

EPISODE: #22 Hosting James Sellers, founder & CEO of Sellmark Corporation

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

Greetings and welcome to the 22nd installment of our podcast series, The Workforce Lens, brought to you by Tarrant County College in North Texas. I am Jacquetta Dantzler Director of Business Development for Corporate Solutions and Economic Development, and I will be your host moderating strategic conversations with employers and economic developers on all things related to preparing and growing the workforce today and in the future. Today, my guest is James Sellers, Founder and CEO of Sellmark Corporation. Sellmark is dedicated to making brands that sell and has accomplished this by successfully integrating its Sell marketing strategy to launch outdoor brands that have products in specific categories. Welcome, James, and thank you for joining us today.

James Sellers:

Thank you for having me. This is a great honour to be here and just. Joining the Campus. I'm a little jealous of all the students here and I think I might have to go back to school now.

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

Nope. Well, we welcome you here. So glad to have you. Can you give us a little bit of background of how you launched Sellmark?

James Sellers:

Sure. I know. I'd like to kind of segue in a comment, we were talking with some, I was actually an Advisory Board for a university and we're talking about student outcomes and really what drives that and I think one of the things that's interesting is that my particular background, I'm not, I never was a great student. I was one of the children that struggle in school. I had learning disabilities before. Learning disabilities were cool and you know going through school is frustrating. They didn't really know how to approach that. But the thing that I think that made a very big difference is that I always was curious. I always was interested in learning any you know about all different types of subjects and I think even though I wasn't when I was younger and academically accomplished I was pushed to be curious and to develop those interests and to learn and really love learning. So I think I fell in love with learning before I was a good learner and I kind of think for me that background ended up creating the stage to success and I got to give kudos to my teachers and to my parents who. In spite of the fact that was probably difficult and the fact that I wasn't doing well with my homework and my assignments, but they kept encouraging me. And I think that is so important. So I would say that I want to be here today if it wasn't for quality educators and my parents who kept instilling that curiosity, encouraging me to keep learning and keep pushing in spite of difficulties. And I think, you know, I think looking back, I think it's that not quitting because it's hard, not giving up because it's not easy. Not quitting because you're not good at something, but keep going and searching for those things that give you satisfaction and being curious about the world and really grabbing that with both hands. So I would probably tell you that the reason some mark is this is really that curiosity and it kind of propelled me into looking at the world a little differently and then with some mark it was kind of a necessity, you know trying to figure out where the need was. I was looking for where the biggest opportunity and what wasn't being done by other people. And went for it. So some are really is was launched from that curiosity I can give a more specific traditional answer but the truth is that I think for a lot of folks that that can relate to that that things that come easy to you had to work hard just keep curious keep learning and look for the opportunity, look for the market opportunity and fill it and that's really some are came from so the academic traditional response to the where some are came from. I really saw there's a great need for disconnect between sales and marketing and companies where sales were engaging the market in person every day on the road, you know, wearing out the soles of their shoes and

bringing that message. But then marketing would be back at the office and they weren't engaging with that market and they didn't know really what the customers were needing and what community, what messages were resonating. Sales had some of that, but there also weren't professional communicators and. I think there's so much opportunity to bring sales and marketing together. So I launched some mark in 2000 to really bridge that gap where we offered a full service marketing with sales consulting. So that we get the message right, we figure out the target audience and we deliver that message and the sales brings the business. And then you repeat for people that were in DFW in the 2000s and in the early 2000s. And end up being a very difficult time we had the telecom.com was flying high in the late 90s by 2000 and early 2000 crashed and then we had 9/11 happen and then all of the air went out of the economy. So at that point I decided to put our money where our mouth was and said, you know what, let's take these concepts about, you know, using sales and marketing together and looking for poverties in the market identify those needs to bring products. So we started importing products. Shortly thereafter and we'd never looked back.

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

Wow, that's incredible. Yeah, I love that. So I don't wanna steal your Thunder, but one thing I do know is that you did start in your garage. Tell us about that. Tell us about how you started there and where you are now.

