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'Uber' For Wooden Pallets: How I Make \$216K/Year With Zero Employees



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ABOUT

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SAVE



John Wilker

Founder, **The Simple Biz**

\$30K

REVENUE/MO



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FOUNDERS

Hello! Who are you and what business did you start?

My name is John Wilker, founder of [The Simple Biz](#). Since 1998 I have been running an under-the-radar business model that requires low overhead and is very non-technical. The Simple Biz is a wooden pallet recycling business done in a very streamlined way. It enables me to make extremely high-profit margins, and most importantly, I only work a few hours a day to make a good living.

I have no employees and no brick-and-mortar location. I acquire hundreds of pallets daily for free from businesses that no longer need them and then sell them to businesses that require them to ship out their inventory.

I do not repair, lift, or store the pallets I am acquiring. The best way to describe my business is: I am an Uber driver for pallets. But instead of having just one passenger in my back seat, I have 150 passengers (pallets) that are placed on the back of my non CDL 12 ft by 8 ft truck.

I drive these passengers approximately three blocks and drop them off. Each so-called passenger pays me, on average, \$8 to \$12 each. Best of all, unlike a real passenger, they do not throw up in my backseat at 2 AM. Lastly, a whole set of new passengers await me to be picked up on my next visit to the supplier.

If you do the math from the scenario above, you can readily see the profit is very nice for minimal work. \$8 per pallet x 150 pallets = \$1200.00 for less than an hour's work.



What's your backstory and how did you come up with the idea?

How this unusual pallet business came to be, began in 1998. I worked with a partner named Dane back then, and we had a home remodeling business. On a cold December day in 1998, we walked up to the door of the home we were scheduled to work on, and there was a note on the door stating that the owners had to go out of town because of a family emergency.

We hop back in the truck, somewhat dejected, and I ask Dane, "Well what do we do now?" Out of nowhere, he says, let's go pick up pallets. I say, "What's a pallet? Dane tells me, "You know those wooden things that warehouses use to move inventory around or ship their product out with. I said, "and do what with them?"

This is where it all began. The first place we went to was about 8 blocks away, and they had 2000 pallets. We both stumbled through the negotiations, and before we knew it, we had been given for free 2000 pallets.

We did not know any better back then and literally hand-loaded the pallets on the truck and took them to the pallet yard. These days there is no need to lift pallets, thank goodness. The Pallet yard back then would give you about \$1.50 to \$2.50 per pallet. Nothing fantastic, but we had volume working on our side.

The next day we came across a location with 1500 pallets they wanted to get rid of so we

repeated the process. This whole time I am saying to myself, “what other business model out there lets me get my inventory for free? I had never seen such a business.

I realized in short order that I was not maximizing this business model by selling to a pallet yard. I asked Dane to meet me the next morning, and we were going to find actual buyers and bypass the pallet yard to maximize our profits.

Well, guess what? Dane didn’t show up the next morning. In fact, I never saw Dane again. I heard he had run off with this cute girl that he was infatuated with. Now I am left to figure out this business model from the ground up.

At this point, it became a puzzle to figure out. A challenge to overcome. I had no idea how long it would take but from what I saw in those early days of the business it was going to be a fun ride. Sometimes life unexpectedly throws you a fastball and this business certainly was one I wanted to hit out of the park.

It wasn’t even really about the money, it had more to do with having the opportunity to solve a whole series of problems and each hurdle I jumped over was akin to a dopamine hit to the brain. It brought me great satisfaction.

I quickly noticed the competition was not professional in their approach, my solution was to be professional. When I encountered supply shortages, I devised a plan for exclusivity for the supply. I was on a constant quest to see how short I could get my workday done so I could reclaim my time and freedom.

It took me years to navigate and solve all of the issues, but it was a labor of love. Oddly enough it was fun. Once I had mastered the business, it then seemed like a game of scavenger hunt, but I had a map. It’ll all add up to low stress, repeatable income, and best of all I was serving my customers as they had never been served.

