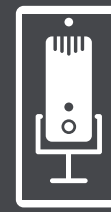


# Randy Brothers



**Mike Merrill:**

Hello, and welcome to the Mobile Workforce Podcast. I am your host, Mike Merrill. And today, we are sitting down with an awesome guest, Randy Brothers, the head coach of The Roofing Academy. He's also the founder of Elite Roofing and the best-selling author of Start It, Build It, Grow It. So, a fascinating guest, and that book is about the contractor's guide to success. So, if you haven't checked out his podcast, the Start, Build, Grow Podcast, you need to. Randy has seen it all and is full wisdom and practical tips for everyone in the construction leadership industry. Welcome, Randy. We are so glad to have you here today.

**Randy Brothers:**

Hey man, thank you so much for having me. I'm looking forward to it. Congratulations. You guys are getting a podcast going as well, man. So, it's a lot of fun to be a part of your podcasting journey.

**Mike Merrill:**

Thank you. I appreciate that. Hopefully, we'll have some opportunities to connect up again down the road.

**Randy Brothers:**

Heck, yeah.

**Mike Merrill:**

Awesome. So, your story, Randy, is one that is actually pretty powerful. Would you mind giving our listeners a little bit of a glimpse into your journey?

**Randy Brothers:**

Sure. I am essentially a third-generation contractor by blood, if you will, grandfather and father were carpenters, and I grew up with a knack and an interest in building, creating, and as I grew up I kind of developed a love and a passion for construction and

building, and just seeing things created, which kind of brought me into construction early on. I mean, before I could even drink I was a full time project manager building homes, doing custom homes, track homes, basement finish, remodel, fire and water restoration. So, I've done a ton of contracting and then, like many of us, if you've been in the industry long enough, we were all pretty drastically affected by the recession that kind of started in 2006/07 and kind of culminated all the way up in 2009.

So, that affected me greatly. It kind of essentially made me completely have to change the trajectory of my career, if you will. Originally, I wanted to work my way into becoming a well-known custom home builder. I thought that was kind of like the pinnacle of contracting and if you can be a custom home builder, build a name for yourself, that was the thing to do. The market and the economy didn't allow that. So, I ended up learning a lot of lessons and fell flat on my face and ultimately had to completely shut that first business down and file for bankruptcy. Since then, I learned a lot and I'm grateful for it, but I kind of stumbled into the roofing industry, the roofing space, and ever since then I've been diving in and working as much as I can to learn and grow within the roofing trade space. And it's been a pretty awesome journey up until now.

**Mike Merrill:**

Wow, well thank you for sharing that with us. I know it's not easy to talk about those low points and those struggles that many businesses go through. Some, again, it gets more extreme and they got to figure things out. So, I'm glad to hear that you're back on your feet and it kind of worked out, kind of reinvented yourself in a different way. What would you do differently if you could have gone back now? I mean, we can never do that, but if you could, what do you think you would have done differently to try and help navigate those troubled waters differently?

**Randy Brothers:**

The short answer is nothing, because of all the things I learned. I look back and yeah, there's a lot of people that have experienced similar situations but nobody's willing to talk about. There's a lot of pride involved in that. And I feel that it's kind of my calling and destiny to try to help others who have experience or to avoid similar situations. So, that's why I'm so kind of open about my experience. But the things I've learned at such an early age, I mean this all happened when I was 23, 24, 25 years old. So, I'm grateful that it happened to me so early in my career that I was able to learn and grow and manifest that to where I am now to just pour into and help other people. However, economically, I would have paid a lot more attention to the market around me.

I mean, there was plenty of signs, looking back, that that kind of identified and showed me that something's not right here. The market's changing, the economy is changing, the housing market, the crisis, all this stuff started happening and I had the blinders on, I was just focused on I have X amount of basements to finish and I'm trying to get more business and I just kind of completely got caught without really paying attention to what's going on in the world around me and kind of got caught slipping that way. And ultimately, what happened, happened, but I would've paid a lot more attention and I'd been a lot more aware of things outside of the narrow focus of the three things I had to get done at a time.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, I mean, we often hear in construction, it's like you're herding cats out there. It's just a lot going on. You're performing in the circus every day, juggling acts and all kinds of things. So, it is a common thing. The businesses struggle and don't always make it through those challenges with construction. It's just a tough business, no question about it.