James Sellers:

That's correct. So when you start a business, you got to keep your overhead low. You don't have the corner office in the high rise with the great view. So the cheapest place to start a business is in your home and then we use our garage as a warehouse. And in those early days were very lean, but we made a lot of mistakes. But we learned and we survived them and were able to reinvest. You know, I think the problem with the good thing about it operating out of your garage at your home is that everything's right there. You have a very short commute. The bad thing is you never stop and work becomes a part of your life. And I. I think there's a later question I think I saw here, but not to jump ahead. But I really think that the idea that you can be an entrepreneur and have life work, balance is kind of a difficult. I think by phrasing it that way and never achieve it, you'll always be miserable and feel like you're fighting the job. I think you have to embrace the integration of your life and work and enjoy it. If you don't enjoy, don't do it because entrepreneur. To be the one ultimately responsible to assess and fail your business, you have to be prepared to do anything at any time. There is no time and you're not on, so you better love it because it is part of your life and you can't escape that.

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

No, that's great. I love that. I love what you said at the beginning about just being curious and staying curious. And I think that it ties into what you just said, as well as staying in love with whatever you're doing as an entrepreneur, because you do have to go with the ebbs and flows and it's going to change. It's not always going to be the same, but if you are always really curious about finding the solution and you're staying attracted to whatever problem you're solving, it always stays new. Would you agree?

James Sellers:

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. So I mean, I think that one of the things we get from great teaching and great access to knowledge is it's a great pool to draw from. One of the weird things about me is I'm actually a history political science major, So I did graduate from college and if I had one more semester and I was at 1 university the whole time, I did transfer a few times. So again, if you're listening to this and you've transferred or you delayed your education, don't give up. I mean, it's part of the process, but if I was in one university the whole time, I would have had five majors. So in addition to history and political science, I'd had philosophy, economics and religion as majors to round out my great knowledge base. But you know, you couldn't ask for a deeper pull to pull from than those subjects. And I I've.

It's interesting. It's allowed me to relate to people from all different walks of life, different cultures. You know I understand historical perspectives. I understand. I understand the power of history and. And the importance of law and, you know, religion, all those things come into play. It makes us who we are. And I think that if again, it wasn't for that, I think there's been a lot of times and experience in my life that I would have been capable to handle. So again, kudos to all those professors to put up all my questions all those years.

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

I love it. I love the way it all ties together. And speaking of tying together, so I've always thought that Sellmark was from your name. But now that I'm learning how the company originally started with the marriage of sales and marketing, I think I'm learning that that's where Sale Mark came from. Is it a combination of both or?

James Sellers:

See, I'm getting caught in another story. So you're right though, I wanted to really bring a new way of doing marketing and I wanted it to be an integration of those two things I didn't think you could do well. With one without the other, you need both. But I had all these great names and I would type them in the computer and then I would look at the Secretary of State's office to register those names and every great name I had was already taken. For fun, I typed Sellmark in and sellmark came available in the Secretary of State. What's funny about that though, is my dad was a financial consulting business and he used the name Some Mark, so he was a he was used as DPA. And anyway, I went ahead and registered the name with the Secretary of State and I went to visit my dad and I said, dad, I hope it's OK, but I just registered sellmark, so I'm going to have to ask you to stop using that name. And he said, well, I said, you know, I tried to get that name for years, never could. And I said I've been looking to retire. So I think this is the reason they'll retire. So I helped push my dad into retirement by taking technically his name, which probably was named for his, you know, sellers or last name. I picked it because sales and marketing is what I was trying to deliver. So it's kind of funny.

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

I love that it does both though.

James Sellers:

It does. It works so well. Most people think my first name is Mark by the way, which is also funny but.

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

And I'm sure your dad happily passed the baton of the name because it's like the name gets to live on and through his son, so.

James Sellers:

I hope so.

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

It's a great, Legacy story.

James Sellers:

I mean, my dad's been one of those rocks again. He's an amazing inspiration to me all the hours. The one other side of the back story is I grew up in Michigan.

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

Me too.

James Sellers:

Where are you from?

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

I'm from so I'm from a village called Bridgeport, but it's in Saginaw, Michigan.

James Sellers:

The Saginaw, Okay.

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

So you know Saginaw.

James Sellers:

Yes. I was born in Kalamazoo and we used to go up to it was east of Muskegon, a place called Branch Michigan.

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

Yeah.

