**Leveraging Lived Experience to Serve Business Owners**

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With Your Host

Maddy Roche

XYPN Radio With Maddy Roche

**Maddy Roche:** Hello, and welcome to XYPN Radio. I am Maddy Roche, your host. Today, I'm excited to have guest John Bovard, founder and CEO of Incline Wealth Advisors, a wealth management firm out of Cincinnati, Ohio. John launched his firm at the start of 2020. Right before the pandemic and has since grown his firm to over 75 clients with two different employees.

Although John has what he describes as a barbell approach to his firm, working with two different types of clients, we spent most of our conversation talking about his work with business owners. We spent a lot of time talking about how he serves them comprehensively as they navigate decisions from the financial considerations to the decisions they need to make about running their businesses.

And John is particularly well suited to provide them this advice, because as you'll hear, John is not just the owner of Incline, but an owner of another business. We'll hear about how John takes into consideration how he charges for his advice, which is through a flat fee and AUM, and he talks through his service model.

He even gives listeners a number of book recommendations that he thinks are fundamental to advisors' understandings of how to run a business and be a good advisor. I suspect you'll find this podcast fascinating. And with that, here's my interview with John.

Hello, John. Welcome to XYPN Radio. It is so nice to have you today.

**John Bovard:** Yes. Hi, Maddy. Thanks for having me on today.

**Maddy Roche:** Yeah, congratulations on officially making it to XYPN radio and hitting your fourth year in business.

**John Bovard:** I'm thrilled. I've been with XY Planning Network from day one. They helped me to launch, honestly, discovering this podcast and having XY Planning Network as a resource was one of the things that literally pushed me to launch my firm and for me to know that I could do it with the resource that XY provides.

So yes, very happy to be joining you today.

**Maddy Roche:** Great. That is why we are in business, my friend. We want to help you run a successful business. And I would love for you, John, to introduce the business you've built to our listeners. Who do you serve? Where are you located? Things like that.

**John Bovard:** Yes. Yeah. Thank you. We'd love to do that. so the name of my firm is Incline Wealth Advisors. Incline Wealth Advisors is based in Cincinnati, Ohio. The name gets a little bit of a nod to Cincinnati because there's seven hills in Cincinnati and there was an incline that ran on the west side of Cincinnati and that's where I live and the bulk of my clients are from. Didn't want my name in the firm, wanted something that could be a national brand. Incline Wealth Advisors was started back in 2020. I do have a bit of a barbell approach if you look at my book of business.

However, since launching I've definitely grown with the with business owners. Servicing business owners from company 401k plans from their personal wealth management accounts and also on a retainer basis as well. I transitioned from Merrill Lynch. So a lot of my clients that I moved from Merrill Lynch were retirees, the older clients.

So I've got the barbell, so to speak, my 65 and older is a handful of clients. And then I would say my mid thirties to mid forties, earning high income amounts, business owners, people that are right around my age demographic, couples with families are really who I've been growing my firm with here recently.

**Maddy Roche:** I love you painting that picture and you using that term barbell. Something we talk a bit about here at XY frequently, how to serve two different groups for two different reasons. Could you just give us a rundown of the number of clients you're serving at this point?

**John Bovard:** Yes, sure. So I'm at a 72 client households. we are a little over 54 million in AUM. So looking at where we're at from an AUM standpoint, and then I also have flat fee retainer clients as well. As of right now, we're approaching about $400,000 in revenue as a firm. Like I mentioned the group that's growing the most from, I would say, new clients has definitely been business owners.

**Maddy Roche:** Oh, let's get into that in a bit. Healthy business, congratulations on the growth and this is what appears to be a super sustainable model for you.

**John Bovard:** Yes, thank you. Yeah, it was... took a journey. It took a while to get here but I am starting to see some things pay off that I've been doing consistently now since, since day one. So three to four years into it there's definitely some things that just by every single day staying with it and staying consistent have started to work.

**Maddy Roche:** Awesome, we are going to talk about each of those things but John, I think it's important for the listeners as we get into this to understand your vision for the firm because this isn't the average lifestyle. Usually when advisors get to about 70, 75 clients they're like "I love it" I've got the exact people on the bus I want to work with and they steady out there, but paint us the picture for what Incline Wealth Advisors will look like in the future.

**John Bovard:** Yeah certainly. My goal for Incline Wealth Advisors, I want to grow a billion dollar firm. I want this to grow as large as I possibly can. I know that the terms out there that XY uses is enterprise for that. So I'm not necessarily sure if I want a full blown enterprise or more of a boutique with as much assets as I can possibly, start to gather.

