

Episode: 86

# Josh Edwards



THE  
**MOBILE  
WORKFORCE**  
PODCAST

**Mike Merrill:**

Hello, and welcome to The Mobile Workforce Podcast. I'm your host, Mike Merrill. And today we are sitting down with my friend and our customer, Josh Edwards with Expedition Contracting. How you doing today, Josh?

**Josh Edwards:**

I'm good. I'm good. It's been... yeah, it's hot. We're in Arizona.

**Mike Merrill:**

We're in your office, right?

**Josh Edwards:**

We're in my office, which is nice right now.

**Mike Merrill:**

Your comfortable chairs.

**Josh Edwards:**

Nice, cool. Nice red chair. So.

**Mike Merrill:**

So you and I were talking a few weeks back and talking about a visit to just come by and check in on you and see how things are going. And we were having a pretty interesting conversation and I thought it might be fun to bring you on the podcast and just talk about your journey in construction and a little bit of your history and what makes you tick and your mind, even though you're not a huge shop, you are invested in technology. Technology's been important, right?

**Josh Edwards:**

Yeah. Technology... it's been huge for us because I know early on when any business owner first starts, you're just trying to figure out every... trying to figure it out. Still trying to figure it out. I don't know if you figured it out yet, but I'm-

**Mike Merrill:**

I'm working on it.

**Josh Edwards:**

So am I. It's an ongoing thing. But I think early on, I really figured out that technology was going to make life easier. And I didn't want to have to... I was just tired of writing everything down and trying to remember how to write everything down and whatnot. And you know how that goes. When you do that, you forget stuff.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah.

**Josh Edwards:**

Technology I've learned is, it's real simple. Initially it was just sending emails right away to myself or to my wife who was working in the office at the time just to try to make things easier for life for us. And so, mobile phones, smartphones, apps have been amazing. So that's been a journey all on its own as you obviously know.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, for sure.

**Josh Edwards:**

Yeah. That's good.

**Mike Merrill:**

So how long have you been in business right now, so far?

**Josh Edwards:**

We're close to 15 years now, which is... it doesn't feel like 15 years. It feels like-

**Mike Merrill:**

Don't blink

**Josh Edwards:**

Six months. So it went fast that's for sure.

**Mike Merrill:**

So let's talk about that a little bit. So from what I understand, you pretty much got into construction right out of high school. Is that kind of-

**Josh Edwards:**

My dad owned a little electrical company and I figured out early on that I was tired of crawling through attics that were 150 degrees in Phoenix and I wanted to work smarter, not harder. And so I decided to go apply for some builders and I ended up becoming a superintendent for a couple of different companies and then eventually started my own company, which was the ultimate goal, once I figured out, I might be able to make a little bit more money than I was making for someone else.

**Mike Merrill:**

So you have mentioned before... we were talking here on the podcast that you thought, well, maybe I can get by with working maybe 30 hours a week if I still-

**Josh Edwards:**

Oh yeah, that's-

**Mike Merrill:**

How's that working out for you?

**Josh Edwards:**

I'm still waiting for that. Let me tell you, so-

**Mike Merrill:**

Working 30 hours a day now, right?

**Josh Edwards:**

Right. With 12 different bosses. It's just sure. You think... every business owner, I think, initially goes into business thinking, oh, I can do this and make a lot more money for myself and work a lot less hours. And it never works out that way. At least I haven't found anyone yet. I've had that conversation several times.

**Mike Merrill:**

Well you obviously have passion or you wouldn't have done what you did, right? You took that plunge at some point. What do you think... so part of it obviously was having control and you hoped to work less and make more. You probably worked more and eventually made more. That probably didn't happen right away. Probably lean times getting started.

**Josh Edwards:**

Yeah.

**Mike Merrill:**

I mean, tell us about how you grew your business to what it is today.

**Josh Edwards:**

Well, initially it was me working out in the field, obviously swinging hammers and running drills and whatever and fixing stuff. I really enjoy fixing things, believe it or not. So kind of started out in that handyman way of building. I thought I was going to build custom homes and I'm still waiting to build custom homes 15 years later, but I enjoy doing things that no one else will do.

**Mike Merrill:**

Ah, okay. That's interesting.