James Sellers:

I don't know if you know where that is, but anyway, yeah, so I used to, Yeah. Go through your neck of the woods. Yeah. Western Michigan. We go, all right, but you know the thing, my dad was an advertising guy, so. He had stories about when he used to work in brand management, product development for Post Serial and New York back in the in the 60s when they were doing their big things in national brands and campaigns. So we would go on walks and we would talk about business and philosophy, religion and everything else. And I spent a lot of my childhood with him. He's the younger years walking in the woods and discovering things. He was a photographer, which is probably why I was asking about the photography here. He would go out in the woods and shoot things with a camera. And we learned about butterflies and flowers and all the animals and critters of the forest and how everything worked together and how nature is just always finding a balance and everything has a place in nature. And you think about marketing, it's the same thing. If you have an area that's overcrowded, well, you're going to have to have something that's got to give right you, you can't, you can't exceed the resource of opportunities that you need to, and you need to shift. So I think marketing actually is kind of a system that nature does inherently. Which is always seeks the balance, always seeks where the great opportunity is the unexploited niche that's out there. So marketing essentially is bringing those products to find those holes in the marketplace that your competitors can't adapt to and that's really what it comes down to. So in some ways growing up in Michigan and those woods kind of taught me more about marketing since I didn't study business and our graduate definitely needed that. So anyway it does all come full circle.

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

I Love that. Sellmark is a company that does offer a wide range of products and I've had the pleasure of being at your office and seeing the different brands that you guys carry. And I'm just curious, with the different brands, how do you ensure that you stay competitive and how do you choose which brands that you manufacture? If you could talk to us a little bit about?

James Sellers:

That absolutely and I could tell another story so.

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

I love stories.

James Sellers:

Since I did not have a business degree and I wanted to do business. When I made that decision original was pre law and I wanted to go into public service. I wanted to run for office at one point but started a legal service company senior year in college. Love the business,

didn't like the practice of law. It was interesting because getting a chance to get to go back to school had an opportunity to kind of learn a whole new skill set from a different perspective and. And that was really powerful. I will tell you anybody that that's an engineer or anybody that's a lawyer accounting is really, really hard. So I don't get my masters at UTA and in business and my final paper for UTA was a strategy class and the teachers main point of the class was do one thing and do really great like Lee I Coco type of perspective. And my thesis, my last paper was that's really great. If you're first, you have a new technology and you can go to that market 1st. But for the rest of us that don't have that first mover advantage, either we're goanna be with one small company for the rest of our careers or we're goanna have to figure out ways to pivot and grow beyond that. So the multi brand you just asked about is a result of that senior paper. And by the way, I got a bad grade on that paper. So yeah, I was like my worst grade I think for the whole time I was in Graduate School. So yeah, so a little disappointing. So I built the company on a multi brand thing. But what you have to do is treat the marketing that as like you're an agency and each brand is a separate customer and the way you stay flexible and competitive is that you're constantly surveying that market environment, see what the competitors doing, new technologies changes in the marketplace. And you got to be close to that market, you got to own that sales relationship and you get that feedback and you take that and you bring it back to figure out if it's positioned correctly is a price correctly is the Product can be better. Do we need to go to different product category? And then if there's a new opportunity, guess what, you now have all the systems in place to take a new brand into the marketplace. So you know, if you have a new idea what the idea behind Sellmark, the big idea in Sellmark right now is it, yes, we have multiple brands, we juggle it and each one has to be focused on. But we're trying to create a global platform so the next big thing we can bring it to the market because without the other brands we'd never. Get to that point and we have very successful brands and it's been a lot of fun. But I'm hoping that someday we bring a really, I mean we're going to change the, we're changing the market now with the brands that we have in our industry. But I'd like to someday bring a product becomes a household name that is synonymous with a great quality product and innovation that makes people's lives better. So that's kind of what we're building somewhere to do.

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

That's incredible. I love that. And with the brands that you have right now and staying competitive in your industry, the shooting and hunting industries have undergone significant changes in recent years. And how have you all adapted to those changes?

