



Mike Merrill:

Hello and welcome to the mobile workforce podcast. I am your host Mike Merrill, and today we are sitting down to have a real conversation with Damien Edwards. Damien is the founder of buildertactics.com and also the host of the construction management podcast. So on that show, Damien gives practical tips for construction and contractors, managers that are striving to increase their opportunity for leadership positions and advancement, and achieve new goals. So, if you're looking to grow your career or advance what you're doing within the organization you work for, give the construction management podcast a listen and you will not regret it, so. Welcome, Damien and thank you so much for joining us today.

Damien Edwards:

Yeah, thanks for having me. I'm super excited to sit down and talk to you.

Mike Merrill:

Great, well looking forward to getting to know you. So, first of all, I'm super curious listening to some of your podcast episodes and kind of looking at some of the content that you have out there. Now tell me what drives you to be an advocate for construction managers?

Damien Edwards:

So I've been in construction for over 20 years now, and the one thing that I know is that that role, construction manager or superintendent, depending on how your company identifies that position is so complex, right. You are a leader, you have to be super organized. You have to have managerial skills, technical skills, negotiating skills. You have to be a creative problem solver. And I feel like once I sat back a couple of years ago I looked around, I was like, there need to be two things. I felt like the position didn't get the kind of respect that it deserved. And when I asked myself why

are construction managers not getting the respect for such a complex position, and it dawned on me that a lot of them weren't representing themselves in a way that really showed people the professionalism that comes from construction managers. So I kind of just started a quest to elevate the position. And really it starts with the construction managers themselves and trying to help them kind of build that position to give it a little bit more status in the corporate world because it's a very complex position.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, in my background too. I've a very similar background to you in residential and commercial construction. And boy, I think you hit the nail on the head, no pun intended. I think with the way people view themselves, or the way that they're referred to, even casually or joking. I think that has an impact on how they're viewed by management and ownership, and I think it's a challenge. So I applaud you for your efforts in helping people to elevate how they carry and present themselves in their position.

Damien Edwards:

Yup. Yeah, I think it's important. I mean, construction managers are responsible, depending on the project you're working on, you can be responsible for 30, 40, \$50 million. And showing up on the job site in a t-shirt and jhorts does not represent the level of responsibility that you've got. So it's really, I think it's important. I've been a construction manager forever. And it's just important that I can do everything that I can to help my brothers and sisters out there represent themselves in a way that's just commensurate with the position that they've got.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, that's wonderful. I always say, I've said it for a long time. But in my business today I help run a software company that sells to construction. So I

haven't left the industry at all, and I'm kind of like you, I'm trying to further the cause of helping others improve. Learn from mistakes and challenges that I've had, or that I've seen work within my line of work. And so, I definitely applaud your efforts to try and raise the bar for others because... Make no mistake, those guys in the field, they are running your business, even if you don't think they are. That's the truth.

Damien Edwards:

Yeah, for sure. I mean they're the face of your company, whether you realize it or not, so.

Mike Merrill:

Well, and the way they carry themselves in front of customers, or owners, or those that we're serving with those projects that are actually paying us and hiring us to complete this work. They need to have confidence in who they're working with and kind of who's managing their project as well. So I think that importance carries throughout, anybody involved, so.

Damien Edwards:

Yeah. Well, it's funny you say that because one of the things I always tell my guys is, the last thing that they want is the client to come out on the job site and think that they have to help them build the structure. And I'm like, well then what are you talking about? I'm like, well listen, if they come out and the place is a wreck. And there's trash everywhere, their immediate response, or their thought is going to be, nobody's in control of this job site. So, I'm like, if you don't want them to get involved in your day to day, you need to make sure when they come out to the job site they have 100% confidence in you, the construction manager. And then they're like, oh okay, you're right. I don't want their help.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, right. Well, and that's the other thing that... And I remember being in that position, like you I started in the trades, I was at the bottom, I was the kid sweeping stuff up just out of high school. Picking up boards, straightening nails, whatever was asked of me. And I know for sure, a clean job site and having things organized, and giving the appearance, and also acting

as if you're running a tight ship will also help tighten up the ship.

Damien Edwards:

Exactly. Just builds confidence in your customers.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, so tell me, what types of processes, or skills, or even technologies do tradesmen or people that are out in the field, what do they need to adopt or embody in order to advance their role into leadership?