**Randy Brothers:**

Absolutely, yeah.

**Mike Merrill:**

So with that, what would you say as far as, I mean, you wouldn't change anything just because of the valuable

lessons that you learned, obviously if you could fix some things, you'd be more aware. What about the team around you? I mean, is there anything we can learn about that? Any wins or losses as it relates to the people you surround yourself with?

**Randy Brothers:**

Yeah, absolutely. That was probably the biggest catalyst to my demise, was I was wearing all the hats. I was doing everything. I was the guy waking up in the morning going to do the estimates. I was the guy managing the crews. And I was the guy at night going in and framing and having to paint and do some of the labor work. I was also the guy driving around with my checkbook on Fridays trying to pay my subs and pay my help and wearing all those hats trying to do everything in a business. It's really hard to one, identify what your greatest asset is from a strengths perspective to help that business grow. And it's hard to be really good at one thing or two things because you're marginally average at everything else.

I mean, I could have been the best framer in the world, but if I can't spend all my time framing how do I really master that craft? I can be the best business mind or business visionary in the world, but if I'm spending all my time doing all the other things, how do I become the best visionary for my business? So, I had to figure out how to take that plunge of finding and getting other people and surrounding myself with other people that are really good at the things that I'm not good at, and that can also do the things that I shouldn't be allocating my time towards doing.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, I'm having, it might even be PTSD, I'm having flashbacks myself of the construction years where you're... I mean, I remember too laying walls out and thinking I've got some 23 year old kid and I'm like 30 and he's the GC on this big project. And I'm framing all of his houses and I'm thinking, "What's wrong with this picture? I'm seven years older than this kid. Why am I framing houses for him?" And it was the same thing. I was in my own way a lot of times, busy with the hammer and not using my mind to grow the business as much as perform labor.

**Randy Brothers:**

And I was that kid and I still failed. You still aren't able to just naturally do it without really having the right people, systems, processes. I mean, you hear it all the time, right? I'm sure people talk about it all the time. But there's just so much value in people. You have to invest in others. You have to find the right people. And there's some luck, there's some faith, there's things that are outside of your control that have to kind of go right for that to work, but all you can do is focus on you being the best person and understanding what your strengths are and just put yourself out there. And don't be afraid to have uncomfortable conversations and look towards mentors, and ask people who have the success that you want to have, or know what you want to know. Don't be afraid to reach out and ask them, "Hey, can we go to coffee? Can I learn from you? Can you teach me? Can you share with me what you've learned?" I think that was a key catalyst as well, is I wasn't afraid to seek out mentorship.

**Mike Merrill:**

That's great. And it sounds like, again, really if I'm kind of reading between the lines, effective and proper delegation is a gap that probably a lot of young entrepreneurs struggle with, and it sounds like it was something that you were struggling to find as well.

**Randy Brothers:**

Yeah. I had a hard time with it. And then, I was able to work my way through that. And for me, I was lucky because when I kind of switched from wearing all the hats and doing everything to starting a roofing company, I started off knowing that I needed help and I can't do it all myself, because I learned the hard way. So before I ever even started, I had hired my mom, of all people, to help. I knew she balanced me in many ways, so I hired her to help me with the books and help me manage the office. And then together, just piece by piece, continued to grow the business and add the right people. And we made plenty of mistakes, not everybody stuck. The team we have now definitely wasn't the team we had then, but again, you still have to go through, it's like a rite of passage. You've got to just hire and train and develop and if it's not the right person, know when to let them go and know when to bring someone else in.

**Mike Merrill:**

I think it sounds like, I mean, it's really similar, and I'm in the software business now. I mean, you do some different things, obviously as well, as an entrepreneur, but what I'm hearing and what I've heard often is sometimes the people that take you from zero to 1 million aren't the same people that take you from 10 to 20 million. You kind of have to work through that and figure out what those gaps are, who those people are that you can delegate to. I like what you said about focusing on people and process, essentially.