James Sellers:

Yeah, it's bleak. In the shooting sports. Every time you pick up the news there's bad news and that that's what people hear. Our demographics are challenging because the people that grew up hunting and as a part of a tradition. They're not past that tradition on, so there's more and more people that don't know the wonderful experience you can have shooting sports with your friends or your kids. Hunting is a great tradition. We're hunters. That's who we are. And whether you hunt in the grocery store when you pick your meat out of the fridge and put it in your cart, or if you go out in the in the woods or you're on a farm, we're all hunters. But there's something truly remarkable about that journey of being with somebody. When they are applying their skill and the technique to provide food for themselves, I think it's a great tradition. It's great experience. I think it'd be great if everyone experienced that once in their life. But it is difficult because now we have we have urbanized, we have people in cities they don't understand. You know you could be 60 miles outside the city and they have no clue what it's like to get out of the city. They don't know what it's like to do things that. You know, we probably, I don't if you got a chance to go hunting and shooting, but you know, we grew up doing these things, sure. So I mean it's so important, it's such a positive thing. But if you just watch the news and the political rhetoric, they think it's a terrible thing. And my experience being the industry, I really found the people that are hunters and

shooters are some of the nicest, most on earth, respectful, law abiding people. If you ever needed something, they'd be the first one to help you. They're just great people, so. I think though that we are going to have some trouble in the shooting, hunting, and sports. I think anybody that cares about it cares about our values and culture. As a society we should stand up and protect. Even if you don't do those things you should protect people to be able to enjoy them safely and I understand you know concerns with that. So I think we do need to diversify as a company and look for opportunities in the broader markets. You know our common theme is we want to provide people with the chance to explore. And have experiences and do amazing things outdoors. So there's so many different ways to enjoy the outdoors and I think we just scratched the surface of things that we could do.

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

That's great. One of the key things that you mentioned to safety, and I agree, I think that education and safety are so important and once we figure out more ways to educate people about safety that maybe there wouldn't be so much resistance. Were there. I know that we grew up like our dad taught us how to shoot when we were like 8-9, ten years old. And so we always understood like the safety of it. We always, we were never fascinated about guns in the negative way. It was always a sport, you know it was always very positive and as you said, you know, just. All of the people who ever worked with us were always so kind and so quick to educate you and help you, and it was just always a really positive experience. So I completely agree that it would be really nice to be able to carry on more of those traditions because it is a great tradition and good family time. It was some of the coolest times we had with our dad.

James Sellers:

You know, there was I had an opportunity to be with the Scouts and they used to summer camps and we should be in archery and. I remember that, you know, I was new to teaching, instructing and I had to go through courses and stuff on it. But it was interesting the first time out there watching other people shoot because they grew up doing it. And I think my grandfather taught me how to shoot when I was 4. OK, So I was very young, but it was interesting cause I was, you know, watching these scouts come through and these are young boys and you have a couple of kids really you are excited, you know, get out there and shoot and then when they hit the target just. Their chests poked out and they're feeling confident, but there's it just reminded me of there's just a couple kids that were there that didn't want to do it and I found out Hit her that they were, you know, they had a single mother that raised them and they didn't have a father or somebody in the household to show them how to shoot. And they were really kind of afraid. So going through this, you know, talking about the safety and showing them the, you know, the safe operation and whether it's an arrow or it doesn't really matter what it was. It was, you know, whether it bow or rifle or the BB gun. But when those kids for the first time hit the target, the sense of accomplishment and confidence. And I don't know where else you get that to say. I trust you enough and I value you enough. I'm goanna take my time. I'm goanna show you how to do this thing. That could be dangerous because it could be used for hunting or could use self-defence, or it could be used for just for sport. But I trust you enough with this thing that's potentially dangerous because I value you. And guess what? If you apply yourself and you work hard at something, you can accomplish it and be successful. And I think we need those opportunities for young people. And I think that it really comes down to what we need to do is provide those moments of confidence. And maybe not the doubt they'll be Olympic shooters that go through that, maybe some would, but that confidence goes into their whole life, how they treat their family, what they do when they're in school and what they do in their professional lives. And I think that's really important. So I think it's pretty profound actually, what? What we do and how it helps people.

