

**Mike Merrill:**

Hello, and welcome to The Mobile Workforce podcast. I am your host, Mike Merrill, and today we are sitting down with Keith Post, CEO. Steve Little, President and Head Coach, and Jayne Williams, the CFO and safety manager of KPost Roofing out of Dallas, Texas. So for those of you that may not have heard our episode yet from last week, just wanted to get a brief background from KPost. So, how do each of you fit into the leadership, starting with Keith?

**Keith Post:**

I'm the CEO, and I work in a lot of different areas. I am over the service group right now, and the estimators, and I work with Steve in Sales. So I've got my fingers in a little bit of everything, and I help be strategic. So when we're chasing large projects, I usually try and take somewhat of a lead or give direction to the team of how we're going to be successful. Help just push everybody in the right direction so we present well. And then I also work in our educational side of the business, that's really my passion, where I feel like we are giving back to our employees to help make them all better people, better co-workers and better people in their lives.

**Steve Little:**

So I handle the business side of the business. I work in the sales side, I work with the project management team, the legal, banking, surety side of the business and the operations team reports to me as well. And I also am the interface for the industry, either involved with ABC, or NRCA, or Midwest Roofing Contractors, and I share some of the NRCA duties with Jayne.

**Mike Merrill:**

Jayne, how about you?

**Jayne Williams:**

I'm Jayne Williams, I'm CFO and safety officer. I do all the money and the fuel, as we call it, for the company. I also am the safety officer. I am an OSHA 500 trainer and we have from the very beginning had a strong focus on safety. It's number one, get our guys home at night. I also started KPost charities and it's a way for us to give back to the industry and the community that we live in.

**Mike Merrill:**

That's awesome. Well, it sounds like you've got the dream team put together, The trifecta. So today we wanted to talk a little bit about something that I think a lot of contractors really focus on and try and accomplish. I know, Keith, you mentioned you chase large projects. Something that I thought was interesting is I'm aware of your relationship at KPost with the Dallas Cowboys. How did you get that opportunity? Was it something that you deliberately pursued or was it just another project that you were just trying to win like normal? Or how did you guys land that opportunity?

**Keith Post:**

Well, I don't think we pursued being a partner with the Cowboys at first. But when they had, many people remember the old Texas state where the Cowboys started playing. We actually helped the city of Irving put together a spec and coat that building. And that's when our relationship started. And Tom Williams, Jayne's spouse, ran that project for us and created a great platform with the Cowboys and Manhattan Construction, who is a partner with the Cowboys. And from there, we were in our infancy, probably year two or three. And then when they put the new stadium out for bid, we went and presented there. And that's where we put a strategy together, put a team together, and went and presented, and we were successful. And through that project, we got recognized by the general contractor as a leader just on that facility. During the

construction of that project, Jayne's team, her safety leader, Luciano Perez, ran the safety meetings for the project. For 1,500 people on a site, Luciano ran them. That's pretty strong from a roofing contractor.

We had our video done by the TV show Build it Better or... Build it Bigger. Which was pretty cool, which is out on the Internet. So we got some sea legs there. We were still in our infancy, probably five, six years old, on a project we probably had no business in doing in most people's eyes. But we had a very, very strong team, a very tender team, and that led to us going further and we eventually became a partner with them. That's not something that's just to be sneezed about because you get vetted by the NFL. And we went through a process there. And today it's actually led us to open up a residential arm. So it's been a great success.

**Mike Merrill:**

Wow. Steve, what about from your perspective? What was your role in kind of working with the Cowboys organization and procuring that opportunity?

**Steve Little:**

Well, we have a tendency to do a lot of guerilla marketing. We had to be bigger than who we were when we first started. I can remember Jayne doing Excel spreadsheet brochures that she would draw pictures in on projects any of the 11 original employees that we started with were involved in, no matter what company that they were participating in before. And so we would print those off on our... we got a big fancy color copier with staples and collating and stuff like that. And so we're big marketers. So when we got the coating job for the Texas Stadium, which is known as an icon all over the world, it's a stadium that the hole was put in so that God could watch his football team play in. Big Texan type scenario. We promoted that, and then we had big thermometers on the roof while our guys were working and the television station could see them, and that kind of stuff.

And so we would take that information and we would just plaster it all over the city. Well, I can remember when we started on Cowboys Stadium, it ended up being AT&T Stadium, we got the job, we started promoting it. Keith got a phone call one day. And it was from a senior vice president in charge of brand

or marketing or et cetera, that he was coaching their kid in his club soccer team. And he was saying, "Hey Keith, who is this Steve Little guy in your company?" And, "He's stepping on our marks. He's pushing the envelope." And Jayne had warned us that we would get a call like that one day because we had a tendency to push the envelope, drive 80 through a 15 school zone.