Damien Edwards:

I think they need to adopt an attitude of learning, of being a lifelong learner. So many times I run into construction managers that have stopped learning. And technology changes so quickly. And even just, not just computers, but building technologies. The way we flash something, the mix for concrete. Everything is constantly evolving, it's constantly getting better, it's constantly just changing.

And the best thing that I can tell anybody is just never stop learning. The second you think you know everything, you're done. Then you don't know anything, because things will change so rapidly, if you're not constantly asking your trade partners, or your vendors, or whoever about new technologies, new products, new ways of doing things, you're done.

I recently interviewed a guy, and I asked him that same question. I was like, hey, what have you learn recently? And he's like, pah. What do you mean? I've been doing this for 20 years. And I was like, oh okay. You know technology changes? And he was like, yeah I'm good. I was like, okay. Next.

Mike Merrill:

The old adage of, you can't teach an old dog new tricks. Those old dogs are not surviving in this environment nearly as well.

Damien Edwards:

You know they're really not. They're really not, and it's an issue. Because there's a huge, you know there's

a huge gap right now between new guys coming in, and guys that have been doing it for 20 and 30 years. And the guys that have been doing it for 20 and 30 years are used to paper schedules, fax machines, I call everybody.

And the guys that are new, grew up with technology. And not just technology but rapidly changing technology. And they don't want to do things... They're not going to sit there and write everything down on a piece of paper and then make a bunch of phone calls. They're going to text, they're going to jump on an app, they're going to jump on new, whatever the software system is that we're using. And they're going to do it all from their phone, and they're make it look super easy. Which makes me crazy sometimes. But that's what they do. And the two... So you've got these older guys with all the technical knowledge in the world as far as sticks and bricks, trying to mentor a younger generation that is like, look, I don't need to memorize all that stuff because I have all the information I need right here in the palm of my hand.

Mike Merrill:

I got Google.

Damien Edwards:

Yeah, I can Google it. I can look up the technical standards in 30 seconds. And it's tough, it's a tough... I deal with quite a few construction managers, and it's a tough relationship to bridge because there's that generational gap in between them. So, we're getting there, but it's definitely challenging right now in construction.

Mike Merrill:

It's painful, no question about it. I mean, in my organization today, we sell software to contractors. So, we deal with and hear these objections every single day. Now they're last and last, it feels like the bar has been raised enough that people understand, you're going to have to use an app, you're going to have to use mobile devices. Everybody's got iPads and things that we didn't have when I started. I mean, my first boss had a brick phone, and he was the only guy on the... I mean, within a country mile, that probably had one. It's like two or three bucks a minute. Some cellular one.

You could drive a nail with the thing. But nowadays, you can't throw a rock without hitting a six year old kid with an iPhone, so.

Damien Edwards:

I know. Right. I was going to say, the great thing about those brick phones, was they were great for throwing against the wall when you were super frustrated. And they would just bounce off the ground, you could pick it up and still use it.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, it was a stress management tool.

Damien Edwards:

That's it. That's it, so.

Mike Merrill:

But lots of changes, which... Going back to something you said originally. Kind of a word was popping up in my mind. It almost sounds like you're saying field personnel need to kind of brand themselves and brand the organization in a way where it's not just... I mean that logo has to shine through them, their interactions, how they behave, how they interact. Are you seeing people step up and do a better job of that?

Damien Edwards:

Well, I think that the guys that really do a good job of kind of self branding... So there's two brands right, that we represent when we're out there on the job. We represent ourself, and we represent the company that we work for. And it's super important to understand the company that you work for. What are their values? What's their goal? What are they trying to put out to the public? So, if we can understand the brand that we work for, whether it's ourselves, or whether it's another company, and strive to represent that brand.

I'll give you an example. And I always use Mercedes and Lexus as an example when I'm talking to construction managers. Because I'm like, what do you think of when you think of Mercedes? And they're like, quality. German engineering. I'm like great. What do you think about when you think of Lexus? And they're

like, same thing, quality, thing never breaks. And I'm like awesome. Now what do you think of when you look at a construction manager, your buddy down the street? And they're like, oh that guy. Cigarette in his mouth, he's always eating doughnuts or whatever. I'm like really? Is he representing quality? Is he representing luxury? And, if the answer is no, then he's probably not representing the brand well.

