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Rocket Your Time Back: How Virtual Assistants Can Transform Your Business and Life

Heather Mansy (00:00.12)

Welcome to the *Women Who Rise* podcast — the podcast for ambitious women. I am so excited to have my special guest today, Justin Nelson. He is founder and CEO of an incredible company that is on the cutting edge of leveraging your business. It's called Sphere Rocket, and I'm so excited to have him here today.

Hi, Justin, thank you so much for being here.

So a few things — we're talking about having women be more successful in their business, whatever that looks like — whether it's the real estate industry, the medical billing industry — I have multiple clients who have benefited from your service. I am one of them.

And so for me, it's one of those hackable tools, right? When I think about elevating women inside of their world and being able to do the heavy lifting of being an entrepreneur, having a company, or even just leveling up in their own world or life — or even figuring out how to wear so many hats.

Many of us are moms, we're in the middle of multiple things — we've got kids' sports, our own careers to think about. Maybe we also want to travel, maybe we're planning family vacations. And so there are just so many hats that we all wear, and life just seems to be so fast these days.

So, for me, I think VAs — first of all, just being in your world a little bit for the last year or so as a customer — and having your father, who's a good friend of mine, share with me the different ways he was able to utilize VAs...

And then also, already in the last year, being able to share with friends of mine and coworkers and people in the industry and other industries how they can expand and use VAs — this has really blown my mind.

I gotta be honest with you, because I know you have a house VA and all that. So I have many questions for you. But first, let's just get into it — what is your origin story?

So I'm using a Marvel Cinematic Universe term here — but can you tell me a little bit about what had you be able to become a successful entrepreneur? What had you think about VAs? What's behind Justin? How did this all work? And welcome.

Justin Nelson (02:14.868)

Absolutely. No, thank you so much for having me, Heather.



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You kind of touched on the story a little bit. My father got into real estate when I was roughly 14 years old. He's not really a tech-savvy or marketing-savvy guy. He's a hard worker, but wasn't really good in the marketing world.

So when I was 16, he allowed me the opportunity to come into his business and kind of see the real estate realm — where we got started. At 16, I had nothing but time, right? I was a busy kid, but I fell in love with the industry. I fell in love with commissions.

I thought I was going to go be an engineer, and I figured out like — whoa — if I sell 10 homes a year, I can make more money than if I was to be an engineer. And I just loved the uncapped potential of real estate.

So, as soon as I turned 18, I got my license. And because I had been in the business a few years, relatively fast — within about a year and a half — I was already running my dad's team that he had launched.

So, 19, 20, 21 years old — I was making \$200K, \$300K, \$400K a year — an amazing income for my age. I was super blessed — and yet I was burnt out.

I was looking around — and because I was single, no kids — I was able to just run until the wheels fell off.

And yet, I looked around and thought, wow, how does everybody else do this? How do people with spouses do this? With kids? With families?

And obviously that wasn't a part of my life at that point, so I kind of turned a blind eye to the question. I figured I'd get there one day.

Keep going on in my story — 23, 24 — I just burned out. And I had an awesome coach come into my life — her name was Tara — and she was like, "Hey, you should really consider a virtual assistant."

And I was like, "What's a virtual assistant?"

She's like, "Oh, it's someone from the Philippines that makes four or five dollars an hour."

And immediately, because I have a lot of good ethics in me, I was like, "What? That doesn't sound ethical. Do they speak English? What's their education level? Is that even secure? I run a business with wire transfers and social security numbers..."

I had all of these limiting beliefs.

And she pointed to me and said, "Justin, where are you going to go today after you get off work?"



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I said, “Well, I’m probably going to stop by the gas station, 7-Eleven, and then go to Walmart, and then I’m probably going to go home and watch some YouTube videos.”

And she said, “Every company you just named — 7-Eleven, Walmart, Google — they all use virtual assistants.”

So my mind was kind of blown.

From there, I got my first VA. Amazing. All of my limiting beliefs were blown. I got my first awesome executive assistant, paid her \$4 an hour, and she was so thankful.

She said, “Our minimum wage is \$1 an hour — you’ve elevated my life.”

Then COVID hit. The whole world turned virtual.