And so they wanted to start talking to us because of the kind of quality work we did and the kind of branding that we were doing. And one thing led to another and we ended up hooked up together with each other. And it's been a great ride. We've been successful in doing projects for Blue Star Development, which is the Jones family. We built their world headquarters from a roofing standpoint, the practice field. And it really kind of took this little old West Dallas company that just came out of the blue in 2004 and put us on the map in 2007 or 2006 with the Texas Stadium. And then 2007, eight, nine as we built the new stadium. And it's been a ride the whole time.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, that's no small feat to have your logo next to the Dallas Cowboys logo on it, which I've seen many times out there. So congratulations and kudos on really paving the way for success. And again, a story like that where, again, like you mentioned, you were just a small Texas company that probably was doing a job they didn't belong on necessarily.

**Steve Little:**

Well, what was interesting about that, and it was kind of fun because we won the project from the current partner that was out there, we were the final two people. And we show up with seven photos. And Jayne made sure we had our safety manager there, and we brought Tom Williams, who, by the way, although he has the great recognition of being Jayne's significant other, he also has 28 years as a lieutenant commander in the Navy. So he'd rebuild nuclear power plants inside submarines and aircraft carriers, and Jayne suggested that we go grab him, and he had retired because we had this massive 121 steps. I remember I've walked it many times, from the bottom all the way to the top of Texas Stadium. And we needed somebody that had that wherewithal, somebody that could really understand the significance of an operational achievement like that,

to be in the view of the public. That was the first real public project that we did.

So we brought Tom and we brought the estimator, and we brought the project manager, and Keith and I went to the presentation and we took the Cowboys and the contractor from mobilization to demobilization. And it was supposed to be a 45-minute, we were there for two hours. I had a post-bid meeting and they told us that they were going to think about it for a month and then get back to us, but that we were a quarter-million dollars high. And that they want us to go back and really see what we could do to tighten that up on a four and a half million dollar project. And we got in the car and we were all feeling kind of good about it, but at the same time, we were like, we can't get there. It's not going to happen. So we're kind of all a little sour mouthed on the way back, and the phone rings on the way back, and it's the general contractor. And he said that it was very impressive and they want to go ahead and get us committed.

**Mike Merrill:**

Wow.

**Steve Little:**

We were like "Oh, crap! We got it."

**Jayne Williams:**

Exactly.

**Steve Little:**

You know? We felt good because they told us we were a quarter-million dollars high, because sometimes in the construction business you get a job and it's a large project, and the first thing as the estimator you ask, what went wrong? What did I leave on the table here? What did I do? What more could I have done?

**Mike Merrill:**

What'd we miss? Yeah.

**Steve Little:**

And we're all such cheerleaders, we want to high five each other. And hey, we have a mission, we had a goal, we had a plan. We accomplished it, we won the project. Well, no, our estimators are going, "Oh, what did I leave out? What did I do?" But we didn't have that on the Cowboy project because they told us going in we were hired.

**Mike Merrill:**

Interesting. So, Jayne, I think your role in the background, possibly, was also a key factor. What did you find that was helpful that you were able to kind of help contribute, even if it was less front facing in that kind of project?

**Jayne Williams:**

When we first got Texas Stadium I was scared to death. We have 35,000 cars that go past that icon every day. And the last thing I needed was something rolling off the roof or an employee falling off the roof. I think us being creative in the way that we did it and the way we did safety, and several people were fired for safety violations. And this kind of just said a lot for us that we got up on this project and we did it creatively as far as the way we stocked, how we'd lanyard our tools so that they wouldn't fall out of someone's pocket. And then really stayed on top of the project. We were always involved in it and we made sure that we were there for our customers as well as our employees.

**Steve Little:**

But Mike, she said it right upfront. The minute we get a large project, she has a sick feeling in her stomach.

**Jayne Williams:**

Oh, I do. Big time.

**Steve Little:**

And it grounds us.

**Keith Post:**

So what we do is we have this imaginary Ferris wheel. We put Jayne on it, blindfold her and handcuff her, and

say okay, trust us. Then we spin her. Then she comes out, and she goes, "Okay, okay, okay!"

**Mike Merrill:**

Now she's dizzy.

**Jayne Williams:**

Exactly.

**Keith Post:**

It's trust. It really is trust.

**Jayne Williams:**

I don't think we've gotten a single project that I haven't felt that pit in my stomach at that point.

