

Cameron Cranford

**Mike Merrill:**

Hello and welcome to the Mobile Workforce Podcast. I'm your host, Mike Merrill, and today we're sitting down with my longtime friend, Cameron Cranford. Cameron is the Director of Technology at Baker Triangle, who is an enron top ten wall and ceiling company with a division specializing in penalized prefab walls and also, uh, heavy into construction. So, in today's episode today, Cameron and I are going to talk about prefab, the technology behind it and what it has done for Baker Triangle, and also why it's so important for all construction today using prefab. So, Kim, thanks for joining us on the show today. Looking forward to our conversation.

Cameron Cranford:

Awesome, man. I appreciate it. Thank you.

Mike Merrill:

You bet. Uh, now, you and I have known each other for a long time. Where do we meet and, uh, how do we get here?

Cameron Cranford:

Uh, I think we met for about at, uh, least ten to twelve years ago. Came, uh, on site to do a software, uh, sales pitch and uh, kind of net it out of the park. Uh, yeah, they signature move that I guess you probably don't do anymore, but I think it's sealed the deal for you, for us.

Mike Merrill:

Oh, I do it. I still do it. What are you talking about? What's this move? What's this move you're talking about, Cameron?

Cameron Cranford:

You do this little toe tab, jump in the air, splits and everything. Right in the air. It's impressive. Not many

people can jump like that. I think we probably should see something.

Mike Merrill:

That will be our next episode.

Cameron Cranford:

But, uh, yeah, it's been a great time. Uh, we started out, we purchased the about time and uh, we started from there and kind of grew together. That was part of at least twelve years ago that we started working with that and um, building the relationship and just increasing bettering, uh, the product and bettering the environment or technology and construction industry.

Mike Merrill:

Yes, I appreciate that. It has been a lot of fun. It's been fun to watch. Um, I'm, um, a big consumer of LinkedIn. I'm on there all the time. And I notice every day there's people getting awards for being at Baker Triangle for ten years, 15 years, 20 years, 25 years. I mean, you guys really have something cool going on there with your culture. Before we get into the prefab discussion, what is it about Baker Triangle that makes it the type of company that it is? Because you're not just a drywall contractor down the street in Mesquite, Texas, right?

Cameron Cranford:

Correct. We're all over Texas have been working. Numerous states are around the United States. Um, the m biggest thing is our culture here is, uh, we have numerous employees that have been here. Uh, I think we have five right now for 45 years. Uh, we have numerous ones, actually. Me personally get my 15 years next month. Um, so we have a plaque when you walk in. We had to increase holds over 100 names we actually had to buy another one because it only goes up to 15 years. We had to add another one for more employees that have been here a long time. So, uh,

that's one thing. We, uh, have a lot of people that have been here a very long time, which speaks volumes. We take care you got to take care of your people. And that was one of the biggest things here, is we take care of one another. It is definitely a family environment. Um, in construction. Construction is high stress, high pace a lot of times, and kind of leaning each other to help each other out, uh, both into each location. Not just your next door person, your party next door. Different offices come in, help and help out one each other all the time.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, I love that. And I think, uh, the prefab discussion fits in the same line of thinking. Uh, you're a little unique in that way, too. I mean, a lot of drywall contractors don't get into this stuff the way that Baker does. Let's just talk about that a little bit. What exactly is prefab for those that maybe aren't familiar with it firsthand?

Cameron Cranford:

Sure. So prefabs, basically, in simple terms, it's, uh, related construction. Uh, we're fabricating building products or components away from the job side. So we're doing a factory setting, and we build it into we're having a yard or warehouse. We've taken several different components, building it all together. So you got your stud when you build a wall, get your stud sheetrock, everything else. We build it off site, and then we truck it inside and install it so it comes in as a whole complete unit instead of individual parts and pieces that you got to put together on the job side.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, that's amazing. I've got to imagine that there's a safety component that you pick up there quality control. Right. You got a controlled environment. Um, what are some other reasons why prefab is a great idea?