**Randy Brothers:**

Definitely, yeah. It changes, but one thought, I guess one I think that we go through this where we think that we have to hit a home run every time. We have to hire the exact perfect person to get us to that \$10 million, that huge level. But if you have that mindset, you're just going to be stagnant. You're not going to ever get there because you're not going to actually take a risk on this person that's right there in front of you that might be able to be developed into something bigger and better than what you think they are. So, and that's another thing we've learned is, some people that you don't even realize that the potential they have, you go out on a limb, you give them an opportunity, and they may end up being a catalyst or a leader of your company 10 years down the road. You never know. But if you're for that perfect person with a perfect amount of experience every time, I think you're going about it the wrong way.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, that's very interesting and I think you're spot on. What are some of the characteristics that you're really looking for when you're trying to find somebody that's moldable that has that potential, are there certain characteristics or traits or ways that you vet them and have found out to be more effective than maybe what you did previously?

**Randy Brothers:**

Absolutely, and I can't even take full credit because I'm quoting Patrick Lencioni here, a well-known author and works with teams and that sort of thing, but the concept of the three characteristics of humble, you want someone that's humble. They're moldable,

they're teachable, they want to learn and they're not arrogant. You want someone that's humble. You want people that are hungry, motivated, they're hungry, they want to learn, they want to grow. And you want people that are smart and this doesn't mean MBA. This doesn't mean highest score on the SAT. This means that they're just people smart. They're really good with people. They're self-aware and they're sharp in a sense of human to human interaction. Those are the three characteristics that literally we've built into our company and that we're always looking for. And it's easier said than done, but that's the characteristics of people that we're looking for. If you have those three components you can go a long way and you can really develop people into awesome entities, awesome assets for your business.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, and like you said, I think one of the key points that I heard is you got to give them an opportunity. So, you kind of have to extend, maybe put a little bit of extra faith in them to allow them to bloom and flourish into something more.

**Randy Brothers:**

I love that you mentioned that, because I think, and I talk about this when I'm coaching or speaking or something, I talk about this where we as entrepreneurs, as leaders, as owners of companies, we have an incredible gift, an incredible blessing that we're able to create opportunities for other people, yet we don't take advantage of it. We're scared. We don't take ownership of the fact that we literally can create jobs and create opportunities for people that can define their family for generations. That's big if you think about that. If you can actually process that and take ownership of the gift you have to give to others as an entrepreneur and as a business owner, why wouldn't you grow? Why wouldn't you invest in people? Why wouldn't you extend opportunities to good people that just want to do right by their families and wants to be a part of something bigger than themselves.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, I love that. I think back to when I was in construction and that was something that I would talk with my staff about all the time is we're impacting

hundreds and even thousands of lives every day by what we're doing. We have hundreds of people that are working on our projects and their families are counting on that revenue and that opportunity, and so I love that you mentioned that. If you've got that potential and that drive and that ability, you've been blessed with those gifts, for lack of a better term, or talent, I don't think you can be satisfied just being another sheep in the herd. You really need to stand up and fill those shoes.

**Randy Brothers:**

Yeah, absolutely. If your only focus is to provide for yourself and your family, great, that's totally fine. But why be an entrepreneur? Sure, you can be a one person, start a business, that sort of thing. But what's the old saying? If you're not growing, you're dying. I think, we start businesses, it's not about money it's about freedom. We want to earn freedom to spend time with our families, to watch our kids grow up and to do what we want when we want, to travel and to not have to worry about the financial aspects of it. The best pathway to freedom is to build a system and a process within your business that allows for consistent, measurable growth, but also through development of other people and development of leaders. And that allows you to get that freedom that you want, that's the reason why you started your business.

**Mike Merrill:**

I love that you just said the development of leaders. So really, your role is to help empower them and give them an opportunity to help, again, lead others. So, you're really kind of like the shepherd leading your flock, so to speak.

**Randy Brothers:**

Yep, absolutely.

**Mike Merrill:**

So, I was going to ask you what your why is, and I mean, I heard a lot of things in there that I think are a part of that, for sure. But I mean, if you were to boil it down to why are you doing this? I mean, a lot of companies that struggle or fail, fall on their face as you said, they might tuck tail and run and go do something completely

different. Go get a job working somewhere else, auto mechanic or something just completely different. Why did you come back to construction and why are you so passionate about it still today?