**Steve Little:**

Including our largest project that we've had in the history of the company, we just... Let's knock on wood, Jayne, I'm knocking on wood. We just are in the probably first third of a 15 million dollar re-roof project on a high-profile client in the Dallas marketplace. The location isn't high-profile, but the client is, and it's a live building to where they make very sensitive items. So we did 14 million our second year in business and this project is 15 million dollars.

**Mike Merrill:**

Wow. Amazing. So one thing I'm hearing is maybe order your shoes a size or two too large and then work like crazy to grow into them. Is that some advice you might give?

**Steve Little:**

And don't forget to tie it around your leg and your ankle at the same time when you go to tie it in.

**Keith Post:**

We want to make sure it fits. That we like that style. We want to make sure it's our style. And so we stay within our lane. And we do check all the boxes. We make sure that when we're dealing with a project, that our sales

team is working the right people. And if we can take price out of the equation, we do. We feel like if we can sell the value of this company and the strength of our team, we'll have the best shot because we've been branded well locally. We don't travel a lot, but we're well known in the metroplex. And it's a good name. It's a very strong name. So I think being proud of something, that's one of the things I'm most proud of, is that across the board we have strong teams, and they love coming to work and trying to do their best. You can't buy that.

**Steve Little:**

You know, if it's a high-profile project in town, we're typically on it because we've put ourselves in that position. We've staged ourselves that you're going to have fewer competitors on the larger projects, and you have to have the capacity to do it. And part of that capacity comes with the safety, having that safety record, having the financial wherewithal to be able to fund the project, having the capacity with surety if you need to bond it, and having the history of when something goes wrong, because things go wrong in construction, it's what we did to fix it rather than what we say we're going to do to fix it.

And we try to align ourselves with credible clients, whether they be on the multi-facility side, health care, industrial manufacturing, or on the general contractor side, that they're tier one generals or tier two that specialize in the specific area. And we just build relationships of trust. We not only have to have it with our employees, but we have to have it with our clients. We have to have it with our vendors. And it makes me think of the strategic partner dinner that we do every year, although this year we're not able to because of COVID. When Jayne came up with the idea that we need to give back and we need to give thanks to the people that helped us get started, I looked at her like she had six eyes. I was like, "Jayne, these are the vendors. Okay? We but from them. We get business from them."

**Keith Post:**

And nobody else had done this.

**Steve Little:**

Pulls me back by the back of my collar, sits me down, and said, "We built integrity with our employees. We have to do the same thing with our vendors." And more times than not she was right. Right?

**Keith Post:**

Yeah, it's something that our partners look forward to every year. They don't all get to know each other until this one meeting and now you have your surety, you have your attorneys, you have your top vendors. In the last few years we'd start bringing key employees who are part of the upper management and who make the same run. And I think it's pretty a special meeting of the minds for that one evening and breaking bread. It's something that not many people in many industries do. But it was Jayne's idea. And as much as I fought it, taking somebody to this fancy steakhouse like we've been to and bringing 40 people there...

**Steve Little:**

74.

**Keith Post:**

Close. Close. I'm a guesstimator.

**Mike Merrill:**

That's the numbers guy.

**Steve Little:**

I don't pay the bill, then. At least I don't write the check.

**Keith Post:**

So it's a special deal.

**Mike Merrill:**

Wow. I heard a few different things there that were impactful. The one thing that just keeps ringing through my mind is because of the integrity that you've established organizationally with your employees from the onset, with your customers, with vendors, it's safe for you to have an event like that. You're not hiding or trying to... You're on top of your stuff, you're paying

your bills. You're obviously going to get paid because of that same integrity. It just feels like you've kind of controlled variables that I think a lot of businesses struggle to gain control of. And so when things go wrong, the wheels fall off.

**Steve Little:**

We can say that at year 17.

**Mike Merrill:**

Right.

**Steve Little:**

I will promise you that the first 10 years we pieced it together every week. Every week it's a struggle, and our vendor community and our client community really partnered with us to put us in a position we're in today. I was on the phone yesterday with one of our partners, and we're trying to work through the pricing on a particular deal. And it's a new area of business for us because in the distribution centers that are happening with all of these online retailers and folks that are building these brands and building these boxes, and all of these automotive centers to manage all of their delivery trucks and things like that. And clients that we've had for years that we've been working their office buildings and their industrial buildings are getting in this business and they're asking us to come into that business with them. And it's a very competitive, price-sensitive area, and so we're evaluating it.