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

I agree. I think any opportunity to overcome something that seems maybe scary or something that seems that it should be feared and have an opportunity for someone to trust you, to teach you how to do it, and then opportunity to get on the other side of that. Fear is always character building and it's always giving us confidence for whatever that next challenge is. I've had so many opportunities in my life where if I felt like I was not as confident as I needed to be or a little fearful. It was something that happened in the past that reminded me that I could do this. Something that reminded me that you can do hard things or you can trust yourself. And that is just another one of those opportunities where once you have that. Not only is it good for that moment, or for the sport or for learning a new skill, but you get to take that with you for the next challenge that you have. And the next time that you need an extra boost of confidence. Or a time where you need to be reminded that you can trust yourself. Or even an opportunity. Once we get our age, where we can help others who are teenagers who now they need us to give them that confidence and we need to play the role that someone played in our life once before and we show them that we trust them and give them that, yeah. So I also know that so Mark has a strong commitment with supporting military and law enforcement communities and I think that's incredible. And I would love it if you could talk a little bit about some of the ways in which your company does this.

James Sellers:

Sure. You know, so much respect for the young men and women that have defended our country and been there, you know, in time of crisis and stuff. And we have great people serving us now, so anything we can do to get back to them is great. And selfishly though, I'll say that. I've been blown away by the talent capabilities, a lot of you know law enforcement and military personnel that have left the service and have joined our company. Some of our best leadership and just great people have come from that. So I owe a debt of gratitude just for this the people that come into our company but you know we'd like to get back and try to protect those that protect us would be great. I never was able to serve I For another reason I couldn't, but you know, I wish I could have and if I could change one thing about my past, I think a four years of service this country would have been a great thing to do. And I think I think we owe them so much debt. I just can't think of enough for what they do for us. And if they want to join our company, that'd be great. If they want to use your products, that's great. I think we're lucky to have such a great military tradition where the military serves the people and it's a. They can. You know, the head of the military is a civilian, the president of the United States it is. We're unique that way. Most countries if the military is control, the people aren't. So it's nice to have our tradition and I think it's very fundamental to our American experience.

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

I think that's another great full circle moment for you. Maybe because. While you say, you know, that may be one thing you've changed with being in the military, but you are in the role of service, you know, to the military in many ways. And so I think that's awesome, you know, especially once someone's in the military and then they become a civilian and you have an opportunity for them there at Sellmark. I just think it's a great full circle moment for you to still be in service in a very unique and special way. So it sounds like I'm just based on our conversation here and just meeting you before that relationships and networking is really important to you. If you wouldn't mind just telling us a little bit about the role you believe in networking plays and business success in general and how is it important for business owners to build those strong professional relationships?

James Sellers:

Our business, at the end of the day, the business and again that you look at all the different options you really have too. You have the, the type of interaction with people where it's two

people freely deciding they want to do something together. It's a relationship to give and take. The rest of it is where it's one side dictates the terms, the other one has to accept it or die, right. So that's. Anytime you get involved with the government and unfortunately they have the power, you don't get to say what laws you want to follow and what terms and conditions you want. But in private business, we have a chance to do things together, to find ways to help each other. And that's really it comes down to trust, honesty and that relationship is everything in business. Without it, business is impossible. So I would tell anybody that's listening again I think curiosity. Leads that relationship. I think you, if you have a natural interest in people and care about them, you'll want to find out about them, how they think and why they think what they think and what they know. You know, I think that in school not only do you have all these different subjects and faculty that are, you know, experts in their field, but the students sitting next to you, I mean there's students now and the universities like I just walk into class. I guarantee you there's probably 100 different countries. Of students that their parents are from where they're from in the school. You don't even have to leave the state or the city or the campus for that matter to go talk to somebody and say what is it like growing up with in in this environment and what did you experience and what's your world view, What were your values and what did you think you know are the keys to success. And those relationships with those people and of connecting beyond all over the world and those connections will create opportunities for you and again our business. In the early days and to this day is really international, there's been people from, you know, people in you in the states that came from somewhere else with different perspectives. But people from other countries without their help company wouldn't be where it is. So I would encourage everybody to get to know the people sitting next to you and you don't even have to leave town. You could be standing in the line at the grocery store, be curious and somebody asking you questions. That's what it's about. That's a relationship. Be open. Maybe they ask a question in a weird way. It's okay. We're learning every Just give them these, be open, ask questions back, and if somebody says something silly, laugh about it. Yeah, I think that if you trust and again are honest, it's natural, and you have that curiosity that really drives that.