So, whether it was — let’s say, Heather, if you were my awesome executive assistant — it didn’t matter if you were in the state you live in or in the Philippines. The mileage is the same on Zoom.

So it really took off for me at that point.

And then the story is pretty much Sphere Rocket from then. I launched a virtual assistant company. I started to have friends go, “Justin, how did you get your awesome VA?”

I started to get all these requests, and I said, “Alright, I’ll help you find one too.”

Next thing I knew, I woke up one month and I had 50 people asking me to do it. So I did it for them. It evolved into a business.

And now five years later, we’ve helped almost 9,200 people get virtual assistants.

Heather Mansy (06:51.628)

Incredible. I mean, even just to take a pause — first of all, I love everything you shared.

Just wow — being a young person that was really going for it at that age, and not only seeing that you could rock it in your job, but also recognizing that it was unsustainable.

Even at a young age — no wife, no kids at that moment — that was not a sustainable job.

And this is why we talk all the time — I’ve been in the sales industry a really long time — in every type of sales, there is a burnout.



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It's like you said — uncapped potential income and all of those things, but also this massive burnout that can come with it.

And this idea of leveraging and duplicating your efforts — like you said, comparing it to those big companies — that's what they do.

And I think we tend to think, as entrepreneurs, that maybe we're supposed to just do all the heavy lifting. That we're supposed to just figure it out. That we're not a true business owner unless we're running around crazy — trying to do a 5am workout, finish work at 10pm, because otherwise we're not really "owning it" or something.

I think there's some idea like — it's our creation, and we have to protect it.

So, just the fact that you already realized at a young age: "I am productive. Therefore, this is not sustainable."

And that it was *because* you were successful that you realized you needed to get help. That even though you could be amazing and do it at the time, that was not going to continue.

I love all of that.

What are your thoughts about that immediate transition for you when you first got that executive assistant? In what material ways did that really change your life — like in the moment?

Justin Nelson

Yeah, so I mean, obviously from a business standpoint, I was able to reinvest my time into whatever I wanted to.

At the time — no wife, no kids — I invested it back into lead generation. So I was able to double my business with no more effort.

But as my wife came along, I now had the fundamental practices in place. I could reinvest that extra time into spending it with her — which is an investment in and of itself that's well worth it.

And I always think that sometimes, when people in the United States own a business, we think the only way we can get help is spending \$40K, \$50K, \$60K a year.

A lot of us don't hesitate to hire someone because we don't want to hire someone — we hesitate because we're thinking: *Can I afford \$40K? Can I afford \$50K?*



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Even if you're making \$200K a year, \$50K off that is 25%.

And so I think it's interesting. A lot of times we say, "Oh, business owners want to do it all themselves."

I think it's actually a protective instinct.

We say, "I'll hire someone when I get to \$300K. I'll hire them when I get to \$400K."

We're trying to protect ourselves, protect our families, and do it all ourselves so we can have more income and more stability.

But it's kind of backwards. We have to be able to take a little bit of risk to actually make our families a little bit safer.

And VAs are a great way to do that.

I don't have to go risk a \$50K/year salary. I can get someone for \$8K/year who can be just as effective.

Heather Mansy (11:11.276)

And that's the thing — *just as effective*.

And I've heard from people, even inside the industry, who maybe dipped their toe in the water and weren't sure how to utilize the help — or didn't find it was a fit.

And then of course, I have plenty of people who could not even imagine doing their business without it.

So I think it's kind of one of those things — and one of the things I think is hackable — and that I wanted to get into with you is:

What is the right way to determine what kind of VA to get, and how to implement them?

Because yes, if I'm wearing five hats — which one do I replace first?

That's kind of the first idea, first question.

And then also: What do I need to put into that VA, and how can the company help me do that so that I am scripting what they do the same way we would with any other job?



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And there's one more thought I had — which is, I remember having fear around wage laws, employment laws, where to put this person if I'm employing them, how to track them...

When it comes to a VA versus a domestic, local worker — I remember, as a busy realtor, I kind of, like you say, wanted to hire someone. I was ready to give up that portion of my ego or control — my hair was on fire. I was ready to go.

But I was concerned: Could I give this full-time \$50K/year worker enough work to keep them busy all year? Could I also quickly learn the U.S. employment laws and stuff?