One of the visions for my firm is I might break out into several business lines, rather than be strictly an investment management type firm, offering those different services, looking at maybe we run some of our own funds, run some of our own portfolios and possibly, piece some of that out to other firms but my goal again, I want to get to that billion dollar mark. And part of the reason for that, so I've got five kids, but in my family no one has ever owned a business. My parents never did aunts, uncles, grandpa, grandparents. No one has ever owned a business. first and foremost what I told my wife when I started is I want to change the course of our family for generations going forward from an employee, from employees to now business owners.

And with that being said I also want our family to be, I want myself and my wife to be the generation that moves our family, call it up a notch. I want to take our family to the next level because on the West side of Cincinnati, the families that I saw that were going on the nice vacations, maybe they have a lake house, maybe they've got a beach house. Maybe they belong to the local country club or whatever it might be, and those might seem like superficial things but that's what I want to be able to provide my kids. I want my kids to have first and foremost, the opportunity to own a business in the future.

That's one of the main things that I wanted to provide for them. But then I want them to have the resources if it's access to teachers, access to coaches that can help them in their sports. If it's any resource that we can provide to them I want them to have access to and I don't want them to feel limited at all.

So yeah that's again, long winded answer to the vision for my firm is like I said, I want to grow it, as much as I can.

**Maddy Roche:** Beautiful. Thank you for that. There's nothing like a clear reason to jump out of bed every day. And you really do and I love the collaboration with your wife and the buy in that you have and the long term play that you're playing here. Let's talk about how you were able to hit the ground running.

Obviously you launched, during the America's worst time to launch an RIA, which is during COVID, but I must challenge that assumption because we have a lot of members on this podcast who launched during COVID and ended up building really successful firms. Tell us a bit about what your approach that first year was out of the gate.

**John Bovard:** Yeah, so first year, and I would even maybe back up like probably six months prior to leaving my former firm. The approach for me was every day I would look at an Excel sheet and I would look at who my clients are and I would look at how much revenue they're generating and how much do I think I can bring with me from Merrill. And then I would look at who is not currently my clients, but I feel like with a better business model and with better service can become my clients. So there was a lot of time spent looking at that list, updating that list, growing closer relationships with my clients, whether that be text messages or birthday cards or lunches, breakfasts really solidifying those relationships, prior to launch. And then, I had never, I spent my career at Fidelity Investments and then I went to Merrill Lynch, so I never had ran a business, never had owned a business. I dove in hard to the resources at XY Planning Network. Honestly, I listened to as many podcasts as I could from XY, from Michael Kitces Financial Advisor Success Podcast.

Really started to become as resourceful as I possibly could prior to launching. So figuring out the best way to do it. I met a guy here in Cincinnati who had sold an RIA firm before. So I was picking his brain, and really, dove headfirst into it. So then yeah, January hits. I go. I give notice to those that I need to give notice to at my prior firm.

And, leave on a Friday, left on a Friday morning that afternoon started calling my clients. So it was, yeah first and foremost, it was okay, we're gonna, I'm gonna call them immediately get as many of those clients moved over as i possibly could. You know, that was a great month and a half, right?

Cause then I could go out to lunches. I didn't have an office space, coffee shops, lunches, wherever that might be. I'd set that up and I did a good job of moving people over. I say I moved initially probably 13 or 14 clients right away. Then COVID hits, right? Then the reason why I say it's one of the, it was one of the worst times is because not only did, people aren't leaving their homes, it's very hard to go meet people, get in front of people, but also you had the market drop by 33 percent in March.

So it was a double whammy of, all right, the market tanks, we can't go out and see people. Why would people leave a firm? It's been around for a hundred years to go to this firm that literally just started. So yeah, so that was, that was a bit of a struggle. for me when COVID hit that's when I had to pivot a little bit because a lot of my clients that were at my previous firm, the statement from them was we're going to wait until the dust settles. We're going to wait till the dust settles. And in my mind I'm thinking I need to quickly as I can get to $10 million in AUM. I can get to $100,000 in revenue, I'll be okay. My rule was, I'll bring these clients over from my previous firm and I'll get there. That took a pause. So then it became my natural network. My wife's uncles became, my friend's older brother that, owns a business that has two different locations. The guy that I know that's a couple of years older than me, that, that knows my older brother and owns an apparel company.

So it started to become a little more of this homegrown, firm where I started getting people on the West side and the stuff that they would say is, We know you, we like you. We want to see you do well. We'll open up accounts with you. So that, during that first and second quarter of 2020, again it became a lot of my natural network people.

