



## **An Interview with Ken Yancey, CEO of SCORE by John Jantsch, Duct Tape Marketing**

*Welcome, and you're listening to The Struggling Entrepreneur, the podcast where we address the challenges that you face when you're a struggling entrepreneur and where we try and assist you with experienced and successful small business owners who share their lessons learned as well as resources to help you become successful.*

Fred Castañeda: Welcome, This is Fred Castañeda, your host for the Struggling Entrepreneur and today we have a special treat and a bonus for you. With special written permission from John Jantsch of [www.DuctTapeMarketing.com](http://www.DuctTapeMarketing.com) -- that's DuctTapeMarketing.com, we're able to post for you an interview that he had with Ken Yancey who is the CEO of SCORE. Yes, SCORE.

SCORE is in the list of resources for you in the [StrugglingEntrepreneur.com](http://StrugglingEntrepreneur.com) and from his website, John Jantsch on the 14th of November when he posted this particular podcast with the SCORE CEO, Ken Yancey, "I had a chance to visit with Ken Yancey, CEO of SCORE for this episode of the Duct Tape Marketing podcast." Now, we're going to have links in the show notes to [DuctTapeMarketing.com](http://DuctTapeMarketing.com) and also to SCORE and also to the other items that are mentioned in this particular podcast.

"SCORE is an underutilized resource for the small business owner," says John Jantsch in his post of 14 November on his blog, "-- who are just starting and want to get some help from a seasoned often retired business owner and executive, and did I mention, it's free?" John Jantsch in his marketing blog of [www.DuctTapeMarketing.com](http://www.DuctTapeMarketing.com) asked the question, "So, what is or who is SCORE?" John also continues and says, -- and this is in way of introduction to the particular podcast -- says these are his show notes -- "The thing that many small business owners may not know, however, is that you can find a local chapter and work with a local counselor or you can get matched up with a counselor nationwide

that may have the exact experience you're looking for. The first step is to locate a local chapter and then dig in and find out all the ways that you can start and grow your business."

So, this particular episode is uncut. It is in entirety. And with my thanks to John Jantsch from [www.DuctTapeMarketing.com](http://www.DuctTapeMarketing.com) we present to you this particular interview with SCORE mainly because I was on the list to get an interview with Mr. Yancey but since John has done it we wanted to post it to you. And again, we'll have links and link backs in the show notes to [www.DuctTapeMarketing.com](http://www.DuctTapeMarketing.com). You'll hear the sponsorship message as well as everything. Nothing has been cut out. It's the entire podcast episode, 100 percent in entirety. Hope you enjoy it and we'll see you in the next episode of *The Struggling Entrepreneur*.

Voice: Duct Tape Marketing is brought to you by [AT&T.com/smallbiz](http://AT&T.com/smallbiz) -- resources for the small business owner.

John Jantsch: Hello, and welcome to another addition of the Duct Tape Marketing podcast. This is your host, John Jantsch, and my guest today is Kenneth Yancey. He is the CEO of SCORE, the counselors to America's small business; a great source of free and confidential small business advice for entrepreneurs. So, welcome Ken.

Ken Yancey: John, thanks so much for having me today.

John Jantsch: You bet. Now, you said you're on the way to the airport, but are you in Washington today?

Ken Yancey: You know, I am in Washington today and enjoying a beautiful morning.

John Jantsch: Yeah. Awesome. So tell me -- you know, there are people out there that a, don't know anything about SCORE or maybe have some misperceptions about what it is or was; so why don't you give us the high level? What the heck is SCORE?

Ken Yancey: You know, John, SCORE is an organization of volunteers, mostly retired business men and women, although, these days, a number of our volunteers are still active in the workforce. And what these volunteers do is provide no-cost counseling, mentoring and low-cost training to small business owners and people that would like to start a business all across the country. We have 370 offices. We have 11,200 volunteers and that represents over 300,000 years of business experience. So the depth and breadth, the scope is pretty significant.