And if you've never had an employee before, all this can be daunting.

I'm sure you can address a few of those things.

Justin Nelson

Of course.

I always tell people — when I had my first \$50K/year assistant — you said it perfectly. I had to learn laws. I'm sure I broke some accidentally.

What I found with VAs is that a lot of people start off with them in a contractor status, which gives you more flexibility.

Not to get too nerdy here, but there are a lot of good tax treaties between the U.S. and the Philippines that were created so that companies could hire and have a lot of protection — and less red tape.

Whenever I'm looking at your first part of the question — what are the best things to do to make sure you have success with a VA — I could give you a lot of fancy answers.

But especially if you've tried a \$50K/year hire before, you know the feeling in the first month:

"I'm about to pay them four grand. I have to dump everything on them."

You unfairly judge them because you want them to be super productive so fast — because you're spending a lot of money.

But with a VA — paying \$600/month for a full-time worker — you don't feel the pressure of needing them to know everything.



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When I'd sit in my office and my assistant would ask a question, I'd think: "I'm paying you four grand a month. Why are you asking me that?"

And that was unfair — she was asking good questions.

With my VAs — like Heather, you're probably busy like me — if I have a busy day and I don't talk to my VA at all, and she's making \$4/hour, okay.

I just take a step back and say, "As a leader, I was busy. I didn't have time to meet with her today."

She didn't get a lot done because we're still in training. But I don't beat myself up and think, "I just spent \$1,000 not meeting with them today."

It's the same cost as going to lunch. So I was a little kinder to myself.

And to them, they were making a lot of money — life-changing money.

So, it was kind of this pros and cons thing that worked out really well.

But what I tell people is: if you're wearing five hats today, you've got to get off the things you don't like.

That sounds pretty cliché, but a lot of people try to hand off their lead generation or customer service, or big complex tasks.

I'm going to go really radical here on you for a second — the thing I did to figure out what I needed to get off my plate?

I strapped a GoPro to myself for two weeks straight and videoed *everything* I did.

My team analyzed that footage and started to replace all the things that were small first — to give to my assistant.

Like, "Hey, every Tuesday, Justin orders groceries."

Wait — Justin, your grocery list is the same every week, or pretty close. Let's give that to your assistant.

I wasn't trying to give my first assistant the job of going to lead generate and close a \$10,000 commission check.



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I started giving away all the little things that ate my time. Very simple tasks that no one could mess up.

On average — and we've done studies — there are **112 small five- to ten-minute tasks** we do that should be given off right away.

Heather Mansy (15:57.868)

That's incredible, what you just said.

And even thinking about the math — I don't have a calculator in front of me, but 112 small tasks at 10 minutes each? I can think of a number of them right now.

I also had to laugh at strapping the GoPro for a couple of weeks — that's pretty aggressive.

But point taken. There are a lot of coaches out there who will say: *do a time study*.

Sit down and do a day — or two weeks. And now I can really see how that fits into figuring out how you're spending your time every 15, 20, or 30 minutes in a day.

Justin Nelson

Yeah. I mean, literally just get a piece of paper, a notebook.

You don't have to strap a camera to your head. Just be conscious and thoughtful about how you're spending your time.

It does two things. One — it makes you more thoughtful about how you want to spend your time tomorrow.

But it also reveals how you're spending your time *today*.

Heather Mansy

And I also liked what you said with regard to taking the smaller tasks off your plate first.

I can imagine a couple of things about that.

One — yes, you're gaining back probably *gobs* of time that you don't even realize you're losing. And if you do a time study — or the GoPro method — you can figure that out.

Two — you're able to give away stuff that probably doesn't require an intensive amount of training on your part.



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You can literally just plug-and-play them because you're giving away your simplest tasks — not the ones that require a higher level of skill or deep knowledge about your business or how you sell.

Justin Nelson

It's all about *quick wins*, right? It's addictive.

When you look up next week and they have 20 things they're doing for you — even if they're simple — you feel like you're having success.

In real estate, I used to get this one all the time: "I want a VA to do my transaction coordination."

Well, that one might take 10 files across 120 days for them to fully understand the way you want things.

And the whole 120 days, you're like, "Man, I just don't feel like we're there yet."