I specifically had people tell me that when you were at your previous firm we would have never opened up accounts at that firm. So we're, glad you launched, We're glad you're on your own now. We want to support the business, want to see it do well. So very reassuring during those first and second quarter then of 2020. and I can, there's still a little bit more to it that I can definitely jump into.

**Maddy Roche:** For sure. I'm glad you bring up the natural network because I think one of the more common objections I hear from advisors around niching up is, I've got this great natural network. And sometimes we coach that the natural network can be really diverse. And we want to be careful with that because we don't want to just pivot business models to meet the needs of everyone.

So what challenges did you face serving the natural market? It sounds like it was quite successful, but naturally there must have been some challenges of piecing it together that way.

**John Bovard:** Yeah, absolutely. Throughout my career, I never wanted to be the guy that showed up at a social setting or my kids football games and everyone looks the other way and walks away from because they're thinking I'm going to sell them on something. I never wanted that to be the case, so I was very hesitant to ask anyone in my natural network. And I would say I used a very soft approach. And by soft approach, meaning I, printed out some flyers, printed out some brochures, a one pager. Here's my firm, a fee only fiduciary. I'm independent. I'm on my own now, here's my card. Please call me if you have any needs. And mail that out to 50 of my closest natural, people that I knew had money.

People that were in my natural network kind of sent that out. And again, I think that's relatively a pretty soft sales approach. I definitely wasn't calling many of them directly to try to get them to open up accounts. So there was a little bit of navigating that in the beginning. Luckily for me, they reached out to me. I'd say there's still some people in my natural network that I have not asked for business that I probably should. But just haven't done that yet but it's definitely something that I was very hesitant about but the times that I did it, people were actually appreciative of it.

So one of the things that I had this negative thought in my head where people are going to be turned off by this. They're going to walk away when in actuality people respect, others that are go getters, that might be a little bit aggressive. if you've got the right person in mind and if they have similar background to you, or they know you and maybe they're successful in their business or they're running a successful business that they own.

They respect it. They respect that you're willing to ask them for their business. And there's no negative connotations now it might mean, hey we're gonna start you off with a very small amount for you to manage. But again, what I've noticed is those amounts grow over time. And to be quite honest with you, I had people that I was so hesitant to call and I made the calls and at the end of the call, they were thanking me. Not only did they open up accounts that, thanks for calling, we appreciate this. So again, that's around the messaging of it, but it's also one of the things that you can do is it gets them talking about themselves.

It's, people that have made it, made their money, had a good career. They want to share that with other people and they want to talk about their career with other people. And that's as financial advisors, that's one of the easiest ways that we can get meetings and one of the easiest ways that we can be there for clients.

Yeah it was, again, a little bit uncomfortable at first but something that I got over at the time and then continue to do that with my firm.

**Maddy Roche:** Yeah. Great. It sounds like just you being available was what was so attractive. And I think it speaks volumes of the buy in you've had from people just through relationships over the years that they were willing to pick up the phone and discuss services with you but how have you niched over the years?

Cause it sounds like you may have been more of a generalist at the start. And I know now that you're focused a bit more tightly on a specific niche. So could you talk a bit about that evolution?

**John Bovard:** Absolutely. one of the things that I had to do from the very beginning of my firm, when I mentioned everything shutting down, people aren't leaving their homes, I had to pour heavily into digital marketing. Right from the beginning. And that was brand new for me because I was not allowed to do that at my previous firm.

So Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube channel, podcast, video, I was doing it all. All of that, as much as I possibly could and scaled it up to five days a week. So I was posting and I've been able to keep that cadence on LinkedIn five days a week, ever since those first few months of launching.

So that was something that was very important for me to get the word out. Facebook I've had since I was in high school. So a while. So I had a lot of people on there that were again in my natural market. And they were seeing my posts, they were seeing my firm. That definitely helped to spread the word.

And then one of the reasons for wanting to launch my firm was to work with business owners. And my thought process was, I'm 35, there's a lot of businesses in my town, in my area in Cincinnati that are going to be going through a transition where, gen one business owner is going to be transitioning to gen two business owner or sometimes gen three business owner. And I am around that age. I either went to high school with them. I went to college with them, but I know generation two and generation three. And I also looked at some financial advisory firms in my town as well.

And I knew the older, the older guys the dads so to speak, were going to be retiring and the sons are going to be taking over and they were also around my age and I felt good about competing with them. That's where from day one, I knew I wanted to work with business owners so one of the ways of structuring my business was having the flat fee retainer model in addition to an AUM model, and then also offering 401k and retirement plan services. So having a service model that I'm able to adapt to business owners has definitly helped. I've been able to get clients that are business owners on that retainer model that don't want to move their accounts, they don't want to establish anything different. They got everything in their company 401k. They don't want to move that. So I could still work with them because I offer the retainer model. And then, progressing that forward knowing that was going to be something I wanted day one, knowing that I had that entrepreneurial itch to own a business. I did have an opportunity that came up in 2022 to purchase a, small business here in Cincinnati, Ohio. It was a client of mine, his father was retiring from the business.

