amazed at the response and feedback you get from folks – 'I dealt with the exact same thing!' – and when you go through those times where you think 'Am I alone? Am I doing this right?' you might have 50 people write comments, saying 'I went through that exact same thing over and over and over again,' so your confidence can be rebuilt, you can find somebody to connect with on that human to human level and ask their advice or they can connect you to somebody. That happens to me on a regular basis – 'Hey, John, you need to talk to so-and-so.' It's in the tech space, generally. 'I know this guy, so-and-so, he has this idea, he doesn't know anything, you need to call him.' Okay, so we have a phone conversation, it's fun.

Jaime: The more connections we have the more opportunities we have too, and I didn't even make that connection with LinkedIn. I wrote for Daily Worth, which is an awesome blog, and that got picked up and put on Yahoo!'s homepage and then it got picked up on Business Insiders homepage and that was amazing so now I do that again but I didn't realize the power of LinkedIn and being able to do that same sort of syndication thing there. This is mostly selfish for me but can you give me a step by step so that I can start doing some of the LinkedIn stuff? I know you're not the LinkedIn guy but if you can give us an outline of what we need to do that would be awesome.

John: I'm pretty sure that there is an algorithm component that determines which article gets featured and then the final decisions are made by humans. I know that having more imagery in your post increases the readership, oftentimes. Don't keyword stuff but have a few – so let's say your target is entrepreneurship, then it makes logical sense to drop 'entrepreneurship' in there once in a while, something of that nature. Simultaneously, from a title standpoint, this is where I'm pretty sure the whole human side comes in, there are things that I've titled with completely random stuff that have gotten picked up and then other stuff that's been completely in line with the particular category I was going after that has been completely ignored and I've been like 'Holy crap, this is one of the best things I've written recently and people have completely ignored it!' Ask for people's comments and engagement. You and I both know that's very common blog and article writing strategy but do it. you have a content components built in right there – people will share it with their groups and those kinds of things can be very advantageous – but also, the most important thing is to be a human being, there's a lot of stuff out there that has great value and great information but it's boring as hell to read. Lists are great but they're even better when they're put in the context of a human experience, like 'Hey, I dealt with X, Y and Z. Here's what I learned from it,' and now you've got a list, versus 'here are the things you need to know about blah, blah, blah,' and people are turned off and falling asleep before they even get that far into it. Tuesday and Thursday mornings are the best times to publish.

Jaime: Really? Okay, you've given us one of those tricks, I appreciate it.

John: Yeah, those are the best times to publish. There has also been some research into late afternoon too. LinkedIn users are starting to shift to lunch time and after work – there's a spike in checking things out outside of normal working hours so if you publish something right at the end of the day you can get that acceleration. Another thing, which is a theory on my part, but I think that the quicker you get a few likes of your post, the higher the probability is that you will have the human component featuring your article. Hopefully no one from LinkedIn will hear this but I've tested this a couple of times and told folks 'I'm going to publish this article – go and like it!' Sometimes it's worked, sometimes it hasn't, so who knows at this point. The human component still comes into play but I think that might accelerate you.

Jaime: Better odds – that's what we care about, increasing the odds as much as we can.

John: Yes, everything in business is educated gambling at the end of the day. I joke that business is like poker – you're playing both the odds and your opponents. Opponent is not really a good word for your customers and employees who are not but in human psychology 'opponent' is very important in business – at the end of the day I'm going to pay you \$50,000 on the odds that you're going to make me \$100,000. It's the same as putting your money in the pot – what are the odds?

What's the value proposition that the person brings? All of those angles come together at the end of the day.

Jaime: Cross your fingers that you have better odds than Vegas, right?

John: You have better odds at poker than you do at the rest of the games in Vegas, though.

Jaime: Very valid point but let's hope that business is a little bit better – I know professional poker players and they do very well so I think getting good at what you do is what matters, and you're trying to help people make the learning curve a lot shorter so that they don't have to go through as many punches in the face as they would have to otherwise.

John: One of my favorite quotes of all time is the Isaac Newton quote – 'If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.' That, in my opinion, is one of the most profound statements in life in general but also in business. If you're so closed minded to not at least have an open mind to those who came before – I don't always agree with them, there are maybe better ways of doing it, and as we talked about before, I had that argument recently and we went our separate ways but that open mindedness is dramatically important, in my opinion.

Jaime: I adore that quote. I don't know if I have ever heard it, to tell you the truth, which is kind of crazy. I'll have to Facebook the heck out of that, or maybe put it in my new LinkedIn article. We have to start wrapping up soon so my last question is what's one action listeners can take this week to help move them forward towards their goal of \$1 million?

John: You told me this beforehand and I've had time to think about it but I'm still going to have the deer-in-headlights look.

Jaime: We like that, though. You were talking about the human component and stuff like that – how amazing it is to see people mess up or lose their words. No offence to whoever my guest is but I get really excited if they mess up because then I'm like 'look! They're regular people, they mess up all the time and they're fine and it's not a big deal.' We should screenshot your deer-in-headlights moment and post it on Facebook.

John: Hashtag – #johnmaddoxheadlights! The most important thing you can do? To be honest, this isn't going to be much of an action point, it's more psychological.

Jaime: I like it.

