



## TEL EPISODE #025:

### *The Entrepreneur Mind* with Kevin D. Johnson

Show Notes: <http://www.theelpodcast.com/tel-025-the-entrepreneur-mind-kevin-d-johnson/>

*Welcome to The Entrepreneurs Library, the only book-centric podcast that reviews all the top-selling business books and shares author's perspective, firsthand. This is your resource to finding the next great book that will enable you to grow personally and professionally. Welcome your host, Wade Danielson.*

**WADE:** Thank you so much for joining us today on The Entrepreneurs Library. Today we have Kevin D. Johnson, author of *The Entrepreneur Mind*. Welcome, Kevin, and thank you for joining us on The Entrepreneurs Library.

**KEVIN:** Thanks for having me. I'm appreciative of the opportunity.

**WADE:** Absolutely. Will you take just a moment to introduce yourself and tell us just a little bit about you personally?

**KEVIN:** I'm Kevin Johnson, CEO of Johnson Media, Inc. We are a marketing and communications firm that's been around for about 14 years now, and we serve primarily organizations and Fortune 500 companies in the financial services space. We are based in Atlanta. We're a rather small team with big clients, so we like to operate in that space, and we've done well over the years.

**WADE:** Perfect, thank you for sharing that. Now let's jump right into your book, *The Entrepreneur Mind*, which was made available for purchase back in March of 2013. Kevin, we're going to move pretty quickly through these different questions, but these are really the main questions that our audience, which is made up of listeners and readers, these are the questions that they want to get answered.

The first one is, what was the inspiration behind writing *The Entrepreneur Mind*?

**KEVIN:** In March of 2012 – it seems so long ago – I started a business blog that discussed various ways that successful entrepreneurs think, and the blog became

pretty popular with readers all around the world and received tens of thousands of page views within weeks. Before long, I was really encouraged by some of my readers to write this book, which quickly, because of the response before, became a bestseller.

I really wanted to provide a comprehensive body of work and advice for the many people that I mentor, and ultimately publishing the book and extending The Entrepreneur Mind brand in other areas seemed like a great way to teach entrepreneurial concepts.

**WADE:** Excellent. What would you say makes your book different from others regarding the same topic?

**KEVIN:** I struggled initially with this, but the readers eventually told me what they liked about the book and what set it apart. Eventually I learned that it was my writing style. My writing style for business books has two major goals: to be very accessible and appealing to even the reader who may not be interested at all in business, or even in entrepreneurship.

And then the second is to not be so technical so as to turn off the reader. I do this by using creative stories that entertain and teach at the same time. For example, my aunt said “I love the book; I could follow it. I don’t want to be an entrepreneur, but it was exciting and I couldn’t put it down.” So my accessible style is one of the main reasons so many schools, including Harvard, Columbia, a lot of the Ivys, smaller technical schools, use my book. Because I think it really is a good read at the end of the day, but you learn a lot and you can apply a lot of the principles in the book immediately.

**WADE:** Excellent. This next question I added in here recently. I believe it was David Allen who recommended it. But it’s basically how do you suggest your audience or your reader engage with your book? Is this a book where they can cherry-pick and use as a resource and go around? Or is it definitely a read from the beginning and straight through?

**KEVIN:** It really depends on how busy you are. I always encourage people to of course look at the book to see what's most valuable if you're really, really busy. The book is written in a format that allows you to jump in and jump out and not have to invest so much time to really get to the basic understanding of that segment.

The segments are anywhere between 500 words and 700 words, intentionally so, so that you can read very quickly something that piques your interest. And maybe even discard or skip over the elements that you feel you have a good hold on or that you understand or that may not be as valuable to you.

And then if you've got some time, you could certainly read the book straight through. A lot of people have done that and found that really valuable. You could probably do that in about 8 or 9 hours – and if you get the audio version, it'll be exactly that, about 8 hours.

**WADE:** 500 to 700, was that done by design to read more of – almost like a blog post, I guess, on each specific section or idea of the book?

**KEVIN:** Yeah. There was a strategy in putting all this together. Knowing that entrepreneurs are very busy people, I wanted to make sure that the segments were short and sweet, and then from a marketing perspective, as a self-published book, I can use that content in various different ways to help promote the book. So yes, it was a very intentional project strategy to put together the book like that.

**WADE:** Okay, excellent. Kevin, this next one is really my favorite part of the entire interview, and that's where we just basically hand the mic off to you and let you give us a deep dive of your creation. Will you do just that? Will you take us through and give us a great idea of what your book is all about?

**KEVIN:** Sure, I'll definitely do that. The book is divided into seven different sections, the first being Strategy; the second being Education; the third being People; the fourth being Finance; the fifth being Marketing and Sales; the sixth, Leadership; and finally, the seventh, Motivation.

I divided the book into those seven sections to make it a little bit easier to follow along. As I mentioned earlier, a lot of the content originally was in the format of a blog. The book needed a little bit more structure, and so the posts coincidentally fit nicely into these seven different divisions.