And I was on the phone with one of the vendors and I said, "In order for us to be successful, we need to get to this price point." And they said to me, they said, "The only reason that we were even working with you on this is we know that it's not a collection issue, it's not a problem issue with you and the general or you and the developer. That this is a very clean, smooth transaction. And that's why we would do this." And that was one of the finest compliments I think I've ever heard from any of the vendors, is that we had reached a point in our company and built that trust that they wanted to partner with us in a new area of business that was not very profitable for them either. But it was a large-volume play.

**Mike Merrill:**

Wow. Yeah, it just sounds like the fabric that you've kind of woven your business out of supports the other areas of the business. So I think, again, you're on a very strong footing and you have a very firm foundation. And I love what you said, Steve, especially about you guys had to fight every day for the first 10 years to get to this point. But it sounds like you've continually iterated and tried to pivot and focus on your plan regardless of the situation, even if Jayne was panicking or worried about, "Oh no, famous last words, we just won the project!" And that doesn't always go well. Sometimes you buy a job because maybe you did miss something.

**Steve Little:**

Right. You know, I want to make sure that the listeners are clear that you see the success. You don't see what goes on behind the scenes. And we have stubbed our toe many times. We've lost a good employee or two, or three, or five. We've gained a good employee or two, or three, or five. It's not a perfect science. And anybody that tells you that you can read a Dr... I'm going to date myself, a Dr. Spock book to tell you how to raise a kid, well there's not a perfect book out there that tells you, or a perfect podcast that's going to tell you how to run a business. Because it's just ever-flowing. Something different.

**Keith Post:**

Every day.

**Steve Little:**

I remember the first day I met you and our business director, and it was just a crazy day. I think we had not won a project we thought we were going to win at a previous company. And I was really down. I was like, "Is this what it's going to be like?" And you walked in my office, and you said, "Tomorrow's going to be a whole different day, and we're going to have different opportunities." And it's been the truth for the 20 years we've been together. Every day is different.

**Mike Merrill:**

That's what makes it fun, right?

**Keith Post:**

Yes. It's a great business. It's a great business.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah. Expecting the unexpected. Then you can be ready, right?

**Steve Little:**

And it's still a people business. There are 400 human beings in 200 different vehicles. In lifts, in cranes, in trailers. And it's just every day they go out and they fight the fight. And we have the privilege of leading them and incubating them. I know that the three of us always talk about it as parental. And we really feel that this is our family. We built this. We started it. Let me be clear about that. We incubated. And the people that we brought on board have built it and made it into what it is today. And we work hard on keeping the train on the tracks.

Because it's constant in different environments and different bends and turns no matter what. So I don't want all of this success that we have and the brand that we've built, the reputation that we've had be distorted to the fact that we've stepped on our toes many times to get to this point.

**Keith Post:**

We had no book. No road map. We had no walk into a business that was ongoing. We created everything from scratch. So that's the satisfaction that you get. When you had to learn everything that you had to learn to run a business. Yeah, we asked a lot of people, we asked a lot of partners for advice. But looking back, the things that I did in my early career were so stupid. But I learned. There were a lot of them. And so what I said before about you have to make mistakes to get better. That's what we've done. We squandered away lots of dollars, and it's coming back to us now. We're kind of in the good part of life. So it's great to be able to have a team behind you that is so strong, that you've worked so hard to build. That's a lot of satisfaction. Makes you be able to go home at night and sleep well.



**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, I'm hearing another theme of failing forward, right?

**Keith Post:**

Yeah.

**Mike Merrill:**

Failing forward. And learning from those mistakes. You've said that a few times. And I think that's the challenge that, in life, we all face every day, is how do we get better? How do we learn from where we did fall short or we did stub our toe, like you've mentioned. But it's nice to humanize this and, again, see and bring it back to the fact that it was 10 years of gutting it out every day that put you in this position to where now you have a little bit more control and you've built something that has momentum and probably can be maintained without quite so much heavy lifting, now that you've got some things established. But I don't imagine you're lightening the load too much. You're probably working, like you said, harder today than ever. Is that right?

**Jayne Williams:**

Exactly.

**Steve Little:**

I had a client tell us one time the difference between KPost and other contractors is that we don't try to BS them through a mistake. We will admit the mistake right up front, we will give them a solution for it, and then we will double down to execute it, to get it done. And it puts them in a comfort zone that they have a partner. That they don't have a vendor. And it just changes the dynamic of a project that you're working on. And we've had our mistakes. But we've also had a lot of big wins in fixing those mistakes. And because of the way we fixed those mistakes or handled the situation, we got another opportunity with them when they had another project to work on or they recommended us to somebody else. Or they left the company and went to work someplace else and called us back and asked if we want to be a part of this. And that's that residual that businesses are built on.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah. Critical. We all depend on residual business in some form or another, because you just can't reinvent yourself every single day to somebody new and not wear yourself out.