John: I think the most important thing you can do is accept that you can make things happen and appreciate what you have the capability to do. In order to achieve that, take the time to really think through what you're good at – not just from a pure skillset standpoint, because in my opinion one of the single most important factors in entrepreneurship is the ability to connect at the human level. Throughout our interview I've talked about that multiple times and I think that that's extraordinarily important. Let's say you have a great idea and you go and get a customer – cool, but what happens next? You get another one, right? Then, at some point, you're going to have to hire another employee, and those things continue on. Simultaneously, if you have any kind of family life, you have to deal with the arduous stresses and all of the time restraints that come from being entrepreneurial and if you don't have the ability to connect, see other people's point of view and really engage with

them and try to understand them on a human, I think that's one of the greatest reasons why people fail. From a pure business standpoint you've got market strategy and customer acquisition and if you're only coming from your point of view you're dead in the water because you don't know what the hell your customer wants. That's a baseline example. So anyway, in the context of what you should do this week – figure out the best way to communicate what your greatest strengths are and then an action point for your business idea is I would say figure out a way to pitch your concept in a minute or less.

Jaime: That's hard!

John: It's the traditional elevator pitch. The reason I suggest that is because the first hundred times you do it, you're going to suck, and it's going to turn into a 5-10 minute diatribe and you don't have that opportunity to hook people but, as things are going along, you're getting feedback from folks that can really prepare you for those moments where you stand before that first potential client. Now you know you're ready to rock and get them, or you're going for an investment group and you've already thought through those objections. That's what I want you to do.

Jaime: And you have the confidence because you've done it so many times before. I see that all the time, where if you don't believe in someone's confidence you definitely don't believe in their business idea.

John: At the end of the day, people do business with those that they trust and those that they have confidence in. This applies in general but specifically in B2B at the end of the day you're doing business with a person – they may represent a business but you're still doing business with a person and I think the sooner you recognize that and accept that reality it will dramatically increase your chances of connection and that rapport that gets the customer or the investor trusting you – 'Oh cool, this guy or girl gets it, that means they should be able to communicate the same logic to the potential customer. Cool, I'll invest in them.'

Jaime: I love that. Thank you so much. That's something that's so unique and interesting but a thousand times true in general and in business. I really appreciate that. So thank you for looking like a deer in headlights, I appreciate it. So we do have to wrap up – where can we find out more about you online? I know you have a podcast, tell us where everything is so that we can connect with you.

John: You can go to SeriousStartups.com. Follow us on Twitter @SeriousStartups. You can find me on LinkedIn or Twitter – on Twitter I'm @JohnHMaddox. Those are the best places to find us. We had the podcast on a different domain but that's been moved over to SeriousStartups.com as well so you can go there for all the good stuff. I don't know when this will air but I'm going to start doing 30 minutes of free consulting to startups for five people each week. I haven't decided which day, it's probably going to be Thursday, but my plan is that each week I'm going to give away 30 minutes to five people that get in touch and we'll talk about your ideas and business logic and just run through it and I'll help you get some idea and validation. All of the stuff we've been talking about today in this interview is what I want to give back to those ready to make that entrepreneurial leap.

Jaime: Okay, so how do they do that? Because now they're going to be like 'Okay, I want to sign up!' Do they e-mail you, do they send you a message on Twitter? How do they sign up?

John: There will be an entire section on SeriousStartups.com where they can go. One of the startups that I'm involved in is built on a really awesome consulting platform, a video conferencing that doesn't require plugins, you just push a button and we can connect in real time, so I'm going to leverage that on SeriousStartups.com and they can just click it and we'll sit there and chit chat for 30 minutes and then move on to the next one.

Jaime: That's killer. That's a lot of time, too, but it sounds like you really appreciate the fact that you can do that because you have a brain and it works really well so give it to the people.

John: I'm not going to lie, it's a means to an end for me and the folks that I'm associated with. It's a cool idea so it's almost a deal flow – I can coupon it too, 'Hey, I liked you, we talked, you seem like an interesting person. I'm not acutely going to invest in you but there might be somebody I know that this would be a great fit for.' Those kind of things are, in my opinion, the smartest way of doing it. I was having a diatribe the other day with the CEO of an angel network that I'm friends with and I was like 'Hey, so you know one of the biggest things that kills time is trying to set the time to sit down face to face with a startup? Have you ever considered doing video conferencing to accelerate the whole process?' and he was like 'No, we've never even thought about that.' So all of these phone calls, driving to different cities and all of that stuff – 'You know there's this great thing called video conferencing that might solve this entire problem.' It was one of those eureka moments so I'm intrigued to see where that goes.

Jaime: I love that. I think it's amazing that it's a win-win for everyone. The people calling you are exciting because they're getting advice and idea validation and an opportunity to be connected with someone else you know and you've got a win-win on your side too. We're so lucky we live in the world we do now where we can have win-wins on either side of the fence. Thank you so much, John.

John: Thank you so much for having me. I really appreciate it.

Jaime: I'm so glad that we made this happen – even after a long period of time you still remembered who I was. I appreciate it.

John: Absolutely.

Jaime: Everyone listening right now – make sure to check out his podcast too. If you like mine, you'll probably like his too, so check that out at SeriousStartups.com. Thanks, John, I hope you have an awesome day.

John: Thanks, you too.

Announcer: Thanks for listening. You can find out more great information like this on EventualMillionaire.com.