We do three things, very quickly, John. Face to face counseling that's available to anybody that wants it. It's absolutely free. We counsel on line via e-mail at our website, [www.score.org](http://www.score.org), and then we do a series of workshops or seminars on things that relate to starting, growing, managing, buying, selling a business. We did about 7,000 of those seminars last year. And typically those have a small charge and you can find your nearest chapter really easily again on the Web at [www.score.org](http://www.score.org).

**John Jantsch:** That's funny. I do a lot of workshops and run into a lot of small business owners and I still find that, even though you have touched that many people, there still are people that don't realize what a great resource SCORE is.

**Ken Yancey:** You know, you're right and opportunities like this give us the time to reach a number of people and give them the straight story and hopefully encourage them to take advantage of a really terrific free service that's provided, quite frankly, by your taxpayer's dollars. We're again affiliated with SBA and we get a grant from the Congress. We raise about 40 percent of our funds and it's a great service.

**John Jantsch:** Yeah that's -- I was going to ask about funding, because again, anytime something's free it can be dubious in nature but the fact that you are well-funded actually, and are able to put on a pretty good show is, I think, testament to the quality. But what -- tell me a little bit about this how you raise funds.

**Ken Yancey:** As I mentioned we're very fortunate that we do receive support from the Small Business Administration in the form of a grant. That grant is \$5 million a year and then we raise money beyond that. We do have a foundation and we raise money from individuals who are interested in supporting job creation, small business creation, strengthening our economy in that way. We receive funds from other grant making organizations, other foundations that are interested in adult education programs and things of that nature. And then we're very fortunate to receive corporate support from companies that are interested in addressing the needs of and providing products or services to the small business market.

**John Jantsch:** Yeah, that's great. So talk -- if I'm a small business owner and I'm listening to this and I'm thinking, wow, I didn't know this existed. Can you talk -- and I know you gave -- you mentioned them -- a little bit about what are the specific offerings? So if I said I want to find a chapter or an office in my town what might I go there and get?

Ken Yancey: Sure. If you were interested in engaging SCORE services, whatever they happened to be, finding us would be fairly easy. You would -- you could contact your local chamber of commerce, they would know about us. Your local SBA office would know about us. We're also in the phone book. You can find us on the Web again at [score.org](http://score.org).

When you come into the chapter or contact the chapter they would ask you what your challenges are, your needs are, where you are in your business life cycle? Are you thinking about starting? Have you recently started? Have you been in business for a long time? What your opportunity or challenge is? And then we'd match you with a counselor that would sit down and walk you through your issue. We would be very careful to listen to the challenges and opportunities that you're facing, the things that you have been doing, maybe have not been doing. And then work you through a series of suggestions and opportunities and help you come to an appropriate conclusion about next steps in your business life.

The great thing about SCORE is that it is certainly free, the counseling, but it's not just a one-time opportunity. We have documented, John, relationships between counselor and clients that go well beyond 20 years. And when you think about it, you might sit down with a restaurateur that owned three or four different restaurants; a franchisee, if that's what you're interested in. You might sit down with a CFO of a major corporation if you're -- if you have financial issues. People that have really relevant experience and they're there to give back. They're there to help. They don't have an ulterior motive. They're not interested in competing or being involved. They're just interested in providing help. And so, again that doesn't necessarily have to be help around a problem. Maybe you have an expansion opportunity. Maybe you're going to add a new product line. Maybe you're going to bring on your first employee and what does that entail? And we can walk you through that whole process.

John Jantsch: Tell me a little bit more about these -- you call them counselors -- is that correct?

Ken Yancey: Correct

John Jantsch: Yeah. So tell me a little bit about them because I do think that -- because it actually used to be part of the name, retired, is a little bit of a misperception and I think there's probably some people out there that think, "Oh, honey, you need to get out of the house and do something," is where the counselor comes from sometimes and I actually -- I'll tell you a story. I had a organization that was just

getting started and was looking for venture capital funding, had a great on-line, kind of, Web 2.0 business they wanted to start. And they thought, "Well, what's SCORE going to really be able to help me with? Surely, they don't know about that kind of business." And the person they got matched up with had started -- was a gentleman in his 60s but he had started four venture-backed businesses and sold them all and two of them were online ventures. It was an incredible match for them.