**Josh Edwards:**

Just kind of random stuff. And that's kind of how we got into healthcare. We work in some bigger healthcare facilities now, which is a whole different challenge and it's everything from politics to you got to pull special permits to work there. And you got to... you spend a lot of time training and learning the systems of where you're working. But I tell you what, it's nice working at 72 degree temperatures versus out in the heat-

**Mike Merrill:**

Out roof?

**Josh Edwards:**

In Phoenix, that's for sure.

**Mike Merrill:**

So that's interesting. So most of your work's in the Phoenix Metro area?

**Josh Edwards:**

Most of our work is in the Phoenix Metro area. We try... early on, we just went wherever the work was. I wish I could work in Flagstaff all the time. That'd be great.

**Mike Merrill:**

That's nice.

**Josh Edwards:**

But realistically Phoenix is where it's at. That's the biggest market. So we try to stay here for the most part.

**Mike Merrill:**

So I think it's interesting. You already mentioned you were hoping to work less hours and make more money and again, maybe you're in a position... you could do that a little easier now than when you started. But on the other side of things, it feels to me like you're kind of an early adopter of technology and even... you're not running a huge operation. You don't have hundreds of employees. So sometimes companies wait to put technology in place when they just cannot handle it

anymore... like they're just going to burst at the seams because choking on paper and spreadsheets and all these other broken processes.

**Josh Edwards:**

I think I found where technology made us more successful was just the fact that I didn't have to spend the time working through paperwork. And I was trying to be more efficient, trying to do it without an office, and try to stay mobile, I guess, more so than spending hours... I mean, I watched my dad for years working for... he'd come home after doing jobs, and he'd work in the office... work hours. And I've got a family. I don't want to do that. So that was part of it. So we've always kind of looked to technology to make things easier on the office side. The building is building... I mean, construction's construction, but it's the office side that's hard. So we tend to try to find systems that are going to work for us, whether that's mobile apps, mobile phones, guys having iPads or computers in the field, which technology in construction in the field is always a challenge too, because things get broken.

**Mike Merrill:**

So yeah, it's a rough environment.

**Josh Edwards:**

It's a rough environment.

**Mike Merrill:**

Aside from the Phoenix heat, you're talking just hammers and people are... bull in a China shop.

**Josh Edwards:**

If somebody could make a screen that was not destructible... indestructible, I think they could be-

**Mike Merrill:**

Bulletproof glass.

**Josh Edwards:**

Yeah. Billionaires right?

**Mike Merrill:**

That's probably true. So one thing too, that intrigued me with your story is, you're pretty mobile. You run pretty remote. I mean, even to meet here in your office for this podcast is, well, I don't go into the office much. You got a space here, but... tell us about that.

**Josh Edwards:**

I mean, realistically I'm in the office a few days a week at most. I'm really out shaking hands and kissing babies. Really, I feel like a politician sometimes, but realistically I'm doing what I need to do as a business owner. I'm trying to make connections and-

**Mike Merrill:**

Networking?

**Josh Edwards:**

Yeah, networking. I mean as a business owner, you're always selling, so you don't want your clients to feel every time you're there, you're there asking for money or something. But at the same time, you're always just trying to help and realistically talk up your company and you're trying to get that next job for your employees. That's really what we do. I've been able to spend more time doing that, rather than being in the office.

**Mike Merrill:**

So you're doing some specialized work in healthcare. There's probably some security things or some things that... you probably have to go through some processes. You probably have more qualified people than just hiring general laborers from off the street, so to speak. I mean, tell us about that a little bit.

**Josh Edwards:**

The people that I look for are guys that are, for the most part, they've been in the field a while. They understand that the business and they have an eye for detail, because when you're working in healthcare, you can't... you're working around... if there's patients involved or people that are sick around, you can't just go into-

**Mike Merrill:**

It's serious.

**Josh Edwards:**

Yeah. You can't be cutting a wall open with a drywall saw, with a circular saw, start cutting in the middle of a healthcare environment. So it's very specialized. You have to be... we've learned a lot over the years. I wish they had a school for it because it'd be really nice, but-

**Mike Merrill:**

There's an idea.

**Josh Edwards:**

There you go. But it's different. It's different, but the same... what we found everywhere, there's certain levels of no dust, and you got to... there's all kinds of crazy HEPA filtration things that you have to know to work in that environment.

**Mike Merrill:**

And maybe different hours, at times.