They had been looking for a buyer for the business for about a year. And I got together two of my friends from high school and we were able to, a six month process with due diligence and banks and lawyers and accountants, were able to go through that process and acquire that business. and now we're coming up on two years of owning that business.

So that process as well helped me to expand my centers of influence network. It helped me to also see the day to day things that go into running a business. We did a press release, we got featured in the Cincinnati business courier from buying that business that got some notoriety, some eyeballs. So that also has started to attract business owners to my firm as well.

**Maddy Roche:** And this business has really nothing to do with the other business. Do you want to let the listeners in on that?

**John Bovard:** Yes, absolutely. So yeah, completely different. We are a wholesaler and distributor for sporting goods, equipment. We get products in from different places in the U S we had a couple of products in from overseas and we distribute them to big box sporting goods retailers or just large retailers in general such as Amazon, Walmart, Dick's Sporting Goods, Academy Sports Scheels you name it.

We are a wholesale distribution company. We've got named in game master athletic, located here in Cincinnati, Ohio. So yes, completely different business. Completely different industry. Like I'd mentioned, it's been good learning the ins and outs of the process for buying a business, all the steps in there from LOI to a unit purchase agreement to the funding, the financing.

So learning that entire process and then the ongoing sitting on the board of directors, it's myself and three others that sit on the board and helping with the financial statements, helping to evaluate the business has been great from a learning, learning experience, but also from a relatability experience with the business owners that I'm working with.

**Maddy Roche:** Yeah, nothing like running two small businesses and well arguably two larger businesses to relate to business owners themselves as clients. So I want to stay on this topic for just a moment. What unique qualities are there about the financial planning components when working with small business owners.

We have a lot of advisors want to focus on this. And I think it's so important to differentiate yourself around what that service looks like. What are their needs? What's the technical expertise? You've named a few things that you have to bring to the table, but from your experience, what's unique about serving business owners?

**John Bovard:** Yeah so from what I have experienced with a lot of them is you really need to look at again, their total balance sheet and then you need to help them to bucket out their wealth. if you start to bucket out their wealth and see what percentage of their overall wealth is in these different buckets, it can help them to compartmentalize their business and their personal assets.

I try to let everybody know money is a tool, right? You use money as a tool to get to whatever your goals are. But having your business be set up in place, how are we able to generate wealth, generate cashflow to then provide you with financial independence and financial stability?

If every single dollar that you have is tied up into your business, you are one, it's not very diversified. and then two, how are you going to have some liquidity down the road or savings that you can then use as spendable dollars for you or start to save or start to invest.

When we sit down we look at these three different buckets, what I call our wealth allocation framework, which we have, Bucket 1 it's your personal assets with your cash Bucket 2 is your market assets. So what's your stocks and bonds, what's invested in the stock market.

And number three is your aspirational bucket. And that's where their business sits. So we want to make sure that everything isn't in just this aspirational bucket, which is their business. I also have a lot of people, a lot of business owners too, that they're too heavily skewed in cash.

They've got large amounts of cash, a couple hundred thousand dollars sitting in cash that they don't know what to do with. And they've always done it that way because they remember a time when their business wasn't doing well and they had to, get a line of credit or a loan from business owners. So yeah, making sure that each one of those buckets is well represented. And what I typically find the most time is, they are underfunded in their market bucket, whether that be a 401k plan, simple IRA, SEP IRA, or even just a basic brokerage account. And we can open up for them.

Like I said, they're heavy in their business checking accounts and they're heavy into their business. So how do we extrapolate some of that wealth and get that into the market for you, so that you can have some of that long term compounded growth. So holistically that's typically how we start.

I've had business owners that I've helped evaluate businesses for look at potential acquisitions, helped to craft an LOI for them to buy potential business. and then obviously the exit planning piece as well. I've had a business owner client last year that sold his business. So figuring out things like a 1031 exchange for the real estate that he owned with the business, he was young, right?

He's only 41. So how are we going to take this business put it into another income producing asset for you? How are we going to take the liquidity that you got from that and invest it appropriately for you? Are all part of that business owner services that we provide.

**Maddy Roche:** Really appreciate the technical, deep dive into the components that you work with these people on. What have you found to be challenging about working with the business owner segment? Any hesitation, any challenges that come up whether it's taking them in as clients or the actual work you produce for them?