**Steve Little:**

I remember when you got started.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah.

**Steve Little:**

And we try every software that comes out, and we tried yours, and it was light years ahead of everybody else, and somebody asked us about, "What are you guys doing for your taking your timekeeping for your groups," and, "You're modern, have you gone to any kind of digital platform?" And we said, "Hey, have you called Mike Merrill?" And one thing led to another and then when an opportunity presented itself on something that you found, you called us up and said, "Hey, you took a chance on me, I'm going to introduce you over here to this person." And boom, look what happened. Look where we both are today.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah. And I love the words you've used about your clients. We feel like we're a partner company. We partner with our customers. It's a partnership. We're both working together for a common goal. We want to help you be successful in your business. If you are, you're going to grow, you're going to be back next year, and so will we. And we'll just enjoy the journey together and, like we've said before, that rising tide lift all the boats in the harbor. And that's one thing as a software vendor or a roofing company, whatever business that the listeners are in, you have got to look at not only your customers as partners, but also, like you've mentioned so many times here on this call, your employees. They are business owners. They have ownership in their role in growing that business, and it sounds like the culture that you've created has allowed for them to take that ownership and feel that way.

**Steve Little:**

You know, we've had some success with peer groups.

**Keith Post:**

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Steve Little:**

Jayne, I remember when you were leading the Timberline Users Group that you would collaborate with other folks that are in our industry and share practices. And I'm curious, Mike, do you do that in the software business? Do you guys have peers that you collaborate with that help you with your business?

**Mike Merrill:**

We do. And we're involved in some of those, we're involved with CFMA, we're involved with some of the AGC, and the ABC, and other organizations. We do webinars, we've done events. National Association for Women in Construction, and other things that don't have anything directly to do with our business, but they're supportive of the community that we serve, and we believe in those causes. We believe in higher education. And this podcast, we don't do it to generate revenue. We're doing it to help share wisdom and knowledge and insights so that others can hopefully take the ball where they're at and move it forward down the field with greater success.

**Steve Little:**

Well, we've actually talked to other peers in different cities, and they have ideas, things that have worked for them, and we've grabbed some of those and tried them. They don't all work, and people have tried some things that we have, and it didn't necessarily work for their culture. But I think we're better for it because we're sharing with each other to always try to get better. That's something that you advocated. How do we always get to be better at what we're doing?

**Keith Post:**

Yeah, we do that a lot. I get a charge out of that. When we have 10 people or eight people on a call, and everybody's talking about what software did you use? Or what's your process taking the project from

cradle to grave? And just seeing how people do that. Say, "Wow, that's maybe a little tweak that we could do on ours." And we do it with peer groups around the country. So there's nobody local, so we're really not giving anything up. We're actually bare bones. We open up wide and say, "Here. Here's us. This is what we do." Or this problem we have. "You ever had that problem?" And yeah, it's been very healthy. Very healthy.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, I would imagine you probably, on occasion, get more than you give in some of those cases. Where you learn, because you were vulnerable and open and additive to your community, you probably gained that insight from others that maybe you were able to use.

**Keith Post:**

Yeah. The first time when you do that with a peer group and you start sharing these things, you're like, "Oh man, I'm giving up my secret sauce." And then you go, "Wow, they just gave me theirs." And then that's the bond that starts taking off. That's when it's like, "Here's my stuff, man." And they give you your stuff. And you go, "Man, I got this problem over here." And they say, "Well, we had that problem. This is how we handled it." And you learn so much from that.

As an entrepreneur, there is no book to go read. You can go read a bunch of entrepreneur books, but life experiences are our book. And when you can share your life experiences with somebody who is doing the same thing as you as an entrepreneur in New York City or LA or Miami, and their market is a totally different world, but they run into the same issues we run into every day. Same issues. And how they handled it. You know? And those help. Those are healthy.

**Mike Merrill:**

Hmm. So Jayne, from your perspective, you're the one holding those purse strings and you've probably got the tiger paw that has to be defensive of those dollars sometimes. What's your secret to your approach with that sacred money to make sure that you're not putting it places where it's not going to come back and grow?