**Ken Yancey:** You know, the counselors are very unique and today about 20 percent of our volunteers are the ones that are coming to us now to volunteer are still in business and they're active in a variety of different types of industries and opportunities. So we do have that current, relevant skill. Not to say that the retired volunteers that we have aren't current and extremely capable because they are. We have skills and industries represented that run the gamut. We can find, through our online counseling capability or our skills inventory, just about any type of background that you would need. Now, many of the businesses that come to us want to talk about more general topics, and so the specialist is not necessarily required. But when the specialist is required, as you pointed out, they wanted somebody that had venture experience. We can find that for you and make sure that there's a conversation that's really relevant and really valuable for the time that you've invested.

**John Jantsch:** Yeah and I guess that's something that I wasn't aware of. I guess I assumed I put in my zip code. I found my office. I went there and whoever they happened to have as volunteers in that office was the pool available. But you're saying you have the ability to open up the entire counselor network.

**Ken Yancey:** We do. We have, today, over 1500 volunteers that are available online, John, and those are searchable by skill or by issue. A small business owner or potential small business owner would go to the site, find the dialogue box for ask SCORE, put in "I want to start a restaurant." We would key on restaurant and start and provide you counselors that had restaurant start up experience. There's a brief bio about each counselor available as well. And that would let you hone your search a little bit. Are you interested in a fine dining restaurant? Are you looking at a franchise? And you'd be able to see who has start up experience in the deli business or in the fine dining business and you'd be able to refine your search and actually send them an e-mail directly and they would respond.

Many times they would refer you to a local chapter. You might wind up on the telephone with them as you talk about how menu prices should relate to lease cost, talk about the demographics of your

market and what types of restaurants may or may not be suitable in those areas and what type of studies to do to understand whether you've got a saturated market when it comes to Italian food or there are other opportunities for something different. So it's a really unique service and yes, we can bring to bare a broad variety of skills.

**John Jantsch:** Well, Ken, don't tell anybody, but I know people that charge \$500 an hour for that.

**Ken Yancey:** Well, and I'll be honest with you. Our intent is certainly not to replace those small business owners that are out there and doing that for \$500 an hour and there's clearly a place for that. We tend to deal with businesses that are -- what we would consider nascent. They're considering going into business. Start ups and early stage businesses and once a business would begin to be ready to pay for that consulting service, we would really, kind of, consider them to have graduated from SCORE.

**John Jantsch:** So if I'm listening to this and I think -- I think we've talked about how to find a counselor. What if I want to become one?

**Ken Yancey:** Oh, you know, we are always looking for people that want to give back. There's an opportunity on the website to click on volunteer and learn a little bit more. You can contact your local chapter. Our recruiting efforts actually occur at the local level as you would imagine. Once recruited there's a 90-day provisional period during which time we make sure that the volunteer is the right match for our organization and for what we're trying to deliver from a service standpoint. But also give the volunteer an opportunity to understand whether or not we're the right volunteer choice. And it's a relatively simple process but we take volunteering in SCORE very, very seriously because we are dealing with people's businesses and opportunities and their livelihoods. So we're very serious about the way that we approach this.

And you also need to know, John, that you don't have to be retired, as I mentioned earlier. And number two, you don't necessarily have to be a counselor. Our chapters really are small businesses, for lack of a better term, even though they're 100 percent volunteer-run. We have marketing challenges. We have websites that need to be managed. We have PR. We have speaker's bureaus. We have fund raisers. And many of those folks contribute without actually sitting down to talk to a small business owner. So, lots of ways that you can contribute in our organization.

**John Jantsch:** So maybe volunteering in kind even.

Ken Yancey: You know that -- we would appreciate that more than you know.

John Jantsch: So with the millions of people that SCORE has touched in doing counseling is there a Starbucks or a Microsoft or an Oracle out there that started with a SCORE counselor, that you're aware of?