Cameron Cranford:

Yes. So, like you just mentioned, if you're off the bat, you're not having all these other people step on each other. There's not things going around everywhere. There's not all these other different traits. It's, uh, just

like an assembly line. So you're doing one task and all these other tasks going around you. Second, we can look at all the materials before they're installed. So quality control is key. We take pictures of everything beforehand, after hand, so you can see the product before and after. And third, the speed of I can enclose buildings or get things installed a lot quicker compared to trying to shove several people into a small space. And also materials. Right now, everyone's feeling at the material shortage of COVID and all the other stuff. Uh, yes. You can get materials at what cost? And is it actually going to be a, um, quality product that you're going to get in as well?

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, and it's funny, this just popped into my mind. I've never really thought about this before, but also when you mentioned material costs. Um, I don't think it's a real common issue or not necessarily in all parts of the country, but theft sometimes could be a problem where if you prefab off site and bring it and install it and put it in, it's not going to walk off the job as it would a bunk of hundred sheets of drywall.

Cameron Cranford:

Right, exactly. Like a copper is very common for both plumbers and electricians. That's how easy as a roll of twelve, uh, gauge wire to walk off. You know what I mean? The stuff like that, or even ten foot six of copper or whatnot that easy can walk off versus unless they're going to cut it out, the sheetrock and everything else, it's one complete piece. So I know I have 400 pieces of ten foot copper. I know they're there and they're installed. I'm not like, oh, we lost some, um, I don't know where it went.

Mike Merrill:

So that brings up another great point. So when you're pre fabbing a wall like that, are there sleeves of copper and other things that you're putting in those as you go? And what does that look like?

Cameron Cranford:

Yeah, it depends on some of the jobs. But as I mentioned before, it's like a semi line. So with the sheet rock, I mean, we put the studs up everything else.

Then we might have a plumber coming around. We'll start with a good example, like, uh, hospital head walls or bathroom pots. So you get the frame structure up. Then the plumber comes in. The actual sub that is on the job, not our sub, it's actual the stuff that's going to be installing it on the project as well. He'll have his guys there, they install whatever copper fitting, so forth like that. Then it gets passed down to electrician. Same thing. It's the electrician on the site. He runs his wire, hooked up, switches all that, gets it all pre wired up. He passes down the line. Then we sheet rocket, do the tape bed finish, and then the plumber does his final fixtures. And then we heat, uh, shrink it up, put it on the trailer, truck it on site, slide it in place, bolt it, get inspected. They do their final hookups. You're done. So the quality control, like you mentioned before, earlier, everything's the same when you do that big order, and we're doing this months before you even get it ready. So when you're like, hey, we're sealed in, we can start bringing those units in right away. So it speeds the process up significantly.

Mike Merrill:

It's truly amazing. I mean, uh, honestly, I was a general contractor. You know, some of my history, we self performed. It's truly amazing to me. It blows my mind that we're able to do these types of things today from going back 2030 years ago. It's awesome. And I just uh, applaud your guys' effort in leading the charge in this type of innovation to build better and quicker and more efficiently.

Cameron Cranford:

Yeah, being more efficient, there's less waste on the job. We maximize as much as we can. Now we have multiple, uh, CNC machines and different things that cut out shape exactly to how we need and stuff. We figure out we got eight by eleven sheet or eight x ten sheet and we can figure out what we got to cut out of it and do to minimize waste on the job and everything else.

Mike Merrill:

Wow, that's incredible. So how long has Baker Triangle been involved in prefab work?

Cameron Cranford:

So uh, there's a little mixture of both. We started kind of doing DDC BIM work first and that kind of ropes us into the prefab. Um, we started about in early 2010. Uh, we started actually to um, do class detection with other trades. So where the electrical is coming in at the mechanical, uh, contractor, so forth like that, to see where we would have issues of, oh, we put this firewall up, mechanical contractor has to come back and do this and stuff. And this is before the building has even poured concrete. So this was a very early stage in the whole thing and it's slowly developed into, well, you know, we already got the design right here, why don't we just start making this? And we started out from, you know, we did hospital headwalls and stuff like that. Hospital has four in a room to the same. Why can't we do this? So we started from there, and like I said, it developed from first at, uh, VDC Bin all the way up to that.