Strategy by far is the largest and the most important chapter of the book, and it starts off with motivation to think big. That's one of the most popular parts of the book. I think thinking big is so important; if you're going to be an entrepreneur, you might as well go after the big ideas, because you're going to be doing a lot of work and spending a lot of time and investing a lot of resources into your company and into your idea. So I encourage people to start off by thinking big and going after that big idea.

Another popular section in the Strategy chapter is to create new markets. I talk about that often, because those entrepreneurs that are able to identify new markets are ultimately the most profitable and most successful. Imagine if you were the one to create the iPhone 10 years ago, or even 20 years ago. That's a market in many ways that didn't exist, and that as the creator, you can definitely benefit from. So yes, creating new markets is a really important part of that chapter.

One other I'll mention for you, "The Business Plan Is Overrated." A lot of people really appreciate my perspective on that in telling entrepreneurs that you've got to get out there and test the market and make sure that the idea, the product or the service that you want to sell, actually will sell before you even step foot into your office or put pen to paper or start typing up that business plan. Too often, people go directly to the business plan and don't even know if what they're selling will actually be successful – or at least have a hint as to whether to not it will be successful.

Chapter 2 gets a lot of feedback. Chapter 2 is about Education, and I talk about how school is not necessarily education. Nowadays, it's very important that you get all of the value that comes from, for example, being in the microcosm that is a

college campus. So it's not necessarily what you learn in class, but the opportunities that you take advantage while you're there on a college campus.

One of the great examples is that of Mark Zuckerberg. I think without that microcosm of Harvard, he wouldn't have had a really great opportunity to test his ideas and to see if it works in a very concentrated area of students that were online and really engaged.

I talk a little bit more about education in terms of not rushing to get an MBA. So often I think a lot of entrepreneurs think that getting an MBA will really help them. Of course it helps, but I think what really helps a true entrepreneur is actually getting out there and trying to make a business work. There's no better experience than starting your own business and getting out there and doing it.

Chapter 3 is People. You're going to need very supportive and helpful people to make your business successful. There are very few solo entrepreneurs that reach the heights of those that have a strong team around them, and that strong team carries the business to major levels or high levels of success and profitability. So it's very important that you know how to work with people.

I start off the chapter talking about how and why it's so important to spend the majority of your time with people smarter than you. A lot of people tend to find people or organizations that they're comfortable with, so in order for you to grow, you've really got to step out of your comfort zone and spend the majority of your time with people that are smarter than you and can help you get to the next level.

I also talk about how it's so important to get the right mentor. For me, that was really important and really helpful for my company to get to the next level. And it's not so much finding someone that's a mentor, but someone that's an advocate, that can really help you to get the business that you need, that will introduce you to suppliers or different large businesses that may buy your product or service. So it's a little bit more proactive than a mentor. While getting a mentor is important, I try to change the paradigm so that people think of it in terms of finding an advocate.

Another chapter from Chapter 3, about people, is regarding how you manage people by managing expectations. A lot of people will say that you can't manage people, and I agree with that. So the best way to do that is to manage the expectations.

And finally, for Chapter 3, some of the parts that are in there, "Fire Unproductive People." I talk about how to do that and how to improve your hiring process so that you try to really maintain a team that can help you attain the goals that you've set for yourself.

Chapter 4 is about Finance. One of the biggest misconceptions about entrepreneurship is this idea that you need money to make money. I think the younger generation, my generation, Generation Y, has done a good job of proving that that's not the case, or rather, that you can start a business with very little money. This part of the chapter really speaks to finding those resources that you can use to get your business off the ground for very little money, and doing so in the best way possible.

I also talk about some banking opportunities; for example, borrowing money before you need it. Those of us that have been down that road know that banks will actually give you money when you don't need it, because that's when you're on better financial footing. And if you do need it down the road, it's not so much that you have to go empty-handed, so to speak. You've got a track record and the ability to actually take on more debt. For finance, I also talk about managing debt well. That's a very important part of any business that an entrepreneur should pay particular attention to.

Chapter 5 regarding Marketing and Sales is one of my favorites. Very important. I start off that chapter by talking about how "You're in Sales, Whether You Want to Be or Not." It really talks about how you need to find your way of selling. Everyone doesn't sell in the same way. I'm a little bit more analytical; some people like to schmooze. You've really got to be able to identify the way that you sell, especially as a leader of an organization, so that you'll be most effective.

Sometimes that may include bringing in people who can sell for you and do that well.

Another part of the Marketing and Sales chapter deals with making sure that you ask clients the right questions. This is one piece that's really helped our business. We make sure that we focus on asking open-ended questions, and that way we learn a lot about our customers that otherwise they may not tell us if we ask them a close-ended question. So that takes you through the different techniques and different tactics that you can use in asking the right questions so that you as a service provider or product developer can actually deliver the right answer or solution to those questions.

I also talk about building your network creatively. We talk a lot about networking, but you've really got to know how to network creatively to be most effective. The way that I think a lot of us think of networking is just not effective, and I offer a new way that's really worked for us to grow our business, to use the network creatively and make it worthwhile.