**John Bovard:** Yeah, so what gets a little bit tricky at times is where do my services stop and where does the CPA services start? One of the biggest needs that I get that I hear from a lot is they're looking for an accountant that's more proactive. Someone that can, meet with them more throughout the year, someone that can share them proactive ways on how they can save on taxes.

So that's always been a challenge of mine, working with business owners is revolving around taxes and how the lines can somewhat get blurred there. And then the other thing too, like they are the business owner clients that I work with are, they feel that they're better off having that money on them, they're better off having that money in cash, they're better off trusting themselves

than putting it into an account that's in the stock market that they feel like is completely out of their control and they don't have any, they don't know what's going to happen with that stock. It goes up and down and they feel like they can get a better return if they're just going to take that and either reinvest it in their business or reinvest it in something like real estate.

So that's one of the other struggles is, a lot of these business owners are very cash heavy. And a lot of them have a somewhat of a distrust for the stock market, and they don't like that that's again, that's out of their control.

**Maddy Roche:** And how do you deal with that first issue of where your services end and where a CPA's starts?

**John Bovard:** Yes. Yeah. by getting to know their CPA. Yeah, honestly, so good. So figuring out what their CPA is doing for them, how they're working with them. What are some ways that I can collaborate with their CPA to help? And then quite honestly, having a bench of referrals, or other professionals that I could bring in to help my business owner clients to where, okay, this just is not working, right?

There, this CPA is they're maxed out. They don't want to grow. They got their set number of returns and they're going to punch the return and they're going to move on to the next one. So if that's the case, how do we introduce you to another accountant that can get you what you want?

**Maddy Roche:** I'm interested in if you have a specific type of small business owner or business owner that you work with, certain industries, certain size, how do you discuss that or market to that?

**John Bovard:** There's no, no specific industry. I would say when a business reaches a certain size, that's when we get phased out. I would say businesses with 50 or more employees are probably too big. I also look at it from a size of 401k plan. So once a 401k plan hits about 15 million to 20 million in asset size.

That's probably also where we get phased out a little bit because they're bringing a whole entire investment committee to the table. They're reviewing it. They want to see, they have a formal RFP process and that's where my firm, as it sits today of myself, Eric Toepfer, who's another advisor with me and Amy Zimmerman, who's my client service associate. Where quite honestly, they're going to go to a bigger firm. They're going to go to a firm with 30 advisors, a couple billion in AUM. And that's where we again, somewhat get phased out. So yeah, that's it's definitely that smaller end 50 employees or less. The industry is less, important from that standpoint. It's employee size, total revenue of the business, is what we're looking at but yeah it can be manufacturing to dental practice to an apparel company to an importing business, really we run the gamut of different industries.

**Maddy Roche:** You've mentioned a number of different ways you've marketed yourself over these four years, but how do you get in front of these business owners right now? What's your, best, what's your best investment?

**John Bovard:** Yes. So Right from the beginning, so in 2020, I made a video. It's still sitting on the homepage of my website. someone at XY actually picked it up and was like sharing it with the different training groups, but what I did was I reached out to eight different businesses. And I basically told them, Hey I just lost my firm not too long ago, would love to highlight your business, do you mind if we come and just shoot a quick video at your business? And we'll put this on our website. People will be able to see your company. And again, it was people that I'd known for a while. So yeah, everybody agreed to it. So that was the initial splash that was, and again, that was my big marketing spend I would say in 2020, what I use the PPP loan for somewhat but yeah, so that one, that cost me about probably about $3,500, but that video, the purpose of that video, and it's basically me reading over, it's got some music in the back, music playing in the background and it's got, me reading what the prompt is.

But that video helped to get the initial word out with business owners. And then from there, it has truly been evolving my content around business owners and speaking to business owners. So one of the things that I did, I created a Facebook group called, Building Wealth for Business Owners.

I had an entire list of a hundred different topics that were related to business owners that I wrote blog posts on. So written blog posts, around that and then short videos. So what I started doing was, through that process of buying GameMaster, there's obviously multiple different steps.

Like I mentioned, LOI, there's the whole due diligence process, financial due diligence process. I started breaking down each one of those pieces and started making videos on that.

**Maddy Roche:** Great.

**John Bovard:** Blog posts on that. So looking at that part, that whole business acquisition process, I started making webinars on it within the Facebook group around those topics.

I had a podcast where I was interviewing entrepreneurs, a business broker a CPA that was on there to talk about networking capital. So really podcast, episodes on that did webinars around that content. Then anytime I meet with a business owner client, as I'm logging my notes in Wealthbox I will go and

whatever we talked about whatever questions they had more than likely I'm using that to create a piece of content on. I build out my content schedule at the beginning of every week at our 10 o'clock weekly meeting. So we know what's being posted every single day of the week. And then that helps to determine our targeting of business owners.