So if you're building luxury homes or whatever, you need to exude that in your own brand. So when you wake up in the morning you need to look at yourself. And I tell this to guys all the time. Listen, you're walking out this... And I always use jhorts as an example, because they drive me crazy. But I'm like look, if you're walking out the door, if you're representing... If you want people to look at you like you're a leader, and you're the manager that you think you are. If you look at yourself in the mirror and you're wearing a t-shirt and jorts, you're probably not representing that image the way you think you are.

So, when I interact with a customer, I'm always in a collared shirt... I'm a little unbuttoned today, I'm a little casual. But usually I'm a collared shirt, khaki pants, clean shoes, because I'm representing myself, A. I want them to understand that I'm a serious professional. And B, I'm representing the company that I work for, and I want them to understand that I'm serious about that.

And it's not just that, when your customers see that, that you represent yourself well and your company well, they have confidence in you. But more importantly, when your managers see that. When they're looking around, they're like, hey we need to promote somebody, we need a new manager or whatever. And they see somebody that's representing themselves and their company well, that's the first candidate they're going to choose. Maybe you won't get it the first time around, but if you keep that recognition up, that you know how to represent yourself and your brand, it'll come to you. There's no question about that, so.

Mike Merrill:

Well I love that. So the rusty old ford look isn't what you're after?

Damien Edwards:

It's really not. It's really not. It's funny, I talk to guys all the time. And it's not just the construction managers, it's tradesmen, plumbers. Plumbers crack, you hear about that all the time. And it's not a myth. But I know plumbing companies that require tucked in shirts, clean uniforms, because they're trying to get away from the old stereotype of... I hate to pick on plumbers, but. They're trying to get away from this stereotype and represent themselves as the technicians, and the technical professionals that they are. Because I got to tell you, if you've ever hired a plumber, that isn't cheap. Those guys are making a great living.

Mike Merrill:

A lot of those guys are very smart too. And especially when you're talking with their hands, in the trades. Solving complex problems physically, not just mentally. But they got to not only think it through, but actually execute on it. And, it's a different skill. And there is great value in it. I mean, I know when I was a general contractor... Man, those guys would feed my family.

Damien Edwards:

For sure. No question about it. It's funny you say that, you mentioned that because trades people these days are so sophisticated. I had a young construction manager, he was having an issue with a trade partner. And I said, well, how are you going to resolve this? And he's like, well I told them. And I said okay, well did you fix the problem? He's like, no. And I said, all right. And this went on for a little bit. And I was like, listen, you need to get all your notes together, all your correspondence together. We're going to sit down with this trade partner, and we're going to go through. We're going to look at our schedules, and we're going to go through this and show them where they need to improve. And he looked at me and said, oh it's all phone calls. And I said, what are you talking about? And he said, well I didn't have any correspondence. And I said, you didn't text, or email, or send them anything through our scheduling software, nothing? He said no. And I said, well, we're not going to sit down with that contractor, because he's going to eat us alive. And he's like, what are you talking about? We're the general contractor, blah, blah. And I said no man, you don't understand.

Trades are very sophisticated, and I said they know when... What's going to happen is we're going to sit down and we're going to say you didn't show up on this day. And they're going to say, you weren't ready and here's why, here's a picture. And then we're going to look foolish. And then you're going to say, well they didn't do this. And they're going to say no, you weren't ready, or this wasn't ready, or whatever, and here's why. And they're going to show it to us, because I know they track these things. And they use software and their iPads to do it. And this young construction manager was like, oh. And I said, so before you embarrass yourself and me, you need to start tracking this thing so that you need to be at least as sophisticated as the trade contractor that we're going to sit down with. And they're like, okay, got it, so.

Mike Merrill:

I love that. Interesting. Whether it's a lawsuit or just a disagreement, conversation. I always say, he who has the most data wins.

Damien Edwards:

Absolutely, every time, every time. It's funny, I sat down with a contractor not long ago, who didn't... I guess he thought I was like everyone else. And I had a stack of data. And I said, and he... We sat down for the first 20 minutes, he told me how terrible we were and everything else. And I said, okay, let's go through your issues. And I started flipping through it, and about a quarter of the way through it, he was like, okay, okay. I get it. And I was like, I was just more prepared. So he who has more data, wins.