**Josh Edwards:**

24/7, 365 days a year, so... which is really nice. I mean on the technology side, being able to do time tracking in the field through apps is great. Your company's been helpful in that and it just makes it easier in that way. And realistically on Christmas Day, if there's something somebody has to work unfortunately because of technology, we're able to get those phone calls and realistically guys can... we've taken... I've done mobile meetings where I can look at something over a camera, on a phone, out in the field to help guys figure something out, which is really nice.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, 20 years ago you couldn't do that. It was you're driving 40 minutes each way.

**Josh Edwards:**

Yeah, 10, 15 years ago, it was harder. I mean it really... in the last few years, the mobile technology's been really nice. It's worked well for us. That's for sure.

**Mike Merrill:**

Well, and you... I know with our company, I mean, you partnered with us about six or seven years ago. It's been almost the onset of our Cloud solution. So you were a real early adopter and I think you even looked at our OnPremise system and you were more leaning to the Cloud. So tell me about that a little bit and why?

**Josh Edwards:**

Well affordability. I think initially-

**Mike Merrill:**

That's a great point.

**Josh Edwards:**

Was we could afford the WorkMax, because it was a per user. We were paying the license per user versus a huge system. We're not a big company, so-

**Mike Merrill:**

Server based and having a server.

**Josh Edwards:**

Yeah. And as we bring more employees on, our company... our profits go up. So we're able to justify spending that money per employee versus having to buy a huge system. So that was huge right there. And then Geofencing. Because we're such a mobile company, we do work everywhere, knowing where guys are at all the time, the accountability is great. And that's even changed. I think when we first started with you guys the Geofencing was tough because, not GPS, people were freaked out about it. Who's tracking me, it was new technology. And people would complain their batteries on their phones were always dead and things to work through, but with technology it's always that way.

**Mike Merrill:**

And it keeps getting better, but you were early enough through the gate that I think you probably took a few of those bruises and lumps early, but you've been enjoying the benefits for a lot longer now that you did that, right? There's always a curve.

**Josh Edwards:**

There's always a curve for sure. And the nice part about it now is when we bring people on, I think people are used to the technology now. So they're more apt to use an app like the WorkMax app, and it's part of our company culture now. So, people are... the guys in the field know that, Hey, this is how we-

**Mike Merrill:**

This is how we roll.

**Josh Edwards:**

This is how we do it. So it's just part of it, which is great. And it took a long time to get there, because initially our older guys didn't want to use the apps. It's hard, or guys who aren't comfortable with technology, they don't like it. But now it seems to be kind of becoming part of that culture, or, it is the culture.

**Mike Merrill:**

And you're hiring it's a little older generation. It's not the young kids probably right out of high school super often, that might be more used to the technology. These other guys are probably just a little bit different generation.

**Josh Edwards:**

And it's funny because you get a kid... 20 year old kid, right out of high school or even kind of drops out of college or figures, Hey, I don't want to spend a ton of money in college and I don't know what I'm going to do with my life. Those guys are... you tell them they got to get an app, they're okay, well what's the name of it. And they've got it. And it's down, it's done. It's easy for them. But when I hire the guys that are in their forties, guys our age they're, oh do I really... I swing a hammer for a living, not a phone or-

**Mike Merrill:**

Let me get my kids to help me get the app.

**Josh Edwards:**

Exactly. Can you hire me a laborer just to do my app stuff, you know? But then, I think as the guys get used to it, I think that they've found... probably because guys you are designing it and you understand that part. It's made it real simple for older guys to figure it out. Because as an old guy, you got to be able to figure it out.

**Mike Merrill:**

So what is it that you love about construction? You mentioned you to do the stuff other people don't like to do. You're kind of in a nichey, pretty specific, unique specialty. So what is it about that keeps you captivated and attracts you?

**Josh Edwards:**

Probably... I don't like to do the same thing every day. If I had to go to an office and sit behind a desk every single day, I would just go nuts. I would be a bear at home. My wife would not like me... so doing that. Being able to figure things out, to fix things, really, to help people who can't find a company or somebody to do it a lot of times we'll do it. We'll jump in. It's kind of how we got into healthcare was, somebody asked if we could do this. And I said, well yeah, we can do the work, that's easy, but we're going to have to learn all this other stuff along the way, which we did.

So I had a funny story actually about this. One time we had this... we were working at this facility where they used a special substance and somebody spilled it and it happened to be a radioactive substance.

**Mike Merrill:**

Oh really?