### **Randy Brothers:**

Well, construction led to my demise or failure or, I don't even want to call it that, but I led to that place through construction, but it was construction that also brought me out of that place and provided me with an amazing life, an amazing family and amazing opportunities. So, I owe it to the industry, my life, and I'm passionate about helping other people have similar experiences and similar opportunities and helping guide them along their journey of seeing what the true fruits can be in the construction roofing space. But if you were to just narrow it down when it comes to roofing specifically, I launched my business with a why, or we established the why of challenging the status quo.

And I love this, I took it directly from Apple, right? It's like, do something differently. How can we go into a market and challenge the status quo and then look for ways to differentiate yourself in all facets of business and find ways to find niches and grow your business and capture different markets and segments and different ways of doing things that can separate you? And that mindset has really led to some awesome opportunities, growths, failures, all of the above, but we've grown a lot through that. And the second component is what we just talked about, and that is creating opportunities. I truly take ownership. I feel like I'm put on this earth and I'm an entrepreneur and I was given the entrepreneurial gifts that I have because I'm able to create opportunities for people. And I take ownership of that and I love that. That's kind of my why, is really challenge the quo and create opportunities for others.

### **Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, I love that. I can relate to that where you feel just such this strong urge and you're compelled. You feel like it's almost a calling, like you said, this is what I was meant to do. I think that is rare. I think it's unique as an individual that you've been able to identify that and then channel it, and actually take ownership of that to help guide and direct you. Because I know one of the challenges in any business is finding employees or

team members, partners in your business essentially, to help build that vision, that are a good fit. I'm curious what types of characteristics do you look for in trying to find people that line up with your vision of your why?

### **Randy Brothers:**

Well, a couple different components. To dissect that a little bit, I think as humans we have a natural tendency to want to find people and surround ourselves with people who are just like us. And I think as business entrepreneurs we have to think differently. You can't just surround yourself with a whole bunch of people just like you. That's a recipe for failure. You have to look for people that are uniquely different, but that also share the same value set. If you have the same values and the same big picture and that sort of thing, great. But a different way of approaching things and in different strengths, I think that's the actual recipe for success.

### **Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, interesting. Yeah, I like that. So really, I mean, if you've got the same... we always talk here about planting a flag up on the hill, on the mountain, and that's where we're all headed and everybody knows that. And we all may take different paths to get there, but the key is that we never lose sight of that flag. And that every step that we take is going to take us closer to the direction of getting to that destination and that's something you can measure off of. If this doesn't get me closer to that, then I probably shouldn't be doing it. Right?

### **Randy Brothers:**

Yeah. Well, and also you want to add the component of, if you get to the top of that hill and you plant that flag and you're having to look down at other people, that's the wrong mentality. It's not just for you, it's for everybody to come up to that level and to bring as many people with you to the top of the mountain as possible. I think that's where some of that intrinsic value comes from.

### **Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, we win together, right?

**Randy Brothers:**

Absolutely. All ships rise, right?

**Mike Merrill:**

That's it. I love it. Yeah. So, I think from what I've seen and what I've witnessed myself is when you can have that kind of synergy and kind of followership where people are really buying into that direction and that vision that you have, people are empowered. It feels like employees want to be a part of that team. They want to win. We all want to win. I very rarely meet anybody that says they don't care about winning at something. So, how do you do that and still maintain a level of kind of control and direction in case you've got to kind of steer someone back in line or correct somebody that maybe wanted to approach something that didn't fall within your value system?

**Randy Brothers:**

Establishing clear expectations all the way across the board. Our job as leaders is to... as CEOs, as fiduciaries, as bosses, as founders... is to lead, teach and inspire others. And you can do that in a multitude of ways, but leadership through empowerment is something that we really practice and I love that you mentioned that, because we want to empower our team to make decisions to learn from their mistakes and to make mistakes and to not operate out of fear. But, you've also got to establish clear lines of expectations, key performance indicators, really defined roles like this is your job. This is your role within the business, stay between these lines and make decisions and push yourself forward, we will support that. Once you start going outside those lines, then we're going to have to reel you back in and get you back in line with what your purpose is for this specific business or the specific project that we're trying to complete.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, I like that you mentioned, it sounds like you're saying failure is kind of okay. Like that's just part of the process, right? Part of perfection is failing forward. Right?