Mike Merrill:

Agreed. And today, we both know this well. You, because you work for a very large organization. And me, because I work with organizations everywhere. There's really no excuse not to have these tools in place that the technology is available like never before. Paper and spreadsheets are dead when it comes to documentation.

Damien Edwards:

For sure. For sure. It's funny, I teach a class on... I teach a couple of classes at a local community college. And

one of the class I teach is schedule management, or production scheduling or something like that. I'm a great professor. Anyway, one of the things I always tell people. I always talk about technology and how it's changed in construction, and how modern schedules are time machines. And I always tell them, listen a modern schedule because of the reporting aspects of them, they will tell you what happened yesterday, what's going to happen today, and what's going to happen tomorrow. And every bit of it is captured forever. So, they become one of the most valuable tools, if you're going to... You talk about data collection. If one of our trade partners shows up on the job and we're not ready, he can just go right into our schedule and say you weren't ready, and vice versa. If they don't show up, the construction manager can go in and say, hey, your trade didn't show up this day, and it's captured, so.

Mike Merrill:

If you're not ready for them, you don't really want them there either. You don't want them breathing down the neck of the other slob, who's now going to cut corners, shortcut. I mean, nobody wins when we're having those... I was thinking earlier today talking with somebody. And I think back, years ago, I was a general contractor going through this site, and we had a plumbing test. And it was just a water test. And there's water leaking out all over in the basement, and trying to figure out what's going on. And I have this picture somewhere on an old blackberry here, I don't know where it is now, because this was a long time ago. But an electrician had literally drilled a hole and fished a wire right through a three inch ABS drain. They put on right through the pipe. I'm thinking, okay, this is adorable. This is the new guy, or it's somebody with a beef that's trying to start something and...

Damien Edwards:

It could be either one. It all depends.

Mike Merrill:

Lots of funny stories with those types of things. But really, again, I thought at the time the electrician probably wanted to go first. But, whatever the case, certainly the organization, the flow, just like you mentioned, the scheduling. There's really no excuse not

have a better handle on that. And I think the biggest thing, and something that I hope that our listeners will adopt and embrace further if they haven't already is, getting those tools in place that can give them real time, live field data, on the site visibility. The same version of the truth, right, which is the actual version, that everybody has access to. And it sounds like you're used to utilizing tools like that also.

Damien Edwards:

Absolutely. It's funny, when I first started it was, I had a piece of paper with a grid on it, and it was supposed to be a calendar. And we would write the days of the week, and who's supposed to be, and what lot, and we would fax it. And that was what we did. And the weird thing is, I actually got into... I used to work for T-Mobile, before I got into construction, in like the late 98, 99, something like that. And when I got to construction, I was like holy smokes. These guys are about 50 years behind the times.

But, construction has caught up. And I think in the past, I'd say 10, maybe not even 10 years, in the past eight years definitely, construction companies have caught up and are catching up in a big way. Because now I'm seeing everybody on the job site has an iPad, everybody on the job side is using their iPhone. Although, I do have one guy that still uses a flip phone. It always makes me laugh, but anyway. But, technology has definitely, I think, changed the way we build things, and it continues to change the way we build things. And is going to... I can't wait to see where we are in three, four, five, 10 years with construction technology, because it's amazing how quickly things are evolving.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, and I think, the other thing to that I'm seeing is, that it's not just the big guys anymore. The little guys have this stuff. The 10, 20, 30 men trades contractors, they've got all the tech, all the gear just like you're saying. I'm seeing logo-ed vans and nice logo-ed shirts, and like you said tucked in. I mean, it is a different market out there today then maybe 20, 30 years ago.

Damien Edwards:

Well, I think one of the things that is driving that is the lack of qualified labor. I think people are realizing that...

And I always, I don't want to get on a soapbox. But for years and years and years, people have been told that if you don't get a college degree, you're never going to amount to anything. And it kind of diminished the tradesmen out there, trades people, I guess will say.