“ Go forward with this journey because you must. Not for the money, nor notoriety. Do it because you know deep down inside you can bring something to the table that no one else can.

Take us through the process of designing your pallet service

In the pallet recycling business, I am simply moving lightly used products from point A to point B. There is no need for manufacturing, or working on this part of the model. There are plenty of scenarios when a business wants brand new spec pallets built for them. I personally didn’t start this to build pallets.

I had to devise a better way. I started to be a pallet broker when I had situations like this arise. I would set up a deal where another party would build, deliver and collect the money from the business that I secured.

In return, I would make a cut every time those new pallets were ordered and delivered. The beautiful part of brokering is that I was making money without having to leave the house. At this point the business took on an additional passive revenue stream.

The point, the business got on an additional passive revenue stream.

The key to a good pallet deal is all about noticing issues with the business I am wanting to work with. There are hundreds of moving parts in a warehouse. Being able to spot the issues that cause a slow down in efficiency, safety and cost go a long way in securing a deal.

You have to have the right solutions for the businesses to buy in. Finding out everything I could about the types of businesses I work with in the end gave me an unfair advantage over the competition.

Describe the process of launching the business.

The week that Dane didn't show up was very busy. I realized I was starting a business that, at the time, I knew very little about. I pushed through the uneasiness of doing something new. I literally talked to 40 businesses a day for 7 days straight.

Before I describe this further, I should preface this by saying, I did not know nearly what I needed to know to run this business correctly in 1998. I blew lucrative deals I know I would have gotten today. I painted myself in corners that I shouldn't have. But I was in the game, and I was making things happen.

At the end of those 7 days, I acquired 12 suppliers and 6 buyers. Unfortunately, I had concentrated on one size pallet, which caused a lot of stress on my business. I had not realized at the time there were tons of different options of sizes and grades of pallets that I was not tapping into.

It took years to make this as efficient as possible. Years to utilize all the tricks of the trade. All the while, though it was worth it, going through this learning process.

Since launch, what has worked to attract and retain customers?

Retaining customers is all about seeing problems and finding solutions for the business you are working with. My dad used to say "John, there is not much traffic on the extra mile" which led me to go that extra mile for each and every one of my customers at one time or another.

The fortunate thing about the pallet business is that the competition is very unprofessional. The bar was set pretty low. This made me determined to exceed that bar for each one of my customers. This has paid dividends for decades. In fact, 5 out of the 6 buyers I got in 1998, I still have in 2022. With thousands and thousands of orders recurring from just those businesses.

This business can be done with old-school methods, belly to belly/eyeball to eyeball. The secret to acquiring and retaining customers is all about problem-solving. A keen eye for issues and a pursuit of solutions can take you a long way.

I wanted to know everything about a customer's operation, and as I gathered that information, new opportunities would come to the surface. I constantly was trying to think out of the box to make things work. In the end, it would all come together. A lot of times it was sheer tenacity, but that's what being in business is all about.

How are you doing today and what does the future look like?

Today, not only do I run my pallet business I also teach others how to execute this business themselves. The training course I sell is a 14-module training course called THE SIMPLEST BIZ. Additional info can be found at the following links.

www.thesimplestbiz.com or www.thepalletcourse.com.

I now have students in 14 countries executing the pallet business the way I run it. I really had no intention of letting my secret business out of the bag. However, several years ago, a friend of mine that had never been exposed to the pallet business rode around with me one morning. I pulled in a little over 2k in a couple of hours.

He turned to me in the truck when we were done and said, "This is brilliant, will you teach me how to do it?" That is when I had my light bulb moment and thought, heck, I could teach many people how to do this business. Why should I have all the fun?

These days I do have the added responsibility of helping students on their own pallet journey. It's challenged me to be even more creative with my time management to juggle my pallet business while simultaneously helping others get to where they want to be with their business.

It's funny how history repeats itself, now it's just another round of problem-solving. The dopamine is being triggered again, lol.