**Jayne Williams:**

I think the biggest thing for us is no matter what you face, whether it's good or bad, it's what you learn from that experience. We've had some catastrophes. Things that could really have set us back. And it's the ability to get back up that next day and say, "It's a new day and we're going to do better." And the same thing with money. You have your highs, your lows, you have your fear. You know, COVID hits, and all of a sudden people are like, "Well, we're going to shut this job down, and we're going to shut this job down." And that's scary. And you have to make sure that you have saved for a rainy day, or you need to make sure that you have a pool out there or maybe something else you could do while these jobs are shut down.

And it's all about just trying to do better and make the scary parts less scary or less frequent and the good things happen more often. And so we've had the high and low of money, and it's just being the protector of your fate, I guess, is the best way to put it. Make sure that you're doing it the best you can do every day.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, you've got short-term things like payroll that comes. It's worse than death and taxes, it comes every week, right?

**Jayne Williams:**

Exactly. Exactly.

**Mike Merrill:**

Just always churning payroll out. And then you got the long-term stuff like the safety and other things you've invested in that have allowed you to have that longer stride as you continue forward in business.

**Steve Little:**

Well, I think it's important to recognize that we have a group of seven mid-level managers that are either vice president or directors in our company that deal with the day-to-day operation of our business. And it frees us up to actually be a little bit more visionary and to mentor them to deal with the things that they don't have the tenure or the business maturity to deal with yet because they just didn't have the experience. And

some of the folks that have been on this management team have been on for less than a year, and some have been managers with our company for eight-plus years.

And all of them that are either directors or vice presidents have only had that officer role within the last three years. So that would be, we were 14 years running before we actually got additional officers in our company. So we would not be who we are today without our teams that are in place. And other leaders that are helping us get to where we need to get to. And so as we transition as a company, we'll always have our fingers in it, because it's just our personality, the three of us, to have our fingers in different things. But we also have to transition to empower them so that the company has some sustainability as we go forward.

And I think that's part of the stage we're in right now, is we've got it up and running, and we've built a good brand, and we have a really good reputation for people and get it done. How do we now take it to that next stage? What do we do in the next five years that allows those leaders to grow and be empowered and to take this brand that we've built and make it even better?

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, so you're talking about some kind of a succession plan so that all of this sweat, blood, and tears that you've poured your life into the last 18, 20 years continues forward.

**Steve Little:**

Yeah, not as much as a succession of how to pass on the ownership, as much as it is to pass on the leadership. Us transitioning out of the business, the three of us, will happen on a natural basis. We'd like that to happen on the upside, and in a good tax position, as well. But that will all take care of itself. We've always said take care of the people, take care of the clients, take care of your strategic partners, and everything else will work out. And we've been fortunate enough to be able to do that. But it's now where we put our energy to each of the leaders that report to us, and how we grow them.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah. So one thing I want to make sure we don't miss out on talking about is the Super Bowl incident. So what can you share about that? Some people may not know about this story. I do just because of our relationship, and then of course I was interested in it after the fact. What can you share with the listeners about the Super Bowl incident?

**Steve Little:**

Well, we knew they were going to have a problem when the temperature inside the stadium was higher than the temperature outside the stadium and they were accumulating ice over the three days prior to the Super Bowl. And so we called out to the stadium, it was about eight o'clock, seven o'clock Friday morning, and said, "You're going to have some problems here, and we think we can help you navigate those." And they were like, "Well, we're looking at it right now, and we've got the fire department here to figure out how we can take the ice off the stadium." And we're just thinking, "You have the fire department with axes on guys that have not been on roofs, and they're going to handle the problem with it."

"Well, just kind of call us if you need us, and we're here." And an hour later, Keith gets a call, and it's like, "How fast can you get here?"

**Keith Post:**

That was pretty interesting. You show up and the NFL takes over the stadium. All the people that we had dealt with that were Cowboys personnel had stepped aside.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah.

**Keith Post:**

And you almost felt like you were walking into an FBI office.

**Mike Merrill:**

Oh, wow.

**Keith Post:**

And it was very intense. And our team went to work, and by then the fire department had started their process of readjusting the roof, let's just say. With axes. They had shut down. At a Super Bowl event, you have tents all the way around the stadium, and everything was shut down. They had nothing going on. So their revenue source was going out of the window fast. And our people were up there that morning, and they worked around the clock until Sunday morning, about 10 or 11, when they walked off that roof. And they got applause because they were up there getting the ice off the roof. When these chunks of ice came down the side, I remember somebody saying it was the size of a Volkswagen.

**Mike Merrill:**

Wow.