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

I think so too, I think. And if they do ask a question in a weird way or someone says something different than what you're used to, I think that's part of the richness and relationships too, right? Like we're learning different nuances, different characteristics, different personalities, and different cultures. And so I think it just enhances the richness of the relationships because you are able to communicate with different people from different places. And being able to have good, meaningful conversations and relationships without bias or defensiveness, but just being open to build relationships.

James Sellers:

100% I think the world would be so boring if everybody thought like us, right? And looked like us and came from the same background. I mean that sounds awful.

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

Long to get bored, yeah.

James Sellers:

It's just like watching it. Bad sitcom, the same episode the rest of your life. Who wants to be in that? Sounds awful.

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

Sounds awful. No, thank you. Yeah. And speaking of richness and relationships, I really admire how well you do treat your people at SellMark and the relationship that you have there. Can you tell us a little bit about just the employee benefits and I say benefits you do.

You know what I'm picturing the workout centre that's there, but just the different things that you have at SellMark that are dedicated to your people.

James Sellers:

You know, again, one of the things that I set out to do, and I feel like I haven't hit the mark yet, but I really wanted to create the best place for people to work. And it's not easy. It's hard. I want to unleash the potential and the people. And I think that there's like so much talent that's just untapped and there's so many strengths that undeveloped and people don't know what they can do. And I feel like, you know, one of my lifelong missions was trying to figure out a way to unleash that. We've done a great job. I have. Great people, they work really hard. They create amazing things. But I still think we're just happy to end of that. I think we're just getting started. But you know part of that I think you know time out relationships and other things. There's a few things you have to have. Everybody needs to have good relationships in your life and I think you also need to have health and Wellness. I think it's very, very fundamental. You know in those type of opportunities you spend so much time at work, it'd be nice if some of those things can happen there. So we do a lot of things and try to do, you know, fun activities, provide opportunities for people to experience, and do things that maybe they wouldn't have done otherwise. And then in our expansion that you're referencing, you know, we wanted a place where people could come together. They could have a recreational moment playing ping pong or pool or shuffleboard or if it's a sport like we have a sport court. If they do that, they're accomplishing a chance to kind of distress and have fun and get to know other people in a very natural, easy way. So I think that's really good. And then we also provided you know areas and opportunities for them to work out and take to get healthy and we're trying to do more healthy things in the workplace. You know, it's the least that we can do, right is try to try to do that for the people that work hard and take care of our customers. I still think there's more to do and I think there's a lot of potential that we can unleash and the more that they accomplish, the more that we can do too as a company. So when we're successful, we can do more things for them as well.

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

That's great. And would you think it's a fair comment to say that when they have those opportunities that it increase productivity as well so?

James Sellers:

Yes, it can.

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

Yeah, It can because if you're more rested, you're exercising more, you're healthier, so more likely to produce more. Or think of better ideas.

James Sellers:

Our products are so cool though that you could go out and you could literally, you know, explore the products and the whole day will be gone before you know it. So it is fun. We have a great industry and doing things, the outdoors is a lot of fun. We get a chance to be creative and compete. It's really fun that a group of us have all come together in in North Texas and we're taking on the biggest companies all around the world. We've taken on the big leaders of our industry from New York and the big metros and stuff, and we win more than we lose. So that's great. It's a lot of fun.

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

That's awesome. What would your advice be to business owners who are struggling a little bit with what a lot of people call work life balance?

James Sellers:

Well, I think the entrepreneurs are going to have to decide if they want to be entrepreneurs and accept that there isn't going to be this this division. I don't think it's possible. I think they have to be comfortable blending that into their life. But if you do work the right way and do something you love, it'll make your life richer and provide opportunities to your family that you want to have. Otherwise, I've had great opportunities to introduce my children to learning experiences and. Even got a chance to travel with them and meet some of our partners and things they wanted to have. So I think if you're obsessing about trying to create walls between you and your work as an entrepreneur, I think you're setting yourself up for failure. I think it's not a good use of your mental energy because I don't think you can succeed at that. But I would say that, you know, your time is very, very valuable. Put your time into what matters the most and if you don't take care of yourself and take care of your family, then there's no point to have business. So I think it's about. We're really integrating it in a way that's healthy. And then, you know, we all have parts of the job that we don't love or parts of the job that stress us out or whatever. And maybe there's times you just have to roll up your sleeves and work 20 hours a week or 20 hours a week. Yeah, that's really tough, 20 hours a day for a week. And you know, you just, you just have to. There's times you have to do that. But you can't do that at the expense of the rest of your life. So I know what people mean by that, but a lot of people take it too far where they don't answer phone calls and they're like at odds with work. And I think that creates a conflict that you'll lose with my Pinning button?