And then, made sure the Google page was all up. It was getting Google reviews things like that. But then making sure that our content is speaking to business owners and I've gotten inbound leads from that, from that type of content that's out there.

**Maddy Roche:** Oh, listeners, please. I hope you were taking out a pen and paper while John was talking. John's approach is exactly what we say to do here at XY. There is nothing like the lived experience of really serving the type of client you want to work with and not to mention actually experiencing, being a business owner in multiple capacities to identify those topics that are most relevant.

And a lot of advisors are relying on AI to create content for them and even the topics for content. But you can just hear as John's talking the authenticity of understanding why the importance of due diligence in the acquisition process is important and things like that and at this point in time AI cannot take that authenticity away from you all.

Thank you, John, for sharing that.

**John Bovard:** Yeah. And to that point, what I would say happened is it got easier. Because I would literally sit there and say, what should I write about this week? what can I possibly make a video about? And then, it is an XY mantra of the niche, but once you do find that the marketing becomes a lot easier because like I said I'm more zeroed in, I know what I can be writing about.

I know what type of content's out there. And when you have that focus, content creation becomes a lot easier.

**Maddy Roche:** Great. And just to give the listeners a little bit more insight, you mentioned flat fee, what is your price point for a business? And I assume it's based on complexity or size.

**John Bovard:** Yes. Based on complexity of size, it's probably something that I'm bad at honestly, like coming up with what the appropriate

**Maddy Roche:** You can't be great at everything, John.

**John Bovard:** That's right. Yes. because honestly, the way that I look at it for a business owner is I won't turn anybody away, especially if they're a business owner. Typically what I would start at would be around $5,000. I tend to fall between the $3,000 and 5,000 range,

**Maddy Roche:** Per year.

**John Bovard:** Per year. Yes. Yes. So it's low. which I know. I've thrown out higher numbers. I've thrown out, 10,000. I've thrown out as high as 20,000, those did not stick. Those people walked away.

One of them I did come down on price wise. yeah that, that is an area for me that should I be charging more? Yes, I should. Have I gotten ancillary business from those clients? Yes, I have. So there's been rather, one of those clients is an example. paying 3000 a year, moved over a brokerage account took $300,000 that was in cash put into a brokerage account.

so then he became an AUM client and a retainer client at that point.

**Maddy Roche:** Okay.

**John Bovard:** So there has been, what I do is sit down and I evaluate what the opportunity is. If it's a business owner from age 35 to 40, and I know they're going to be in the accumulation phase for the next 20 years, or they might have a liquidity event in the next 10 years. I just want to get that relationship and I want to grow with them knowing that I'm probably undercharging. But to me it's a longterm play. I tell them all the time, I'm going to be in this business for the next 30 to 40 years. I'm not going anywhere. So I want us to grow together.

I want you to grow your business as I'm growing my business. And yeah, that's been the approach I've taken with a lot of the retainer clients.

**Maddy Roche:** Oh, I love that and the way you explain it, it makes total sense. And I wouldn't say it's undercharged. My mind just goes to well then what are the boundaries of the service? What don't you do for them? Like, how do you limit your time with how you work with each of these clients that are only paying three to $5,000?

**John Bovard:** Yeah. So that's again, where it gets tough. I have my client service agreements that XY drafted for me that I try to lay out what those services are. I've built statements of services as well that I have with business owner clients and am I doing more on there? I would say at times, but then am I doing less?

Probably because they might not call for six months, eight months. I'll do my check-ins with them and yeah, I'll call you back when we'll set a meeting and then they never call back and set the meeting. It definitely ebbs and flows, from what they need but to be quite honest with you, I will pretty much try to find an answer to every single thing that they say.

If I can do it or not, there's an old famous story of John D. Rockefeller who, he was trying to get a big contract to sell oil barrels to whatever company it was. And at the time he'd only been doing five barrels of oil a day. I'm probably getting these numbers wrong, but he's only producing five barrels of oil a day.

And the company said, all right we need you to find, we need you to produce 80 barrels of oil a day. Can you do it? And he said, absolutely yes. And what did he do? He got resourceful and he found a way to do it and he got the contract. I'm obviously not that, that far out on the ledge, but I will put the time in, I will leverage the resources that I have, leaverage again the COI team that I have, and I will pretty much try to find an answer or a solution for all of my clients when they do have questions or needs or things that pop up.