But in the meantime, trades people run around making a great living. Their charging hundreds of dollars an hour versus somebody that's fresh out of college, and can barely find they're... They're making coffee. And I think what's happened is a lot of these trade companies have said you know what, if I want to attract the best most qualified people, we have to, just like brand recognition, we have to represent ourselves as being the most professional company out there, so that people want to come with us. And the younger generation, you're not going to hand them a fax machine and say do business this way. You've got to hand them the laptop, the iPad, the iPhone, or whatever. They need smart technology, because that's what they know, that's what they're used to. And you can't go backwards with that.

Mike Merrill:

It's funny you're telling that experience. I remember back when we first came out with a product that worked on palm pilots to collect time and labor data, instead of time cards and spreadsheets. And I remember a contractor, he was almost angry at me. He picks up the palm pilot, I'm in a trade show at a booth. And he holds it, he says, "You will never see a day where field guys are going to have a device like this in their hand, you're absolutely crazy." I said, I appreciate your perspective, I understand how you must feel that way. I said, "but hide and watch buddy, because this trains a coming."

Damien Edwards:

Yeah. Oh my God. 100%.

Mike Merrill:

Who knew that the iPad would even be invented back then, so.

Damien Edwards:

It's funny, I had a guy years ago. In 2005, I worked for a company, and they were very forward thinking. And they give us all these Toshiba, it was like an iPad, but it was a Toshiba tablet, very expensive. And I remember I broke one on the job site, I leaned against a brick wall, I had it slung on my back and I broke it. And my manager was standing there, and I was like, oh my God, I can't believe I broke this. And he goes, who cares. And he goes on this 15 minute rant about what a waste of time it is and how stupid it is. And I was like.

And in the meantime, I was able to take pictures and write on it and send it to the trades right away. And he's like, I don't care if you broke it, send it back to IT. Tell me you don't need that thing. And I was like, I do need this. And I broke it, and I don't want to tell anybody I broke it because it was super expensive. So, but my phone can do everything that that tablet did way faster and more efficiently. So it's crazy how technology has changed.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, and I think, again, where construction historically or certainly as an industry we're laggards in technology adoption. But I think that wave is coming, and change is upon us. And people are coming out of school, even high school. Mike, I got a daughter in eighth, ninth grade, and they've got netbooks that are school issued. They're doing homework on it, they're checking their grades. I mean she knows where she's at on her grades every day. I remember being surprised like, am I getting an A? Is it a B-, a B+. And you don't know until the end. And you only had like two days to fix it. And so, even on that level our children are being taught and groomed to adopt and utilize and leverage technology like never before.

Damien Edwards:

Hell yeah. It's funny, I have a daughter right now she's learning to build. She's actually building robots in college. And the first time I saw a bulldozer operated without an operator, and the fork is going up, the buckets going up and down. I just remember standing there like, oh... At first, I thought it was out of control, like somebody had put it in gear and it was just going. And the operator is standing there with a control pad, and he's like nah man, it's all GPS. I don't even have to

be in that thing anymore. And I was standing there like, this is incredible. And that's when it hit me. I was like, construction is finally catching up. So, it was amazing. Blew me away.

Mike Merrill:

And then that kids probably saying, I told my mom that being good at Xbox would help me one day.

Damien Edwards:

She should have let me stay up all night every night.

Mike Merrill:

I was practicing for my profession.

Damien Edwards:

Yeah, so.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, it's a different time. I know when I used to operate equipment, skid, steer, Bobcat, backhoe, whatever. And yeah, today, looking at those machines with GPS and all the touchscreen, showing everything you would ever want to see: idle time, and fuel consumption, and how many motions and movements of this bucket, how many scoops. All these things that you couldn't even care about before because there was really no way to collect the data, and even manage it.

Damien Edwards:

Yeah. It's funny, I took my youngest out to a job site and I put him up in a bulldozer, and it had a touchscreen, everything's joysticks. And I said, what do you think about this man? This thing is really cool huh? Is that my perspective was, I was thinking, an old school tractor from 20 years ago. His perspective, because he's young and all he knows is technology. He was like yeah this cool. And I'm like, that's a touchscreen. And he's like, yeah, I can see that. And I was like, okay I guess not so cool... Yeah. So, kind of funny.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, but it is nice that finally construction is actually leveraging those tools and actually building things better, safer, quicker, more efficiently, greener, all the things that everybody wants. Nobody wants to... You don't want gaps, nobody's trying to intentionally build something poorly. Though, it's a different time for sure, so.