**Josh Edwards:**

Yeah. And it was so... and they had tracked it out through this facility and they couldn't find anybody to do any of the work to get it done. And I mean, we're not government, so we don't deal with radioactive

stuff. But it was Hey, we just need some flooring, this special flooring they had... we met with some scientists, people, and they're okay, this is... they had the Geiger counters and all that stuff. And they're, Hey, you got to wear these suits. And they explained everything to us and they're, okay. It took us a day to do that cleanup. And really, it's not like we were cleaning up, sucking up nuclear sludge or something, but-

**Mike Merrill:**

Green footprints off of the toilet.

**Josh Edwards:**

It's the little drops in this flooring that we had to remove and clean up and then just. We did that kind of work. And that was the most random one that we've ever done. Well, hopefully nobody from my insurance company's watching this right now.

**Mike Merrill:**

I don't know.

**Josh Edwards:**

Yeah, right. So we don't-

**Mike Merrill:**

You have a nuclear waste rider?

**Josh Edwards:**

Nope. And it's after that or really I think we probably shouldn't do that kind of work again, but for instance, that's the kind of random work we do. We go in and when somebody else won't do it or can't do it, we figure out how to do it. So, it's enjoyable.

**Mike Merrill:**

Oh, that's awesome. So what... you mentioned technology. That's a big part of your business. You like kind of doing things different every day. As far as your peers and people that you network with within the industry... I mean, you're in a... there's a lot of construction going on in the valley. You probably have subcontractors and relationships with other people.

What are you hearing in the market right now? I mean, in your space, I mean, you're busy. Do you have backlog? Are you... I mean, how does the future look? I mean, what are your thoughts about just how things are right now?

**Josh Edwards:**  
Just in construction?

**Mike Merrill:**  
Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Josh Edwards:**  
Well, here in... I mean I can speak for the Phoenix market, it's just crazy. We can't find employees. We've got more work than we've ever had available to us, which is great. It's fantastic. I think everybody is kind of looking at the market thinking, okay, the last time it was this good, it went down really fast.

**Mike Merrill:**  
It can't stay forever.

**Josh Edwards:**  
Whatever goes up is going to come down eventually, so. And I think that's kind of why we, realistically, we branched out the way we did. We've got a couple of good healthcare clients and then we've got some other commercial clients and we're really trying to hedge against that. That down turn, if the economy turns down, we're hoping that one of the other markets-

**Mike Merrill:**  
Sectors?

**Josh Edwards:**  
Sections of our company will... I don't want to make it sound like we're a huge company, but we're not. We have 11 field people and there's three or four of us in the office. So we're 15 and essentially under. I wish I could find enough people to have 30 guys out in the field right now, but I just can't, and I really, and I'm looking for... like everybody, you're always looking for

good people. And it's really hard to find good people right now, because everybody's working.

**Mike Merrill:**  
But you do have enough work. You could sustain more if you could find the talent.

**Josh Edwards:**  
Yeah, we could. Absolutely.

**Mike Merrill:**  
That's kind of what we hear a lot.

**Josh Edwards:**  
I'm sure, and keeping good guys is always hard, especially right now because I mean, as you know everybody's stealing good employees. It's all about the dollar, so.

**Mike Merrill:**  
Well, and obviously back to something that you shared before, about your culture. You have a culture of technology with your guys and it's just kind of how you roll. What are some other things that you think have helped you to maintain that synergy within your company and kind of... is it a family leaning business? I mean, how do... what's your approach to that side of the business?

**Josh Edwards:**  
Yes. So family first, believe it or not, it's really one thing... if one of our team members needs a last minute day off, because they have a kid that has a piano recital or parent teacher conference that came up because their kid did something silly, no problem... family member's sick. That's why I always tell my guys, family is first. That's the most important thing. That's why we're all here at work. We're here to provide for our families and hopefully have a little bit of fun and do something we like along the way and make a decent living. So that's the goal with my team, not just a big corporate number.



**Mike Merrill:**

That's awesome. Well, good for you. Well, you seem to enjoy what you do. I mean, you're doing well on ed and you're thriving and you were fun to talk to on the phone when I called you. I thought this is a pretty cool guy I need to come and have a chat.

**Josh Edwards:**

Thanks.

**Mike Merrill:**

So, so what... tell me this, what's something you've learned through this journey so far, in business, that's really helped you in your personal life.