Mike Merrill:

That's amazing. So are there some other trades in construction that you see commonly using the same approach?

Cameron Cranford:

Um, I'm trying to think off top of my head right now. I love the bathroom pods. I know that's a big thing now and is um, having those pretty much prefabricated in ready to go to install. I've seen them done in office buildings before because usually around the uh, elevator corridors and stuff like that. They'll have and it's all the same going all the way up. Hotels, uh, is another one. I've seen those built, uh, in as well.

Mike Merrill:

You're dealing with exterior walls too, right? So do you have contractors are putting that stuff up, or have you adapted business to do more of those exteriors as well?

Cameron Cranford:

We've done so, yes. Kind of gone through this whole chain of events. And now, uh, we started about five, six years ago. We started doing um, exterior wall panels, both metal, brick, everything else. We had a couple of,

ah, architects reach out to us and said, hey, we want to kind of do this design, so forth like that. And we said, yeah, let's run with and see what we can do. Um, so we started out with that. We've gone through, uh, we've done numerous buildings now, uh, specially ones, um, that they're not just continuous all the way up. They have special designs. Uh, a good one is AOL down in Austin. Um, but, yeah, they have metal panels, then brick on them, numerous different shapes. We cut in windows and all that to help close the, uh, building in, so then the trace can come in and start building out faster.

Mike Merrill:

Wow. I'm in Utah. I know you're in Mesquite, Texas, near the Dallas Fort Worth area. Um, but weather is a factor in all construction. So you're controlling the weather situation, too, right?

Cameron Cranford:

Yes. And that's what we kind of we took the approach, we looked up north, uh, New York and all that. That's a big thing for them, is the weather. So how fast can we close this building in so we can get people inside to do the work? So we kind of took that approach up right now. It's kind of a tornado season. We had some here last week out in Paris, Texas, which is north of us. And, uh, it's Texas weather. You wait 30 minutes, and it changes. Yesterday was 85 degrees, and right now it's 55 degrees right now, and then tomorrow will be 75. It's just part of it here in beautiful Texas. So I always say, just wait a little bit, and it will change.

Mike Merrill:

Well, that's awesome. So I got to say, and I'm sure the listeners are thinking this, too, because, again, me, as a general contractor, when I'm thinking of the Drywall, or so to speak, just as a term that did my work, I mean, none of them were doing anything like this. What is it about Baker Triangle that drives you all to be so progressive and so just cutting edge on, uh, technology adoption? Not only in prefab, but I know because, again, we have a software relationship in history. Also, you guys have always been super, super leading edge on all this stuff. Like, you were doing everything before anybody was doing anything, it seems like.

Cameron Cranford:

Yeah. So, yeah, uh, Steve, uh, which is, uh, the founder of Becca Drywall. He's huge. Big on I want to be bleeding ahead of the curve. What new methods can we do? Like mentioned before, we're not just, oh, sheetrock, and that's it. We do metal panels on the side of buildings, curtain systems, lutron, special lighting, currents. We do all kinds of stuff. We kind of branch out to see how we can be more efficient in certain ways and just be ahead of the curve and everything. We want to be that leading factor across the nation of, hey, can we come visit you to come see how you do this? Because we've been doing it for the last five years, ten years. And like you mentioned before, earlier, that software relationship construction, unfortunately, has been behind the times with tech technology compared to other industries, finance and all that. And a lot of these other companies, when they first we first started heavily investing into iPad and all that, they saw what we did and they said, Wait, no, they're doing it. Then we can do it and speed up. That was one of the biggest things we moved over to the computing attendance with you all ten years ago, is because we wanted to be more efficient. And it significantly helped out a ton. Um, but, yeah, that's one of our key factors on culture, is, uh, how can we make this more efficient, smarter, faster type thing? Uh, there's no, um uh what is it? Blinders on. We can do as much research and we can invest the time and energy to figure out there is a better way to do something and test it out. There's no such thing as failure, and look at it that way.