**Keith Post:**

That a chunk of ice would roll down the side of this roof, and they have a gutter system around the edge of this roof, it's about, I don't know, four foot wide and four foot deep. And these chunks of ice would hit that thing at a high force and explode. And ice chunks would go everywhere. It was very dangerous. Anyway, our team got it done, and we had to end up going back after the Super Bowl and we were there probably for a month fixing the damage. It was a pretty intense deal. But we got through it and we helped the Cowboys out.

**Steve Little:**

I remember this story of them talking about when they arrived at the stadium and got into the bowels of the stadium into the command center. And they walk into the room, and just imagine the Red Sea parting because the roofers are there. Now, come on, Mike. Roofers show up and Homeland Security is getting out of the way, the police department's getting out of the way, and the FBI was there. The National Guard was there. And, of course, the firemen were there. And the sea opens up, and here come the roofers coming through. It just reminds me of the days of fixing the oil fires that are out there. And our team just, they did a great job.

**Keith Post:**

Yeah, they did.

**Mike Merrill:**

Like Moses parting the Red Sea.

**Jayne Williams:**

It is, it was. It was like, oh my goodness, I'm scared. We even had the assistant director of OSHA there. We had anyone and everyone that you could think of to be there. I think it just showed we were the subject matter expert on that job. I'm not trying to be cocky or anything, but we were the ones that needed to be called, and we knew what needed to be done, and-

**Steve Little:**

Jayne, God doesn't like cocky, Jayne.

**Jayne Williams:**

I know. I had to remember that. That's why I said I'm not cocky, but we were the subject matter expert on this one thing. And it helped the Cowboys, and we did it safely. Again, that is the most important thing, that nobody hurt, no one slid off a roof, or the fireman didn't slide off the roof with his axe. So it's all good.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, I remember thinking, with my construction background, I remember when that was going on, and that's what I was afraid of. I thought here's this high-profile project to begin with anyway, it's the football stadium of football stadiums on planet Earth, and the biggest game of the year, the biggest sporting event of the year, and so hundreds of millions, maybe, eyeballs on this. The last thing anyone needed, especially KPost, was a safety incident or anything that could negatively shine on all this hard work that you'd done. So I imagine, Jayne, you were pretty stressed.

**Jayne Williams:**

Oh, yeah.

**Mike Merrill:**

Being in charge of safety.

**Jayne Williams:**

I was. Yeah. That made for a lot of fun that weekend. But, again, I knew our guys would do whatever they could to be safe and I remember them walking off the roof and telling me, "Hey, we got to hear the Black Eyed Peas." You know, they got to hear them, we heard them while they were rehearsing. So we did what we needed to do.

**Mike Merrill:**

All right, so Jayne, obviously we're talking about safety with the Cowboys stadium and the roof incident with the Super Bowl. What about on the financial side? What do large projects look like from your perspective of planning financially?

**Jayne Williams:**

I think the biggest thing for us is to... We have become fairly good, very good, I think, as Keith had pointed out, that we've formed this team. And from the very beginning of the bid process, safety's involved and operations is involved. And we make sure that we have the most accurate bid, but we also are prepared internally for any financial... We may be doing business with a new vendor, they have a special product they want to use. Maybe they don't have terms, maybe they want to be paid the day we order the materials. Things like that that we want to know upfront so we can plan for them. And so that's what we do is we plan for them. But we, from the very start, we make sure that we are able to determine as many surprises as possible so that we can plan for them.

**Mike Merrill:**

That's great. Great advice. I think, kind of winding down a little bit, one thing I wanted to ask, just, and this is for anyone, so what is maybe a misstep or a job that went bad or a challenge that you had that you eventually overcame, and what did you do to overcome it? Is there anything you can share as an example?

**Steve Little:**

How much time do we have?

**Mike Merrill:**

Just pick one.

**Jayne Williams:**

I guess you could pick the sheet metal color in...

**Steve Little:**

Oh, the very first sheet metal job that we did, Jayne. Keith loves this story.

**Keith Post:**

We don't want to talk about this. I'll talk about it. So we did a job, and it was a high-profile standing seam high rise. And we ordered the product, I ordered the product, and it was stone gray instead of ash gray. And we should have put the ash-gray on. So we shipped all the panels, fabricated them, did half of the job, and there happened to be a sister building next door. And the owner of the building shows up and says, "Hey, it's the wrong color." And it was about 30, 40,000 square foot job.

**Mike Merrill:**

Wow.