Damien Edwards:

Yeah, absolutely.

Mike Merrill:

Now you just kind of, looking at some of your background, I noticed you've written actually a book that's now released in an audio book. And it's called Builder Tactics, is that right?

Damien Edwards:

Builder Tactics: A Practical Guide to Construction Management. Yup.

Mike Merrill:

Okay. So tell us a little bit about that and what kind of drove you to write a book? I mean that's not an easy thing you just, have an epiphany one night and say here.

Damien Edwards:

It was not an easy thing. So, I wrote it because, the one thing that I know for sure. So I'll just give you some background real quick. So, I'm the only member of my immediate family to graduate from college. And when I graduated, it took me... After I got out of the Navy, it took me about 10 years to graduate from college. And I always had this attitude that, subliminally, not that I didn't deserve to graduate from college, but it was just something that we just didn't do. And once I graduated, I was 32. It dawned on me, you can do anything you want to do, as long as you do it. The only thing that can stop you is yourself.

And at that point I wrote this list down of things that I wanted to do. And on that list, why I wanted to start my own company, I want to write a book. A couple of other

things. And I slowly started ticking away at this list. And then, about two years ago, I said... I'm a voracious note taker, constantly writing things down. And I was like, I have all these notes, I still haven't written that book. And I was like, I'm going to write a book. And I started the process, and it was a long process. But I started the process, and I got to the point where I got to about 100 pages, and I was like this is, I've written this book.

And really what it is, it's a really down to earth practical way to, or advice if you will, or manual to run a job site. I don't get into schedule management, because everybody's got their own schedule. But I do get into things like sediment erosion control, where I break it down to the easiest thing to... The most important thing to remember about sediment and erosion control is keep the dirt where it's supposed to be. It's that simple. If it stays there, thumbs up. You're doing a great job. Keep the job site clean. Things like how to manage your site. And one of the bigger things that I added to the book was leadership and how to manage people. Because as a construction manager, I mean that's 90% of your job. The sticks and bricks will fall into place, as long as you have quality trades on your job site. But how you manage them will determine the outcome of that project, every single time.

Mike Merrill:

How fascinating to me to hear you say, after everything you've learned and know, and even writing the book. That you came up with, people are the secret ingredient.

Damien Edwards:

People are the secret. No question about it. There's no question about it. If you have a good team, you're golden. If you don't, or you miss, or you abuse your team, which I see all the time. Doesn't matter how good you are, if you abuse that team, they will not perform for you. So, or at least they won't perform for you twice.

Mike Merrill:

So, people are the secret. That's the ingredient. I've also heard, kind of as you've laced in, as we have discussed, technology tools. And if people again are that variable, the adoption of those tools or the proper

adoption would also seem to be critical. What have you seen through your experience in the field that has been most impactful? With all this technology and all these changes, back from the brick phone to what we have today. What have you seen that's been the most impressive or impactful to you?

Damien Edwards:

I would say, from a technology standpoint, the smartphone has been the most impactful, and for a couple of reasons. I mean I kind of go back and forth between the iPad and a smartphone. Just because an iPad is a little bigger, or a tablet. But the ability to communicate complex drawings and scopes of work instantly. So, it used to be back in the day, you would go out to a job site and... I'll just give you an example. You'd say, hey, you got to finish whatever. And they said, well, that's not my scope. Oh, well let's walk to the other side of the job site, we'll open up the filing cabinet, we'll pull your contract out, we'll find the scope and we'll verify that.

Well, now it's like, oh, it's not. Hold on. Boom. Oh, yeah, it is. It's right here. Or with drawings. Somebody's putting something together. And you're like, wait a second, I don't think that matches the detail. Oh yeah, sure it does. Well hold on let me check. Boop, instant. Here's a picture of what it's supposed to look like. So, the fact that we have information immediately available to us now. Not only has it shaved a tremendous amount of time off of our to do list and just our production schedule. It's made building properly almost foolproof.

I mean you still have to be able to find the information. But it's like, boom. I've got the information, here it is, we're done. You can send it to the person you're talking to, you can airdrop it to them, you can email it to them instantly. And information is no longer, or that the availability of information is no longer a hurdle in construction, or really any industry at that point. But in construction, it was always something, well let's go back and check the plans. I hope I have the right version of the plans. Or let me call somebody, get the scope of work. We've eliminated all of that with technology, and it's in the palm of our hand. It's amazing.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, that is incredible. And yeah, I would agree that the technology and the availability of mobile tools to manage that.