Mike Merrill:

Yes. I love that. And you're not afraid to try new things or to necessarily be the pioneer that's leading the charge versus so many companies that are waiting around for ten other people? I mean, they say this phrase, we, uh, use it sometimes here. It's like the first guy through the door gets shot, so to speak. You got to be a little cautious when nobody else has done it before. But it just seems like you all have a propensity to, um, go all in and lean forward and work through it. And I feel like you're way ahead of the curve because of that.

Cameron Cranford:

Yeah, like I mentioned, there's no such thing as a failure. It's a lesson to learn. We learn. We better ourselves

from it, and we continue down the road. We tried it more than most companies will ever do. We tried it. There's, uh, not all that red tape like you mentioned. Several people have to convince eventually. It's usually one or two, and then we'll try it out. What's worse. Yes.

Mike Merrill:

And I think back to what we were talking about earlier on quality control and safety and all these other, uh, benefits to eliminating waste, to, uh, the prefab approach. But also, um, you're delivering things on time, on budget. Um, I got to imagine your contractor partners and your owners are so much happier with the final product that you're able to deliver to them. How has that blessed your company because of that?

Cameron Cranford:

Yeah, so, good example. Like you just mentioned, we have owners that we want to look into this. We have some very progressive owners that, hey, we see you do this. Can you come try this on this job? And it's helped us out significantly. We've closed in and opened up buildings for businesses. I mean, one of them, right off the bat, was a hospital that was six months earlier than was proposed to be finished. So, to them, guess what? They had people in those beds. They were operating six months in advance than they originally were scheduled. So the owner was beyond thrilled that we were able to dispute the process of closing and getting them up and.

Mike Merrill:

Operating well, actually, literally operating right.

Cameron Cranford:

Yeah.

Mike Merrill:

And honestly, not to read too far into it, but truly, if you think about that, it's like you just provided health care sooner, quicker, you eliminated wait times. You helped people get the care they needed sooner. Because this drywall contractor from Mesquite, Texas, was progressive and innovative and was a leader in the industry, and lives were blessed because of that. So I think it's just amazing what you all are doing.

Cameron Cranford:

Yes. There's always a lot of cool things, hey, can you come do this? Or owners and architects come to us all the time. We had meetings with them and saying, hey, we thought of this idea because is there anything you could run with them and play with it to kind of see, hey, uh, is this possible to do? If it is, then can we try it on this job?

Mike Merrill:

So do you have some examples, uh, or case studies or situations you can share of? Just how much? I mean, you mentioned the hospital six months early. I mean, that's crazy. Are, um, there any other things that, uh, you've noticed in some of your experiences of efficiencies gained?

Cameron Cranford:

Yes. So, uh, we talked about earlier about safety. We have left people in the job, so their interest rates are going down and everything else. A good example is bathroom pods. You try to build a bathroom with electrician in there, a plumber in there, a drywaller. It's impossible to spot people. It's built off site. You slide it right in. You, uh, can't beat the speed on that. And like I mentioned for earlier, you have one person doing all the hookups, not six or seven people. You got to get the material to the job site running up there. Does it get there or does it go to the wrong floor? Or the material goes missing where this pod just comes through and you install and you're ready to go so there's less headache. Uh, and a good example was another good example. There's another hospital that we did all this pods. And we've done dorm rooms at colleges the same way, just getting them more, uh, operating faster to open their doors to the public.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah. They're truly a cookie cutter. So it sounds like that's what you're doing. You're just inventing a cookie cutter instead of cutting out each cookie one at a time. Right?