Links to Youtube videos about The Simplest Biz Training and Students Case studies:

Through starting the business, have you learned anything particularly helpful or advantageous?

In business, at times, you have to make lemonade out of lemons. In the downturn year of 2008, one of my good customers went out of business because of the recession. As a business owner, I had to devise ways of diversifying.

I took a fresh look at all my suppliers and buyers to see if there were other opportunities that I could help them with. Here is what happened: I found a whole new world of other products that were at my disposal and also in demand by the same customers that I was already serving.

Some of the items that began to come into play were the following: Corrugated boxes, crates, 55-gallon metal drums, Gaylord boxes, industrial bags, and dunnage.

I started to source and network all these items to my existing customers. It was an arduous process, but in the end, I created multiple recurring revenue streams for each existing customer.

customer

This ensured that I was now indispensable to my supplier and buyers because I was the one business that could move and supply all these varying products under one roof. As they say, “Adversity is the mother of invention” which applied to my experience in the 2008 downturn.



What platform/tools do you use for your business?

The training for the pallet business is custom-built on Wordpress. The back end of the business is run by a combination of:

- [Aweber](#)

- [Gusto](#)
- [Setmore](#)
- [Active Campaign](#)
- [Authorize.net](#)
- [Thrivecart](#)
- [Zapier](#)
- [Text Expander](#)
- Active Member
- Active Hosted
- Python
- [Stripe](#)
- [Paypal](#)
- [Vimeo](#)
- Youtube
- Tiktok
- Facebook Private Groups
- Airtable
- Screencastomatic

What have been the most influential books, podcasts, or other resources?

I'm an avid fan of the following podcast: Side Hustle Nation and Entrepreneurs on Fire.

Influential books:

- Essentialism by Greg Mckeown
- 12 Rules for Life by Jordan Peterson
- Sell or Be Sold by Grant Cardone

Advice for other entrepreneurs who want to get started or are just starting out?

First and foremost, go forward with this journey because you must. Not for the money, nor notoriety. Do it because you know deep down inside you can bring something to the table that no one else can. You can serve your clients better, the money will then follow.

Know going into any entrepreneurial journey you are expected to wear many hats. Especially in the beginning. Do not shy away from it. Become a student of business and become obsessed with learning everything that will make you a better business and a more efficient operator.


Steadily surround yourself with people that know more than you in their specific field. Give them a stake in your business. There is nothing more powerful than a team of people that are working diligently to better the business and the people they serve.


Where can we go to learn more?

- [Website](#)

- [The Pallet Course](#)
- [Youtube](#)
- [Facebook](#)

If you have any questions or comments, drop a comment below!

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John Wilker, Founder of The Simple Biz


Pat Walls, Founder of Starter Story

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Drinkware brand

\$12M / month



Chris

How I Started An SEO Agency For Lawyers Generating \$3.6M/Year



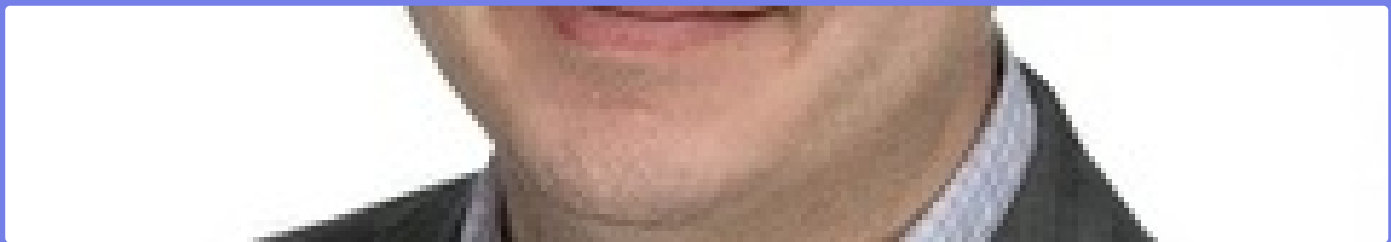
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Johne Vang

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So much valuable information.



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Entrepreneur

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