Versus — *Hey, if I can get all my time back...*

And it's really interesting, Heather — especially if you're talking to a lot of moms.

I'm still pretty close to when I was a child. I'm 28 now, so I'm growing away from it — but when I started the company, I was 23.

I look back to when I was 15 or 16, and I was definitely a mom's kid. I loved my mom, super close to her.

She was a transaction coordinator for a big team.

I can't tell you how many times I'd text my mom little things:

"Hey, we're out of this."

"Can you do that?"

Where if my mom had just had a VA, she would have gotten *so much time* back to do more things for *herself*.

Heather Mansy (18:14.894)

That's the other thing — that's a great note.

It doesn't have to be all about your business. Especially for moms who wear a lot of hats — house stock, kids' calendars, baseball schedules, when you're supposed to bring snacks to the game, when you're supposed to pick up the kids...



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We see so many parents now — if they hire a VA — sure, the business tasks are good, and you can build a whole army of people to help your business.

But a lot of times your *home life* is actually the most chaotic thing.

So even if you fix your business a little, you're still going home to chaos at the end of the day.

And it's always about *remembering*, right?

"Well, I've got to remember this kid's thing..."

Versus an assistant saying, "Hey, don't forget you have to leave work at 3:00 today to go pick up so-and-so."

It's someone else to help you think.

Justin Nelson

Exactly. Someone else to help you think — so you don't *have* to think about everything.

Heather Mansy

I love that way of thinking — someone else to help you think.

It's like someone who has your back when you're out there just running a hundred miles an hour trying to make everything work.

I can speak personally — I just planned a graduation for my son.

And actually, I liked doing that. He just graduated from university. I liked planning that part of it.

But if I didn't have assistance...

Well — number one, I *did* use one or two of my assistants to help.

And full disclosure — I do have in-person employees as well.

But on top of that — I got to *choose* how I wanted to spend those three days.

I got to choose to be in the chaos of planning my son's graduation — and think about the cake style and all that.

That was fun for me.



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I love planning vacations and doing the research and all that kind of stuff — but I *get to choose* because I have people backing me up at work.

Heather Mansy (20:33.592)

That's like the other side of it — if you really have that support, you can do more on your life side.

I'm about to go away for three weeks abroad, and I've already kind of told my team, "I don't want to be bothered during that time."

But the VAs are a critical piece of that.

And I've started to understand now — not just *me* leveraging the VAs I've hired, but actually letting people who are *inside* my company leverage those VAs as well.

Having a social media VA was a *huge* game changer for me.

All I do is think about content. And when I'm on the fly, I grab a snapshot of this, a picture of that, a video — but I'm not having to then develop that into a post.

I just get tagged on the post after it's done.

And now I've got people inside my business doing that.

So let's talk specifics.

Let's say someone is inside a corporation. They want to break the glass ceiling. They're working really hard. They're hoping to level up.

Maybe they're inside a corporation, and there might be rules about how they can utilize a VA.

How does that look for someone like that?

Is it just about taking tasks out from home? What would you think?

Justin Nelson

Yeah — I mean, obviously, we have a lot of people inside corporations who also bring VAs into the mix.

Here's a great example:



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We had a big corporation in the insurance realm. They had an executive assistant on staff who was making really good money.

That executive assistant was told, “Hey, we’re going to bring on someone equal to you because you’ve done such a good job. You grew the business so much, we need another person like you.”

And she was able to say, “Instead of bringing on another person equal to me, if you just gave *me* an assistant, I could probably increase what I handle by 30%.”

They said, “Well, yeah, but we don’t want to pay \$50K for another assistant.”

She said, “What if I could get a VA at \$8K a year?”

So they saved a bunch of money, didn’t hire another \$60K person, and she got to *do more*. Her income went up.

In her case, she also used the VAs to help with a bunch of things at home.

So there are a million different ways to slice it.

We also have people — in full transparency — who make a really good corporate income.

I had a gal a few weeks ago say:

“Hey Justin, I make \$150K a year in my corporate job. My husband also makes \$150K. We make a great household income — but we both come home and we’re exhausted.”

So she hired what we call a **life VA**.

The VA doesn’t work for her company. It has nothing to do with her job.