**Keith Post:**

And what we did do is the general contractor called us and said, "This has got to come off." And we said, "You know what? We made a mistake. These panels will come off today, and the new ones will be here as soon as we can get them," which was in three days. And we did that. We took that hit, and whereas we could have sat and tried all kinds of negotiating ploys and tried to fix this or fix that, and in reality, when we had two sister buildings sitting side by side, it just hit us. We made a mistake. We have to fix this. And it can't be a drawn-out situation. We're holding up construction on the high rise, and so we did it. We bit the bullet.

We took the panels off, bought the new panels, and we still have a relationship with that customer. So we did the right thing, unfortunately. I have a beautiful beach house on the Texas coast that has these beautiful ash gray panels on it.

**Steve Little:**

We moved those panels half a dozen times. From when our first building to the building that we're in now. But it was doing the right thing that came back to us. And that project manager today, of that project, whenever he has another project, he always wants to find out where we are, because that's part of getting it done.

**Keith Post:**

That's integrity. That's standing behind what's right and wrong. And sometimes you make mistakes, and you learn from those mistakes. So I know the difference in ash gray and any other kind of gray now.

**Steve Little:**

And it really was, instead of being oh three one, it was an oh three two item, and we just put oh three two into the submittal process, oh three two into all of it. But when they went back and compared the submittals to what was in the spec, we had submitted it wrong, the GC had approved it incorrectly, and it really should have been the three one number. But we fixed it, did it right, and they're still a client today.

**Keith Post:**

That was a long time ago.

**Steve Little:**

That was like 2005.

**Keith Post:**

That was early days.

**Steve Little:**

But even more recently, we've just finished phase three of a highrise project. We did phase one and it was not successful for us. It was convoluted, we wanted it so bad we priced it aggressively in the labor, we had a very tough... It was a three-phase project and we had a different operations team from the general contractor on the project, three different operations teams that were not in sync with what they're doing. It was just a cluster. And we didn't make any money on that project. You're talking millions of dollar project that, Mike, you used to be in the general contracting business, or in any of the new ventures that you make doing the software side of it, you at least expect to make some kind of profit.

We just traded dollars, and it went on forever, and it tied up our crews that make money on projects, and it was a real lesson to learn. So when we priced phase two of the highrise two project, we were three-quarters of a million dollars high. And our competitor got the project. And our competitor stepped all over themselves and had that same operations teams to deal with, and they went south. They had all sorts of problems with the assembly of the roof, to this day there's still water in the system. And there's some kind of, I don't know if it's gone to legal or what the deal is, but there's a problem with phase two.

So when we bid on phase three, they were glad to take us at the price point that we had and, knock on wood, phase three was successful. But you have problems and you take risks, and that's what we do every day. We have a very high-risk business with a very low margin, and they hold more than our profit in retainage. It's like, "What the hell are we in this business for?" Well, because we are just so blessed to have 400 employees and great employees that help lead this group, and great strategic partners like yourself, and we just have been very fortunate to be successful.

**Mike Merrill:**

Okay. All right. So kind of wrapping up, I think we've heard so many wonderful things today, very much appreciate all of your time and the opportunity to go through this discussion and share best practices. But I think to wrap up, Jayne, I just wanted to ask you, if

there's kind of a secret sauce or something that you really focus on and have learned from in your business career, what would that be and how can you share how that might help somebody else?

**Jayne Williams:**

I think the most important thing for me has always been that if you're going to be the leader of a company that you remember what's important. And that means your employees are valuable. They're the boots on the ground, and they're the ones that do it for you. And also that when you pick the people that you want to be in business with, like I am in business with Steve and Keith, that you are with people that you share the same dedication. These two men are fantastic. They are brilliant and they are forward-thinkers, and I have learned more than I probably can even remember from these two. And it's important that when you're doing this, you need to have that family that you all work together. So that really has been very beneficial to me. Best job I've ever had in my life, and I think it's because from top to bottom, it is all about how we treat each other.

**Mike Merrill:**

That's wonderful. Well, thank you so much, and I can see why you feel that way, and after 18, 20 years working together you still feel that way. Partnerships are tough, but obviously you all have very aligned common goals and work ethic, and I've appreciated this conversation and the opportunity to speak with you all today.

**Jayne Williams:**

Thank you.

**Steve Little:**

Thanks Mike, thanks for the opportunity.

**Keith Post:**

Thanks, Mike. You have a good one.

**Mike Merrill:**

Thank you all. If you enjoyed the conversation today and liked what you heard or were able to learn anything new or helpful in your business, please subscribe to the podcast and give us a five-star rating and review. You can also follow us at WorkMax\_ to learn about our upcoming insightful conversations with other guests and companies like KPost. Thank you all, and we'll catch you on the next one.