**Josh Edwards:**

In my personal life. I'm really an introverted person. So I find in... when I was younger, it was really hard for me to get out... to have a conversation like this in front of a camera would be difficult and I think personally, I've kind of learned how to talk to people and to be able to communicate and enjoy that really is what it is. It's just getting out of my shell and understanding Hey, you got to be able to talk to people. And as a business owner you got to be able to talk to people and it's easier said than done sometimes.

**Mike Merrill:**

So yeah, that presentation's important. If you want the work, they have to have confidence in you as an individual.

**Josh Edwards:**

Right. Right. And you got to figure out how to do it so people aren't thinking you're a used car salesman. Not that used car salesmen are bad, but you want to be honest and people feel comfortable.

**Mike Merrill:**

Genuine.

**Josh Edwards:**

Yeah, exactly. So I think that's something that the genuine and authentic stuff is hard. It's not hard for me, but really it's just being quiet and confident, but being able to have that conversation with people and really to be able to help them is, was, our goal.

**Mike Merrill:**

And I think, too, especially in the specialty that you're in, it's important that your guys are that way too, right? They've got to present for your company. This isn't a concrete site out in the west desert.

**Josh Edwards:**

It is definitely something that has been... it is an ongoing challenge because... and I tell my team all the time, image is... realistically images is everything where we're at, because when you're working in a corporate setting or you're working in a healthcare setting, if you come to work looking rough, people, aren't... they're not going to call you back because they're just not comfortable with that. So having guys that are dressed nicely or construction workers, realistically, that have a collared shirt on, or a nice T-Shirt and a pair of jeans and some work boots, and then to be able to have a conversation with them is huge. To be able to communicate with them and feel comfortable is really it.

**Mike Merrill:**

So do you have training? I mean, is it more just your culture and just the people you choose that are already that way? I mean, how do you... what's your secret?

**Josh Edwards:**

So yes and no. Culture is huge. And it's one thing that I'm constantly telling the guys is, out in the field... anytime we have a company meeting, which is nice... Zoom has made those kind of... we do a lot of that stuff through phones now, where we don't have to bring everybody into the office, technology wise, but it's constant, hey, image is everything. Make sure you're taking care of your clients. It's really getting back to the old ways of if you have a client that's... this might sound old fashioned, but yes, ma'am or no, sir. Thank you. Thanking clients for the work realistically is huge. I



think people forget that we're getting paid by someone to do that job. So it's important that we remember that and that we're not God's gift to those people that are paying us to do the work, that client is a gift to us and we need to treat them that way. And when you do that, I think you really, you get repeat business, which we have.

**Mike Merrill:**

That's great. So your guys are appreciative and they let the customer know that.

**Josh Edwards:**

They do.

**Mike Merrill:**

I love that.

**Josh Edwards:**

So, customer service is big.

**Mike Merrill:**

Cool. So the last question I'll ask... so what is Josh's superpower? What's the thing that you're just... you're just good at it?

**Josh Edwards:**

What is my superpower?

**Mike Merrill:**

Could be personally or professionally. What's something you've really figured out that's served you well?

**Josh Edwards:**

I can fix things. So really, I would say my wife is always saying that, you can just fix things, you figure it out. I have a son who loves to just take apart things and I'll come home and I'll have a box of things to fix because he's taken everything apart. But that's how I was as a kid. When computers first started coming out, I was taking them apart and trying to figure out how to put

them back together and make them work again, or take this part and that part and make them work. I never really got good at the computer side. And that's for guys like you, but in the field, it's real nice. Taking old buildings and making them new again, or retrofitting things in a healthcare facility or there's a whole bunch of old pipes, or there's an old ceiling grid system that needs to get fixed. We figure out how to do that kind of stuff so... which has been good.

**Mike Merrill:**

But yeah, it's turned into your career, right?

**Josh Edwards:**

It's kind of turned into my career.

**Mike Merrill:**

Fixing things. Fixing stuff back together or doing things... figuring it out.

**Josh Edwards:**

Long ways from building houses, which is where I thought we were going to do.

**Mike Merrill:**

Maybe you'll get some jobs here down the road.

**Josh Edwards:**

I enjoy this part of it. So it's been fun.

**Mike Merrill:**

Awesome. Well, it's been a lot of fun sitting down. I appreciate your time today. It's good to get to know you as well. And look forward to continuing this friendship on into the future.

**Josh Edwards:**

I look forward to it, too. Well, thanks for having me.