Ken Yancey: There are a number of notable businesses that SCORE has touched through their life cycle; Vermont Teddy Bear, Ben and Jerry's, Jelly Bellies Candies, Allen Edmonds Shoes. Allen Edmonds had a fire years ago and SCORE came in and helped them manage through some of the rebuilding process and so -- and actually that company is part of the SBAs hall of fame. So there's a lot of companies out there that we have touched that you would certainly recognize. Many, many, many more that you might be dealing with on a real regular basis and just not realize it.

John Jantsch: You mentioned this idea of some corporate partnerships and I know that you just announced a new initiative with Open from American Express, a mentoring program that I think is going by the name of Small Business Speed Coaching Test Drive. You want to talk about that a little bit?

Ken Yancey: I would love to. American Express Open is obviously very interested in the success of small businesses and understands the value that small businesses provide to our country and our economy and so on. And one of the ways that their supporting is through an initiative with SCORE where we're going to -- actually tomorrow -- for the first event in Orlando, Florida -- we're going to counsel over 300 businesses in a single day. We're going to have 60 counselors on board but we're going to be offering 30-minute counseling sessions. Hence, the test drive for SCORE services with the goal being certainly to provide help and assistance and to talk through challenges and opportunities but also to give these small business owners in that area a really good experience with SCORE and help them understand how SCORE can be a positive part of their business life cycle. In addition to the counseling, we'll also have four workshops; one on finance, one on marketing and a couple others. So we're very excited about this opportunity.

We're going to be bringing that to four cities around the country in the next five or six months. We're going to be in Orlando. We're going to be in Phoenix and Dallas-Fort Worth and Chicago. So we're very excited about -- and Atlanta, excuse me -- we're very excited about doing this and we believe that this is something that will continue beyond a first year to again acquaint people with SCORE services. As you mentioned when we started, you still run into

people that don't know about SCORE or don't understand the value proposition that we provide. This is a great opportunity for us to really get out there and show people the value and what we can do and how it can be done.

John Jantsch: Now I glanced at the website and I understand that the uptake for that initial offering in Orlando has been pretty strong hasn't it? In fact, I think you're sold out, aren't you?

Ken Yancey: We are absolutely sold out. As a matter of fact I'm actually very excited about the meeting for a whole host of reasons, not the least of which is it looks like we're over sold and I'm actually going to have the opportunity to counsel. So this is really a terrific first event and we're very grateful to Open for their contribution and the way that they perceive and support the small business marketplace.

John Jantsch: Now you're -- by the time this episode airs, you will have done this Orlando event and since it's sold out, that's great. In the upcoming cities, how does somebody register if they're listening to this and they're thinking I live near Chicago or I'll drive to Chicago? How do they register?

Ken Yancey: You're going to find information about registration on our website again at [www.score.org](http://www.score.org). Once we have all of the dates locked down and the venues, we'll be publishing those not only through the website but also through a number of media outlets. And if you're in that area you'll likely see that through some local PR marketing type initiatives that we'll engage in with the assistance of American Express Open.

John Jantsch: Well maybe a good first step then would be to -- if you're in one of those cities find your local chapters and maybe start a dialogue, right?

Ken Yancey: That would be a great first step.

John Jantsch: Then you'll know when the events are, right?

Ken Yancey: You will absolutely know when the events are. We're working on venues and we have tentative dates but still locking down the details on venues, so I can't be very specific and I apologize for that; but do get in touch with your local chapter and they'll be able to give you the detail. And again, the website at [www.score.org](http://www.score.org) is a wealth of information about that plus many, many other things.

**John Jantsch:** Well, Ken, thank you very much for joining me. I think this has been a great wealth of information and I know that we will expose some new folks to a tremendous resource.

**Ken Yancey:** John, thanks to you and to Duct Tape Marketing. We really appreciate the support.

**John Jantsch:** Well, good luck with your events.

**Ken Yancey:** Thanks.

**Voice:** This show is brought to you by the new AT&T introducing a program rich with resources for the small business owner. Go to [att.com/smallbiz](http://att.com/smallbiz).