Damien Edwards:

Definitely.

Mike Merrill:

Live field data, real time. One single source of truth where everything is collaborative, and people have access to the same information.

Damien Edwards:

Yeah, and the most current information.

Mike Merrill:

Right. Yeah. Nobody wants to redo something that they just finished, for sure, so.

Damien Edwards:

Even things like product specs. How something is supposed to be installed. I can't tell you how many times I've been on the job site, I'm like God, are they doing that right? Let me just go to their website and I'll find out. Boom. Oh, here's a white paper on it. Yep. He's got it right. I'm going to tell him, good job and go check on somebody else.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah. The accessibility of information, Google or YouTube. Or, you can watch and see physically how somebody is addressing or solving something, maybe how others are doing it. And then these same tools that companies... Kind of like you're doing, they're sharing best practices, they're collaborating with peers, maybe even competitors in some cases. They're comparing notes. I just love it because I'm passionate about construction, and I love the idea of a rising tide that's going to raise all the ships in the harbor together.

Damien Edwards:

Definitely.

Mike Merrill:

And I think, something else when you're talking about building something efficiently, or the methods of construction today. It used to be the exception when something was done just correctly, and perfect, and right. And now I think not only is it possible but it's likely.

Damien Edwards:

Yeah.

Mike Merrill:

That's a change. So one other thing, I mean, so you've written this book which is fantastic. I'm looking forward to checking that out. But you've got another one coming out-

Damien Edwards:

I do.

Mike Merrill:

On stress management for construction managers, is that what I understand?

Damien Edwards:

It is on stress management and kind of mentally preparing yourself for different situations. So, the book is called Building Zen, how to find inner peace while losing your shit in the middle of the street. And it is literally based on a story that I start the book out... So, years ago I drove onto a job site. And I'll try and condense the story. But I drove onto a job site and there was, it was a disaster. Everything that could, as far as site management goes, everything that could have been wrong was wrong.

And it affected me to the point where I freaked out. I parked my car sideways in the middle of the street. And I jumped, and I'm yelling at everybody with a pulse. And at one point there was all the mud and dirt in the street. And at one point, this forklift goes by and it

catches a rock, because all the mud. Flings it through the air, hits my car, dents my car. I'm so upset about it, I punched my car, break my hand. I'm screaming at everybody. I jump back in my car I speed off. And I'm sitting there, and I'm like, what am I doing?

And then I had this kind of epiphany, and I was like why am I so fucking angry now? Because years ago I wouldn't have handled that situation like that. But now I am. And I started thinking about all the, what was changing. And it dawned on me that one thing that I had stopped doing was... And this is going to sound granola. But one of the things, I had stop doing yoga, I had stopped meditating. I had been training heavily in the martial arts, and I wasn't anymore. Life, kids kind of took that over. And that's when it dawned on me. I have kind of lost my center when it came to... I don't want to say inner peace, but I was no longer doing the simple things that I could do to ground myself.

And I thought, I need to share this with my brothers and sisters out there because construction management is stressful. There are deadlines, you're dealing with millions of dollars. You've got clients, you've got trade partners not showing up. You've got supply shortages, you've got federal organizations and local municipalities breathing down your neck about codes and keeping dirt where it's supposed to be. And it can be very stressful, and it gets to a lot of... Every profession is stressful. Construction management is, I feel, particularly stressful. So, the book is just a series of stories, and advice, and exercises on how to just kind of bring it back to center. And just find a little bit of happiness when things are going crazy.

Mike Merrill:

Wow. Yeah, I love that. Very profound. I think that's one of the old school view of the contractor construction guy, we're rough and tumble, we're rugged, we're tough. We don't have feelings, we don't have emotion. I mean, we can cuss and yell and scrap with the best of them, but we don't have any feelings. We're not people, we're contractors.

Damien Edwards:

That's it.

Mike Merrill:

I love that you found a way to cut through that and get to the core of... Each one of us, we're all people and everybody's generally trying to do a good job. People don't set out to try and perform poorly or build stuff incorrectly.

