

The Power Of Storytelling

An Interview with John Devaney, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, United Capital Markets and Founder, Manor House Films

EDITORS' NOTE John Devaney is a leading financier with extensive expertise in structured finance bonds, real estate, and film financing. Since 1999, he has served as the founder and CEO of United Capital Markets, a pioneering firm in the modeling, research, and investment in complex structured finance credit. This year Devaney made a pivot in his career, directing his resources, creativity, and network towards supporting films that carry a powerful purpose. He is the majority investor and producer in both *City of Dreams* and *The Prince*, working closely with the actors, directors, and distributors to ensure these important works of cinema can reach larger audiences and invoke real change.



John Devaney

COMPANY BRIEFS United Capital Markets, Inc. (unitedcapital.com) is a leading market maker in subordinate and distressed structured finance bonds. Its leadership position has been cemented over 23 years buying approximately \$50 billion of complex CMBS, RMBS, and ABS bonds as principal with hundreds of customers and dealers.

Manor House Films' (manorhousefilms.com) mission is to craft compelling stories that ignite conversation and inspire change. The company is dedicated to developing purposeful films that challenge perspectives, foster critical thinking, and illuminate the world's most pressing issues. Through the power of cinema, Manor House Films aims to engage, educate, and empower audiences to view the world from new perspectives and take action for a better future.

What was your vision for creating United Capital Markets and how do you define its mission?

When I founded United Capital Markets in 1999, my vision was to create a firm that would specialize in trading mortgage-backed securities and provide unparalleled liquidity and expertise. Based on my experiences, I wanted to build something that would serve as a reliable partner to clients and continue to establish myself as a trusted leader in this financial area.

With the complexities surrounding mortgage-backed securities, my goal was to provide clients with insightful strategies and tailored solutions to navigate these challenges effectively. At its core, the mission of United Capital Markets is to facilitate efficient market operations in the bond space. By focusing on transparency and client-centric strategies, our job is to ensure that market participants can achieve their goals and mitigate risks in what is often an unstable environment. The firm was built on the belief that specialized knowledge and a steadfast commitment to excellence could drive long-term success for both our clients and the business itself.

Will you provide an overview of United Capital Markets' business and core competency?

At United Capital Markets, we specialize in trading mortgage-backed securities, a complex but vital area within the financial space. This includes both commercial mortgage-backed securities and asset-backed securities, which cover an incredibly diverse range of assets such

as airplane loans, credit card loans, automobile loans, and more. The wide range of assets we handle allows us to operate at the intersection of various industries and provide essential liquidity to different market participants.

What have been the keys to the strength and leadership of United Capital Markets for 25 years?

By building a strong team of talented professionals who share the same commitment to excellence as myself, I've been able to cultivate an environment of collaboration and trust with United Capital Markets. We rely on our dedication to our expertise, forward-thinking approach, and commitment to fostering strong client relationships.

What led you to starting your new venture, Manor House Films, and what is your vision for the company?

Following my career within the financial industry, I felt a calling to explore a different path where I would be able to explore my passion for unique storytelling and desire to drive social change. I have always recognized storytelling as an opportunity to address critical issues, spark meaningful conversations, and inspire action. I recognized that filmmaking was the perfect way to reach broader audiences through the power of purpose-driven narratives, and that I had the opportunity to bring a new perspective to this industry from my previous experience within the financial field. Our mission at Manor House Films is to produce high-quality films that not only entertain, but also inform and educate widespread audiences. We aim to highlight untold stories that matter and amplify these voices that drive positive social

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change. Whether addressing human trafficking or other pressing issues, Manor House Films is committed to producing films that encourage audiences to think deeply about the world around them.

What do you see as the power of storytelling and purpose-driven films as a tool for driving social change?

Storytelling is one of the most powerful tools for driving social change because it connects with people on a deeply emotional level. Storytelling has the unique ability to open minds, foster empathy, and inspire action. The value of bringing purpose-driven films to audiences through Manor House shines a spotlight on societal challenges and brings important issues to the forefront of public consciousness in a way that other storytelling platforms often can't. Through visual storytelling, audiences are not only informed, but also moved to engage with the subject matter in a personal and meaningful way. These films can amplify conversations, create awareness, and even mobilize communities to support causes that matter. Our belief is that when you combine compelling storytelling with a clear message and a call to action, the potential for change is limitless.

Will you discuss the film, *City of Dreams*, and the key messages conveyed through the film?

Based on true events, *City of Dreams* is a powerful and emotionally resonant film which tackles the harrowing issue of child trafficking. The film follows the journey of a young Mexican boy whose dreams of becoming a soccer star are tragically cut short when he is smuggled across the U.S. border and forced into labor in

a Los Angeles sweatshop. Despite everything he faces throughout the film, the boy shows unwavering courage and strength, standing up to his captors multiple times throughout the story. After watching it for the first time, I could not sleep without thinking about the impact that the film had on me. I felt compelled to be involved with the promotion of *City of Dreams*, and help expand the film's reach and crucial message to wider audiences. Through *City of Dreams*, I have been connected with an incredible community of individuals who are committed to spreading awareness about this pressing issue plaguing our society. I feel fortunate to be involved in this movement through Manor House Films.

What are your priorities for Manor House Films as you look to the future?

A big priority Manor House Films has been focused on is our feature film coming out this summer called *The Prince*, starring Nicolas Cage, Giancarlo Esposito, J. K. Simmons, and Andy Garcia. *The Prince* chronicles an addict's tumultuous odyssey through the high-stakes world of power, pleasure, and pain on a transformative journey toward recovery. Our team will be making big business decisions in these next few months that will pave the way for the movie's success.

Another one of my priorities is getting our world leaders focused on the critical issue of labor trafficking our nation faces today, using *City of Dreams* as a tool to spread awareness. I recently met with Linda Yaccarino, CEO of X, to discuss the importance of business leaders using their voice to encourage real change. Additionally, I am planning a screening of *City of Dreams* for members of the U.S. Senate,

Congress, and the President to get our government focused on this issue.

What do you see as the keys to effective leadership and how do you approach your management style?

I believe the key to leading effectively is being a good speaker and leading by example. I'm a very inspiring speaker because I'm always thinking big about the future and coming up with creative ideas. These speeches are great for energizing the team, motivating them to work hard towards a common goal and think outside the box. Leading by example is very important in running a business like mine because it strengthens company values. Throughout my entire career, I've always been the first person in the office and the last one to leave, which greatly attributes to my success. I find that being disciplined in what I do drives my employees to work to their full potential.

What advice do you offer to young people beginning their careers?

One of the best pieces of advice for young people starting their careers is to become a good writer. In college, I double majored in business and English. Many see English as a useless skill to have going into the business world, but it played an important role in jumpstarting my career. When I started my first job assisting a mortgage bond trader, I wrote very professional memos to potential clients that I mailed in manila envelopes with the things I was reading. This was very unusual in the bond business where most people just pester you over the phone, and it really resonated with people. My writing skills helped me become the number two salesperson right away, out of about 15. ●

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