The VA just does *everything life*:

- Grocery stocking
- Coordinating house cleaners
- Watching the security cameras to make sure the kids got inside after school



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- Planning vacations
- Anything they hate doing

In her words: “I hate planning vacations. I hate that stuff. I hate ordering things.”

So for \$8K a year — which in their case was nothing compared to their household income — it was awesome.

Whenever something ran out at the house, it went to the life assistant before it ever got to mom and dad.

Heather Mansy (22:49.362)

I love that. And I can already see the kids going, “Yeah, we definitely need to restock the Snickers bars.”

Exactly.

Justin Nelson

Exactly!

And for corporate mom and dad, it's like, “Why are you telling me that?”

But the life assistant can sort and sift that kind of stuff.

And with technology these days, it's crazy.

For example, I have house cleaners who come in. My assistant — because I have cameras on the outside of my house — checks when the cleaners arrive and leave.

And in my house — we're a little bit crazy, so not everyone will do this — we have what we call turn-on/turn-off cameras inside.

During certain parts of the day, they're off for privacy. But when I'm not home, they turn on.

So if contractors are in the home, my VAs literally let them in the front door using a smart code. They watch them, coordinate with them, handle everything.

Now, again, I'm an *extreme* example — but I just like to show people what's possible.



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Some people won't want to go that far — but anything's possible in this day and age.

So you really can't say your marriage is struggling because XYZ isn't coordinated.

You can't say you're out of time — especially if you're earning a good income and have some resources to invest in leverage.

Heather Mansy (25:06.378)

I love it.

And I've actually heard that you have a camera on your laundry bin or something — so when it gets full, they call the laundry people to come.

I love it. You're kind of like the mad scientist of VAs.

But like you said, you're helping us understand what's *possible*.

And that really hit home.

I've had two services — air duct cleaning and a plumbing repair — in the last month.

Between me, both of my sons in university, my husband (who's an engineer and has to be onsite all day)...

It was a *nightmare* to coordinate with the repair people.

They want you there for a 2–4 hour window.

And then — they still miss the appointment.

I'm literally driving down the road, and we're passing each other as their van backs down my hill.

Yeah — this is actually *huge*.

And you're expanding my mindset as well, because I don't know that my highest and best purpose is hanging out at my house doing laundry.

It's okay on a day when I'm going to be there anyway, and I'm having a relaxing day — great.

But again — is that really the best use of me?



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Heather Mansy (27:23.070)

There's a concept I was just talking about with a coach the other day, and it was really this:

What is it costing you *not* to do this?

And I think when we talk about entrepreneurs in particular — or anyone with a high-productivity job, or even a student in college or university — what is the opportunity cost of:

- that dissertation not getting written,
- that certification not earned,
- that one more client not secured?

And it's not just one thing. It's a *huge* number — like you said — a mass of activities we're doing.

One of my coaches once said: "Let's just take your hours and figure out what your ideal income target is for the year. Then divide that by the number of hours you want to work personally — maybe that's 40, maybe 60 per week."

So, if you want to make \$300K and you're working 2,080 hours (standard full-time), that gives you your average billing rate per hour.

If you're doing tasks someone else could do for \$5, \$10, \$6 — even \$20 an hour — then why are you doing them?

And what's amazing is in the VA world, those \$20–25/hr tasks are getting done for \$4, \$5, \$6.

Heather Mansy (29:38.552)

So let's get to the nitty-gritty — because I know we're nearing the end here.

What does Sphere Rocket do that's different?

If someone had an experience with VAs before that didn't work — maybe they plugged them into the wrong kind of job, or didn't train them enough, or chose the wrong tasks — what sets you apart?

Justin Nelson

Yeah. I always tell people — when it comes to finding VAs, you've got two options:



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1. You can go onto Craigslist Philippines, put out an ad, and do it yourself.
2. Or, you can work with a recruitment firm like us.

The first option is tough — if it's hard for someone to understand U.S.-based labor laws, it's even harder to understand international ones.

So that's where companies like ours come in. We recruit the talent. We onboard the talent. We help ensure compliance.

That's where most companies *end*.

They're great at recruitment — they give you a VA and say, "Hey Heather, call us in a month if you need anything."

But I came from the real estate industry — which is training-heavy. I worked at Keller Williams and then at eXp — both very training-based.