Damien Edwards:

Yeah, for sure. So, one of the other things that book touches on is listening. I'm sure you've been in meetings where you can say, if you just sit back and watch. You've got a bunch of people talking at each other, and they're not solving any problems. They're all just trying to find validation in their own ideas. So part of the book is, hey you've got to solve complex problems, sometimes you just need to shut up and listen, and try and pick out the best ideas in the room. And try and help everybody else come to the same conclusion. So, hopefully I'll sell more than one. My mom will buy one. So I'm good.

Mike Merrill:

Sign me up.

Damien Edwards:

Well that's two.

Mike Merrill:

Hey it's a start. That's a plan.

Damien Edwards:

It's a start. And I'll be totally honest with you. The book that I wrote, money was never a goal. That goal, like I said in the beginning of this. The goal is to help other construction managers raise their game. So, same with the second book. The goal of the second book is to help other construction managers find some peace.

Mike Merrill:

That's a good balance, right. I think that the-

Damien Edwards:

Yeah, balance is the term. So, and if I can do that then I think it's a win, win. So, that's my goal. That's kind of the goal I set out for a couple years ago, is to help elevate the position. And so, I've been on a mission to do it ever since, so.

Mike Merrill:

That's great. And I love how you cap that off by saying it's really about listening more, and kind of, what I gather listening to understand, not to speak. Sometimes we got it on the tip of our tongue, we just can't wait to get those words out, and trying to interrupt somebody before they finish their thought. We got stuff we want to get off our own chest. So, in leadership or management, especially on construction projects, that listening is a skill that cannot be overplayed I think.

Damien Edwards:

For sure. You nailed it, so.

Mike Merrill:

Awesome. Well, I just to kind of wind down. I've enjoyed this conversation very much. I'm sitting here thinking as we're talking. If you were to kind of look back and pick kind of one strength or kind of a superpower or secret sauce, something that you've really been able to lean on in your career. What is that, and what could you do to give others advice to try and enjoy that same epiphany?

Damien Edwards:

If I was going to give... And I actually, I give this. There's two things that I always tell guys. The first one is, don't ever say that you can't do something. Whether it's a deadline, or whether it's a personal goal, or a professional goal. Don't ever say can't. Because you can do it, you just have to find a way. The only thing stopping you is yourself. So, never use the word. You can do it, it might be challenging, it might be really hard, but you can do it.

And the other thing I always tell guys is to get involved in things. If you want to grow, you can't have tunnel vision on just what you're doing. So most

companies, and most... And it doesn't even matter if it's professional, it could be personally. If you get involved with things going on around you, you will grow personally and professionally, every single time. An example of that. Last time I had to write a resume, I included philanthropic things that I was doing, ways I was volunteering my time. And when I went to the interview, they were like, we see all these things on here, do you get paid for any of this? And I said no, I just do it because it helps the community, it helps me personally, and I'm helping other people.

And it was because of that I was able to get the last position that I got. And anytime you get involved with something outside your comfort zone, you grow and you learn. And if you're a lifelong learner, you can take that experience and you can apply it to what you're doing, what you are being paid professionally to do. And I've just always found that if you get involved with things outside of your scope, it will help you in ways that you can't even imagine, and you won't even realize that it's helping you. So, it just helps you grow personally and professionally. So, I'd say get involved with something.

Mike Merrill:

Fantastic. Oh, what a great way to end. Thank you so much. It's been a very enjoyable conversation.

Damien Edwards:

Yeah, Mike, it's been awesome. It's been awesome sitting here talking to you, for sure.

Mike Merrill:

Hopefully we can have an opportunity to do it again in the future.

Damien Edwards:

Yeah, when you come on my show.

Mike Merrill:

Okay. Well that would be great. I would love that. Well-

Damien Edwards:

Awesome.

Mike Merrill:

Well, again, thanks again Damien. Great time today. And thank you to all listeners for joining the mobile workforce podcast, sponsored by AboutTime Technologies and WorkMax. If you like what you heard today or enjoyed some of the tips or tactics that you've heard, please follow us on Instagram at WorkMax underscore, or follow us on iTunes or your preferred method of listening to podcasts. And again, don't forget to give us a five star rating and review if you've learned something valuable here today. So thanks again, and please share the message with others looking to improve their lives and their careers. And take care.