**Maddy Roche:** Yeah, as you should being a fiduciary. that's wonderful. You can hear the commitment in your voice. So my mind does go to, this team that you have and how you're going to grow it long term. you mentioned your client associate, teammate, Amy, I'm interested in why that hire was your first hire.

**John Bovard:** Yes. Yeah. from running my firm solo for two years, there was a lot of work that I needed to get off of my plate. opening accounts, transferring accounts, processing accounts. Finally, there was a, 401k that I was implementing that literally pushed me over the edge, I would say. It was,

custom managed accounts for all the 401k plans it was at Charles Schwab, there's 15 different people. There's just forms for days for each one of these clients. And I'm sitting there for, it was probably two weeks straight is what it felt like, where I'm just rattling through these different forms for Schwab to try to get these accounts open to try to get them all set up.

That was a big piece. I needed the administration part lifted off of my plate, to help me to grow. And then two is the content producing, editing videos, coming up with the captions, the thumbnails, the posting them on all the social media platforms. That was something again that I needed off of my plate as well.

If I was going to be consistent with doing it. I realized that with the number of clients that I had, there was no way I could keep up with the amount of content I was doing just by myself. So I had to find someone to come in and help me with that content as well.

**Maddy Roche:** So what was your process for finding this teammate?

**John Bovard:** So my thought process was, I feel like I could get pretty decent candidates if I offered it as a part time position. So part time position, flexible on hours between 25 to 30 hours a week is what I was looking for. And just from experience, I've got an older sister that just turned 40, she would love to go part time.

There's stuff like that where I know that there's people out there that want to go part time. I can offer extreme flexibility from, we can do a couple of days in the office, but you could do the majority of time virtually. So yeah, the process for me was, needed to find the right fit.

I was really worried to be quite honest with you, I didn't get a ton of responses when I put the post out on LinkedIn, on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, got a couple of calls but Amy actually reached out to me. She lived in my neighborhood.

She's a year older than I am and she was a finance major in college. She spent eight years at National Financial Services in annuity. She was at a law firm. She wanted to get back into finance. So yeah she reached out to me. I probably had the post out for a little over a month and yeah, I met with her and.

again, throughout that whole process, leveraged XY Planning Network for a lot of the offer letter stuff, the how can I find background checks, everything like that. But yeah, Amy reached out to me, realized that it would be a good fit. She had some very similar experience.

Like her experience was great for what I was looking for. So yeah, I feel like I really lucked out.

**Maddy Roche:** Wow. Great. And then when was the decision to take on an additional advisor made?

**John Bovard:** That was, so that was at the end of last year's end of 2023. Interesting story. I did not want to bring on another advisor. It's something that I'm not actively looking for. And something that I don't necessarily want to do. The main reason for that is again, I want to grow it, but like I mentioned at the beginning of the call I eventually want to bring my kids into this business.

I've seen other firms where that gets pretty complicated when you have advisors that have been there for 20 plus years, then you start bringing your kids in and it tends to not go well. So I was very leery of that. I also felt like if I just have more administrative support, and even investment support, then that frees me up more time to

prospect to meet with clients, to host client events, to create content. things that I enjoy doing the most, and I feel like I could sell it better than anybody else. So those were all my hesitations around hiring another advisor. I went to three to four lunches with Eric. Eric is very hungry, very driven.

He's made sacrifices in his personal life, selling his house, moving in with his mother in law, things like that to save up, to really go out and build a book of business. I saw him. And there were also throughout times, one of the things I realized is if I'm looking to go up market and start to get bigger clients, I've got to start to scale.

I've got to build a team because that's who I'm going up against firms with teams. So now that we have that three person team, that's where I felt like it can not only legitimize my business, it can help me to move up market, get those bigger clients. and I do think Eric's going to do very well.

From a business standpoint. Yeah, I felt like I had the right candidate. It was right place, right time. I knew I eventually would bring an advisor on in some capacity. Wasn't a hundred percent sure on when that might be but I don't know. Maybe it was like God's will type of thing.

Everything happens for a reason. I'm a big believer in that, to where it just felt right. That again, at first, even though I did not, was not looking for an advisor and not wanting to hire an advisor, it felt like it was right place, right time to bring one on.

**Maddy Roche:** Taking on an advisor, as well as a client service associate changes your job, quite frankly, and it moves you much more into that manager role and has you staying in that kind of entrepreneur level that you need to be. What has that been like to shift more into management and team building and longevity considerations, things like that?

What was that like?