**Randy Brothers:**

Yeah. Ask every entrepreneur, everybody you meet or you bring onto this show, ask them what is the single most important catalyst for their learning? What's that universal answer going to be? Failure, mistakes. Yet, we run our business completely opposite. We run our business as if you can't fail, do everything you can not to make mistakes, and then we hold people back because we're afraid that they're going to make mistakes, or that we made a mistake by letting them fail or by letting them make a mistake that's catastrophic for the company. But the reality of it is, how many mistakes are actually catastrophic to the company? Most owners are the only ones getting to make that level of mistake. Right?

So, you kind of got to be able to know when to kind of let that leash out a little bit, because you've learned and grew because of your mistakes and your failures. Why not have a culture where someone can fail and learn and grow and make up for their mistake without fear of losing their job or fear of being ridiculed or fear of some other negative thing happen to them from their leadership team.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah. I mean, you think as a child, "Oh no, dad's home." Or if you're afraid of someone's going to lower the boom on you because of something, then you're running scared. You're operating in a totally different place than being proactive and taking ownership. I think it's empowering when people can... and we all struggle with this, I certainly do, owning those mistakes and being okay with it. Maybe putting those out in front and saying, "You know what? Yeah, I screwed up and I'm not going to do it again, but I'm going to learn from it, but I definitely made that mistake and I don't want to do that again."

**Randy Brothers:**

Yeah, and I think we have a natural tendency when it comes to self-awareness, where we're naturally going to act the way we learned or the way we were brought up or whatever. And maybe there are some underlying things where we worked for other bosses or our parents were rigid and like, "You failed, you messed up," and caused that fear inside of us. So, therefore, we have a natural tendency to lead with fear, whether

we even are aware of it or not. We lead in a sense that, "You made a mistake, I'm going to yell at you and belittle you right in front of everybody and make you make it right." Versus the empathetic approach of, "What did you learn from this? Did you learn from this? How do we fix it and make it better?"

We can't have this mentality of everybody's replaceable. If you lead your company from a perspective of everyone's replaceable, man, you will be replacing them. And they're not going to want to perform, and they're not going to perform to their best ability because they're fricking afraid. They're afraid of losing their job. They're afraid of letting you down. They're afraid of not performing well. So, they're not going to ever reach their full potential with that sort of leadership strategy. And a lot of us just aren't aware that we're doing it. So, let's do some self-awareness and really look inside at how we're leading our people and how we can make the changes ourselves and take ownership of our own roles as leaders to help empower our subordinates to be the best versions of themselves.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, I think to your point, it seems like sometimes if we harp on those things in the negative, sometimes it's just self fulfilling prophecy. And then, we're excited or almost like we're smart because we said, "I knew you were going to do that. I knew that was going to happen." And that's not a safe place for a team member to be. If your goal is to work together to build something great, you're going to run out of people to turn to when you need some other hands, like you were saying.

**Randy Brothers:**

Yeah, very much so.

**Mike Merrill:**

So, what sorts of technology tools do you use, or do you advocate for, to help manage employees, to kind of give them those rails to stay within to provide direction of what they're doing and being accountable for their production in the work that they complete?

**Randy Brothers:**

Oh, man, I know we're trying to wrap this thing up, but that's a whole nother podcast because I'm borderline millennial and I'm all about the technology. Our company is a hundred percent paperless. Everything from our contract to everything we do is all digital and the foundation of that is a great CRM system. So, whatever industry you're in, you've got to have a great CRM, customer relationship management system, that you can anchor everything you do. And for me, I prefer a system that is customizable, that also integrates with a bunch of other platforms, a bunch of other software. So I mean, if you were to total it up, we're probably using 10, 15 different softwares day in and day out to help run our business.

Everything from hail tracking apps to photo-taking apps to time tracking apps, what you're doing and all these other things. So yeah, the technology will help you build duplicatable, repeatable, scalable processes in your business and if you're not constantly looking for ways to improve and leverage technology, you're probably going to get beat at some point. You're probably not going to scale and grow like you want to, because you better believe your next door neighbor, your competitor, is looking at technology to find ways to improve their business.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, if you're not using tech in construction today, you're late, you're behind.