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

No, I think that's so good. You gave us such a good benchmark as well when you said building walls between work and the rest of your life. Instead of integrating the two and finding pieces like you were, just describing how you guys you have fun at work and so that sometimes that's part of the balance. Part of the balance could be knowing that, yeah, have to work 100 hours this week, but fifty of those might be fun, you know?

James Sellers:

There might be a day where you work 10 hours and you get to go sailing on a yacht and you get to go take a hunt in a New Zealand or something, you know? You balance that stuff out, Yeah, for sure. And the relationships are key. So you know, you have an opportunity to use your work to build relationships and meet other families from other cultures and make that part of your life too. So there's a lot of benefits to doing the work and having the freedom to choose how you spend your time, which ultimately is the greatest thing I think, about being entrepreneur. It's your choice. If you spend your time wisely, the market's not gonna respond very well to that. And you'll have to accept that.

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

That's great. So what would you say to students who would be interested in working with Sellmark? What advice would you give them? What different talents or skill sets are you looking for students who want to join your team?

James Sellers:

Sure. There's really three keys to want to work for Sellmark. First is, you know, being an honest person and being, you know, have good ethics we do not tolerate. There's things we don't tolerate. We don't tolerate dishonesty we don't tolerate. Trying to do make money at the expense of somebody else. We think you know breaking laws, all which stuff. But you know we need to work together to accomplish something wonderful. We're taking care of a customer. We need to make that our focus. So ethics are key. Second thing would be hard work. You going to come to the kind of work, work hard, get a job done because at the end of the day that's. How we provide service to others. And the third thing is be willing to train, which kind of comes back to being curious. If you're curious, you're most likely going to stick with it long enough to learn something. But if you can be open to learning and learn new skills, you can do anything for us. So those three things, ethics, hard work and continuous

learning or being able to learn that makes you a potential to, you know, be very valued and very successful at summer.

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

That's great. I know a lot of students look for opportunities for internships and what would you say would be the most value and getting being an intern for a company for a student?

James Sellers:

I think working early in in multiple different types of experiences is great and I think students perfect opportunity to test the waters. I would recommend somebody go work in a field before they get their major finished or end up with a political science history degree. But I think it's really it's a great chance to go like if some are specifically you get a chance to see a team and how they work. We actually provide opportunity to learn and do things that are very important. Typically if we assign projects that are very intensive in a week or two at a time and then senior management see the results of that. We think that it's important that the students come away with a good perspective and get the chance to contribute and the work that they do is important. We've always paid our interns because we feel like that's the right thing to do and I wouldn't want them to be there if they weren't creating value. So I think that, you know, we, we want to have students have such a great experience that when they graduate they want to come back and work for us.

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

That's excellent. Thank you. This conversation has been so rich. Just great information and advice for other business owners, for our students and just nice Life pieces too. Very valuable, a lot of good gyms. Is there anything else that you would like to share with us And you did at the beginning of the conversation, tell us a little bit about your plans and what you see in the future, but if you want to just end on letting us know what we can expect to see from Sellmark in the next few years.

James Sellers:

All right. Well, Sellmark not going to our goal is to continue to evolve and innovate. I have a great leadership team and people joining the company and I want to empower them and support them to do great things and. I'm not as young as I used to be. So I'd like to see the company continue to evolve and grow beyond what my limitations were. And I think it is now. I will tell everybody that's listen to this. At this point be curious. Find your strengths. Develop those. Apply them the world. Bring something. The table is new and different. Take a chance. Give back. There's something you really want. Don't quit just keep going for it. If you try hard enough and you're willing to learn and. It will come to you. It's never too early to work hard or try, and it's never too late either. So decide how you want to live your life and live that life you know go for it. You only live once. Make it great.

Jacquetta Dantzler (Host):

That is an incredible note to end on. Thank you so much, James. Thank you, James Sellers for being here today, for being our guest. It has definitely been a pleasure. And thank you all for joining us for the 22nd edition of the Workforce Lens.

James Sellers:

Thank you. You guys have a great day.