**John Bovard:** Yeah. It's been somewhat difficult. The one thing that's really helped me, with Amy, with my client service associate is being in a business owner round table group. There were times where we meet monthly, myself and other business owners that are outside of my industry. And.

one of the things, one of the struggles that I had is how much, how do I ensure that I have enough work for Amy? And there was a guy in the group, he laid out exactly what he did. And it changed everything for me. It really did. It really made her feel more valued. It made the work going off my plate a lot easier, helped me help keep me a lot more organized.

So one of the changes was simply giving her like view access, administrator access to my email. And now we have a system where she sorts my email. So flag it certain colors. If I need to respond, certain colors. She created Email folders, files for me. She sorts the emails. Keeps me on. Full control over my calendar, my schedule.

So having that ability to have someone looking over your shoulder, because one of the things that's the biggest fear that I had as a solo advisor and growing my firm is things falling through the cracks, emails falling through the cracks, not responding to clients.

Now that I have an extra set of eyes on that, it gives me a sense of relief and has really, I think allowed my firm to grow exponentially, especially just this quarter, first quarter alone of 2024 and all of last year. 2023 is our best year yet. Q1 of 2024 is our best quarter ever.

And I think a large part of that again is having Amy, having that support, having that organization structure in place. So yeah, leaning on that business owner round table group has helped. Digesting everything I can from Kitces, from XY Planning, from Ron Carson's book, from whatever it might be, anything I can in the industry.

I read constantly. Kids go to sleep at night. I pull out my laptop and I'm still working or I'm reading something, to help with all those different aspects of our business.

**Maddy Roche:** Oh, I'm so glad you bring that up. And anyone who's watching, not watching the video, John's sitting, in front of a beautiful bookshelf absolutely filled with what I assume are business books. and I would love to ask you John, as we wind down this podcast, have there been any books that were life changing to you that you think would be worth the time to read for those who are considering making the jump?

**John Bovard:** They're so hard to just to pinpoint a couple, I think like foundationally, I tell everybody this they should start with this foundation. If you're building a foundation, the books that I think you should start with, just from a money standpoint, The Psychology of Money, The Millionaire Next Door, Rich Dad Poor Dad and then How to Win Friends and Influence People. Would be like that like core foundation.

And then, as I start to build up from there, that Ron Carson has a book Tested in the Trenches. Great, firm on growing and expanding your business. And then the one that I got last summer and I've been like heavily into all of his content ever since is, 10X is Easier than 2X.

**Maddy Roche:** Yes, that's been cited. You're the second person to cite that in the podcast the past couple of weeks. It's sitting on my bookshelf as well. It's a fabulous book.

**John Bovard:** It is. That book has been great for me. His YouTube videos have been great as well his followups. And then one more that has helped from a sales/marketing side. Alex Hormozi's $100M Leads, not only his book, but also his podcast is... he put the entire book on his website so you can literally watch every single chapter of his book that he broke down.

That's a great sales structure. for those that are looking for sales and marketing information.

**Maddy Roche:** Thank you, John. I told John as we started this, 50 minutes goes by fast. And I'm wondering for our last question, if there's any piece of advice you feel like you wish you had before you made the jump that you want to share with the listeners today.

**John Bovard:** Yeah. so one kind of like slogan that I have and one thing to always keep in the back of your mind and honestly like that I feel has probably helped my firm the most. So there's a quote by James Clear that I saw, I don't know if it's exactly his quote, but, it's early wins come easy lasting wins require a lifestyle.

For me, as advisors, if you own an RIA, the way that you live your life, manage your life, act when you're in public, portray yourself, that resonates. And it can be the difference of people deciding to work with you or not deciding to work with you. Reputations take 30 years to build and five minutes to ruin.

So whatever you're doing, you're always on. You never know who could be watching, you never know how it could be portrayed. yourself to a high standard, living by that standard.

Having a good reputation, being known in your community, I think has been, is vital to grow any business. It's really your brand, right? Building that brand every single day, whether that's through content, through interactions you have through your kids sporting events, whatever that might be.

Just knowing that you truly have to build a lifestyle. I don't view this as work as much. Like when I read things, I don't view it as work when I'm having my laptop up and I'm checking emails, I don't really view it as work. I truly view that as my lifestyle. So really just adapting those principles of every single day you're building your brand and every single day you're creating that lifestyle.

**Maddy Roche:** Beautiful. said, John. It's been a total pleasure to get to know you a bit more and to hear about the progress and the beautiful firm that you've built. Thank you so much for being on XYPN Radio.

**John Bovard:** Yes. Thanks for having me, Maddy. Like I said, I'm a big fan of yours. Big fan of the podcast. Big fan of XY Planning Network and the help that they've been through my firm. So I appreciate it.

**Maddy Roche:** All right. Cheers to you. Thanks listeners.