**Randy Brothers:**

Oh yeah, way late.

**Mike Merrill:**

Your competitors are.

**Randy Brothers:**

Oh yeah.

**Mike Merrill:**

No question about it.

**Randy Brothers:**

Your competitors are creating technology.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, that's true. So, maybe we'll have to connect on another day and go down that rabbit hole for a bit, because I'm sure we could riff on that for quite a while.

**Randy Brothers:**

Yeah. Well, if you ever watch my podcast that you mentioned earlier, the Start, Build, Grow Show, we're sponsored by what I call kind of in my roofing space, the core four. Technologies, and it starts with the CRM, which is JobNimbus that we use and it's integrated with a number of other technologies. The other three are for those contractors... in our market, we get a lot of hail damage and hail happens, so Hail Trace is another one to trace that and gather data and information to know where homes are damaged. So, Hail Trace is another one. CompanyCam, I'm sure you're familiar with that one, and that's photo documentation. You take photos of everything all the way across the board in contracting, and photo and video is just, if you're not doing that you're way behind the times. So, definitely do that. And then, estimating software that we use called SumoQuote. Those four to me, I think, that's the core four of technology that you must have in order to position yourself to be at the top level of your game in roofing right now.

**Mike Merrill:**

That's great. Yeah, I love where your mind and your direction are on those things. With your Roofing Academy, do you bundle software like that or do you just have recommendations or packages or how does work?

**Randy Brothers:**

All of the above, actually. I have different levels of membership that includes some of those software, and then I'm partnered with all of them in a way that my members get discounts or extra training. I'll bring them on as guest speakers for my private group sessions and stuff like that. So yeah, I definitely leverage that a lot and try to provide that value and helping companies

get set up with the right technologies to build their companies. Absolutely.

**Mike Merrill:**

Wow, that's great. Well, good for you. That's much needed in the industry and although we might think everybody's kind of catching up to speed with technology in construction, we're just historically laggards and I think we're still a little bit behind. Half the companies out there really aren't adopting technology as they should be yet.

**Randy Brothers:**

There'll be coming around if I have anything to do with it. I'm helping them. I try and encourage it.

**Mike Merrill:**

I love it. Well, so to wrap up and we had an awesome conversation today, and like I said, we need to connect up and maybe talk a little bit further on another episode.

**Randy Brothers:**

Let's do it.

**Mike Merrill:**

But what's one kind of hack or process that you've kind of developed or kind of a secret sauce, if you will, or superpower, what's something that you've really kind of harnessed in your business life now that you've learned over these years and how might it help someone else?

**Randy Brothers:**

Man, that's a good question. It could go a couple different ways, but I think I'm going to lead with personally, as I've grown as an entrepreneur and I have multiple businesses and I have my hands in a lot of different things, and I love it. That's what I love to do. And how do you actually do that and be effective and build these things that grow? I've developed a borderline obsession with what I feel is the most important commodity in business, and that's time. So, I'm very, very intentional and borderline



obsessive about my time. If I can delegate it or it can be automated or I can eliminate it, or I can defer, whatever, I'm going to do that. I'm going to prioritize the absolute most important thing at any given time throughout the day, throughout my week, as I'm working through my list of things to do. And I'm very, very adamant and obsessive, borderline obsessive, with my time. I think that's kind of the secret sauce when you really appreciate how valuable time is, it changes your perspective as an entrepreneur.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, well said. Yeah, I love it. Well, that's a great way to wrap up. Well, thank you so much, Randy. I Very much enjoyed the conversation today. We had a lot of fun and like I said, I look forward to doing this again down the road when we have an opportunity.

**Randy Brothers:**

Absolutely. Thanks a lot, Mike. Appreciate you, man.

**Mike Merrill:**

You bet. And again, for those of you listening, checkout Randy's Roofing Academy and also his best-selling book, Start It, Build It, Grow It. I think you'll find a lot more wisdom that we heard today in the pages of those books. In the meantime, if you enjoyed our episode today and the discussion Randy and I were able to have, please subscribe to the podcast at your favorite podcast platform and leave us a five-star rating review, as well as you can follow us on Instagram at work max underscore. And again, until next time, thank you and we'll catch you on the next one.