Chapter 6 is about Leadership, and it talks about a lot of the characteristics and habits that great leaders have that entrepreneurs should definitely aspire to have. There's a really important chapter that talks about, for example, fear and how to overcome the fear of leadership and overcome any fear of risk that may be involved with pursuing your entrepreneurial dreams.

And finally, Chapter 7 about Motivation, I talk about how "Being Successful Is Not the Goal." A lot of the most successful entrepreneurs were trying to solve a problem or bring value to the market. Often, I run into people who just want to be successful; they don't necessarily want to solve a problem, they just want to be an entrepreneur because they think it's cool or it's the latest fad. And that's not truly what it's about. It's really about getting out into the market, understanding the value that you can bring to the market, and trying to solve those major problems that people will pay good money for to have go away. I talk about what your proper motivations should be in pursuing a business.



Finally in that chapter, I talk about “You’re an Entrepreneur Forever.” This is a little bit more lighthearted as we finish up the book, but I talk about there’s a reason why certain people respond to the call of being an entrepreneur, and there’s many ways that you can pursue your entrepreneurial dreams, even within a corporation. Being an entrepreneur is a way of life, a lifestyle. I think ultimately, it’s ingrained in your genes.

So that’s a little bit about the book in the seven chapters that the book has.

**WADE:** That was an excellent summary. Thank you for taking us through that. There’s so much valuable content within your book, and that’s what makes this next question almost impossible to answer, but if the reader could only take one concept, principle, or action item out of your entire book, everything that we basically just discussed, what would you want that to be?

**KEVIN:** I talked a little bit about that earlier. I think the most valuable part of the book is the part that encourages entrepreneurs, both new and seasoned, to create new markets.

There’s a really great book that inspired this particular part of the book called Blue Ocean Strategy, and the concept is you want to find those blue oceans, or those markets where there’s not a lot of sharks that will eat you up, thereby creating the contrast of the red ocean. The red ocean is a market that has a lot of competition and you’ll expend a lot of energy and resources competing in that space.

I like to encourage new entrepreneurs to, again, pursue new markets that will be well worth your time and much more profitable. So if I had to say one thing, I think that would be the biggest takeaway from the book.

**WADE:** Okay. Do you have a favorite quote from your book, either one that you wrote yourself – and hopefully this is an opportunity for you to brag on yourself – or if you don’t, it might just be – sometimes this one stumps authors a little bit, but maybe it’s something that you see that’s resonating huge, maybe something

that you don't even choose, but certain things that your fans have pulled out of the book.

**KEVIN:** You know, there's a really great function on Amazon that I discovered recently that actually lets you see what people are highlighting in the book through their eReader. Probably the most highlighted quote is the quote that the book starts with.

It says "To be an entrepreneur is to think differently. While most people seek refuge, entrepreneurs take risks. They don't want a job; they want to create jobs. Their goal isn't to think outside the box as much as it is to own the box. Entrepreneurs don't follow the market; they define the market. This bold and seemingly backward way of thinking I refer to as the Entrepreneur Mind."

That's one of the most popular quotes from the book, and I think it really describes mentally how entrepreneurs should think as they move forward in creating their businesses and ideas.

**WADE:** That's great. That's exactly what I was looking for, that was perfect. The last question – and obviously, our listener base is made up of readers and people that love to grow personally and professionally, so what's another book that helped you – you mentioned Blue Ocean a little bit earlier, but what's a book that created a paradigm shift for you and really helped you move forward as an entrepreneur?

**KEVIN:** Wow, that's a good one. I'd have to say – and I think this book is still so relevant – one book that really changed how I viewed entrepreneurship and really motivated me was a book called Netscape Time. That book was written a long time ago. Well, not a long time ago, but maybe 15, 20 years ago.

It talks about Netscape's battle with Microsoft, Marc Andreessen and all of the different opportunities that they had at the time and why they did this in business and why they did that. I think that really, for me, changed how I viewed business and how I approached technology in my company, and really motivated me at the end of the day to get moving and get started.

And ultimately, that's what I'd like people to do after they read my book. It's not so much that they've read and retained this knowledge, but how do you apply that? How do you apply that knowledge and go out and start your business and be successful?

**WADE:** Okay, perfect. Kevin, before we depart, can you recommend the best way for our listeners to get more information on you and The Entrepreneur Mind?

**KEVIN:** Sure. The best way to find out more information about the book is to go to the book's website, [theentrepreneurmind.com](http://theentrepreneurmind.com). And if that's a little challenging, you can always throw that into Google, and it'll find the book's website. You can also find it on Amazon.

To get in contact with me, I'm on Twitter. My handle is [@bizwizkevin](https://twitter.com/bizwizkevin). Again, that's [@bizwizkevin](https://twitter.com/bizwizkevin). And you can always go on my company's website at [johnsonmedia.com](http://johnsonmedia.com).

**WADE:** Perfect. Kevin, thank you so much for sharing your book with us here today.

**KEVIN:** Oh, thank you. I appreciate the time.

**WADE:** Thanks again for listening in today. If you would like to get your hands on The Entrepreneur Mind or any of the other resources mentioned by Kevin, just look at the show notes at [TheELPodcast.com](http://TheELPodcast.com).

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