There were portals with hundreds of videos. Coaches. Systems.

I thought, "Why isn't this level of support available when hiring your *first* assistant?"

Let's say you've never hired anyone before. You're scared. You don't know what to expect. You don't know what you don't know.

So what Sphere Rocket does differently is — yes, we recruit just like everyone else. But for us, **that's where our job starts, not ends.**

Every client gets:

- A **one-on-one coach for you**
- A **one-on-one coach for your VA**

It's not a support line. It's a **named, dedicated coach** — U.S.-based, usually someone earning six figures in their own business — and you can call them **Monday through Friday.**



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They help you course-correct.

“Hey Heather, your VA’s doing tasks that are way too hard (or way too easy).”

They help ensure that **in month 1, 2, and 3**, you’re getting maximum productivity.

So many companies stop at giving you the VA — we believe that’s the **minimum**.

After that, it’s all about helping you succeed based on what we’ve learned from 9,000+ hires — what works, what doesn’t.

Some extra perks:

- We throw **4 events per year** in Dallas — three-day events with breakfast, lunch, and dinner — free to clients.
- You meet 200+ other people using VAs in business and life.
- We don’t stack charges if you hire more VAs — whether you hire 2 or 5, your pricing stays flat.

We don’t penalize growth. If you scale, *that* tells me you’re winning — and if you’re winning, you’ll refer others.

Heather Mansy (34:14.797)

That’s definitely a benefit I didn’t fully realize early on.

When I first interviewed companies, I think I interviewed three or four before choosing Sphere Rocket.

I had two sets of needs:

- One was programming-type tasks.
- The other was social media and video editing.

And I didn’t want just one VA who had to be a generalist — and I wasn’t ready budget-wise for two full-time people.



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You were the **only** company that allowed me to do **two part-time VAs**, 20 hours each, with different skill sets. That was *huge*.

Eventually, I moved both to full-time.

Then at one point, I had a social media guy — a newer one — and after a month, it just wasn't the right fit.

You guys stepped in, and I ended up using your **training and coaching program**.

I said, "I'm busy. I can't take one more thing on my plate. Just help him get better."

And you *did*. He improved dramatically — communication, execution, everything.

That was a whole part of your system I hadn't even tapped into yet. And it was **included**.

This is *all* in the last year. I think I hired my first VA in May of last year.

Heather Mansy (36:33.772)

Also — at Christmas, we gave awards to our local agents.

We ordered Lucite appreciation awards, and we also sent them to the Philippines.

We got all our VAs on a Zoom call — had their direct team leaders present the awards — and they were **so moved**.

They cried. Their smiles were *ear to ear*.

We're literally changing people's lives — giving *great* jobs, at wages that are 4x their minimum wage — and getting real support for our own lives in return.

One of our VAs had to leave a Zoom once because someone was breaking into his home.

Within a month of working with us, he'd moved his wife and kids to a safer neighborhood.

He said, "You guys changed our life."

Heather Mansy (41:15.670)

Alright — as we wrap up — any takeaway or two that you want to share?



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Rocket Your Time Back: How Virtual Assistants Can Transform Your Business and Life

We're all about helping women be successful here — in every facet of life. What do you want them to hear?

Justin Nelson

Yeah. I would just say — while I can't change someone's internal beliefs, what I'll always tell people is this:

Yes, you *can* do it all. But it doesn't mean you *should*.

You don't get more time with your kids, spouse, or for your hobbies — just because you *can* do everything.

Just because you can doesn't mean that's how your life should be.

You're *deserving* of leverage. You're *deserving* of time back.

And VA options are *affordable*. If you think, "I need to wait until I'm earning more..." — we can usually help you sooner than you think.

Heather Mansy

Yes — and maybe even help you make that money faster as a result.

Well, the sky's the limit.

Thank you so much, Justin.

Justin Nelson — founder and CEO of Sphere Rocket VAs.

When you tell me you're 28 — again, mind blown. You are such an incredible entrepreneur.

Entrepreneurs come in any package, from any background.

You really exemplify someone who just had the *self-belief* to go for it — even if the idea sounded a little crazy.

Thank you so much for sharing your wisdom today.

Justin Nelson

Absolutely. Thank you for having me — I appreciate it!