Cameron Cranford:

Correct. Yeah, we're doing a whole sheet. We're not just doing one at a time.

Mike Merrill:

Right. I've got to imagine, again, thinking back, putting my hard hat on for my construction days. Did you have some doubters originally? Did you have subs that are like yeah, I could see my subs back then saying, we're not doing that. The electrician, he's not buying in on this idea that he's going to come to my warehouse or my shop to do his part of the job. What have you encountered and how did you guys overcome it if you did?

Cameron Cranford:

Yeah, that's one of the biggest things, charting the unknown. And a lot of companies are very it's not necessarily a lot of companies, it's just a lot of people where, uh, it can make or break them. That's one of the biggest things. And, uh, the fear of the unknown, uh, is it going to play out good for us or not? And at first you might not you're learning experience, but it's going to pay you dividends later on, uh, with picking up this last time, so trying to convince owners and the architect, like, hey, we had this thought. We think this is the procedure. We did a little bit of a mock up here. We want you to come see it and see what you think. And we think we could do something three months earlier or save you 50% here and so forth like that, um, getting on that perspective. And then once typically this one owner, they saw it and they're like, wow, you sped up all this other stuff. And more efficient or workers compensate. All those different, all those little small things that most people don't think about. You're, uh, not paying for like trash, like earlier waste. There's different things like that. You're not having as much on the job site itself as much as the warehouse. And it is a, uh, struggle with some of the subcontractors because they're like, so I got to send my guys not to here, they got to go there. But after some while, they understand, okay, it makes sense. And they're doing it. They're actually churning out work faster so they can free up the employees time to go to another job or so forth like that. They can pick up more work, if that makes sense.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah. And, uh, I've got to imagine too, back again. If I were in their shoes, I would be thinking, here's Baker Triangle, this company that's super progressive. They're winning all these cool projects, all these amazing projects. If I can hook my hitch, my wagon to them,

right. I'm going to benefit and they're going to feed me work that I wasn't going to get otherwise. Right?

Cameron Cranford:

Correct. Yes, you're exactly right. And the owners and architects see who we work with and everything else. So they're going to look at that and say, okay, well, XYZ Contractors already worked with them. Why don't we bring them in? And then the pre discussion before they even get 5% of plans ready to go type of thing.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah. They're not in a dog fight estimating battle with XYZ electrical, um, so to speak. Right? Necessarily.

Cameron Cranford:

Right? Yes.

Mike Merrill:

Love it. Um, so in your estimation, is there a limit to, um, what you can use for prefab work on a project?

Cameron Cranford:

Limits? There's no such thing as limits here.

Mike Merrill:

I got to love that. That's awesome.

Cameron Cranford:

I never heard that term around here. We have an idea. Let's see, we can run with it and see what we can do with it. Wow.

Mike Merrill:

Uh, I absolutely love that. Uh, your passion shines through, and obviously you're winning and doing projects that are really, really iconic, so to speak. Um, what role does other technology play into this process for you all? Because obviously, you don't just trip and fall and accidentally prefab a hospital, right?

Cameron Cranford:

Yeah. So, uh, very beginning 1012 years ago, the biggest approach was we started doing the class detection, and it was the collaborations with the architects and, uh, designers right off the bat, before they even got the DD drawings ready to go, uh, they were saying, hey, we want to modify this, or, what do you think about this? And we're like, hey, you know what? You can take this out and speed up this, or, hey, you can't do this type of structural right here. You're going to have a problem when it comes to engineering, or whatnot like that, before it even gets made to the paper, or even what we've seen in the past, too, is it gets to the job and they're on the job going, you can't build it this way. It's impossible to do, and I can show you why. So that's always been a huge approach, or a big portion of all these different types of tech. And we use several pieces of, uh, software. There's so much that comes into it, uh, it's hard to say like what piece or whatnot. There's always little pieces at the cog wheel that make up each piece to turn to finalize the product. And as I mentioned before, earlier, with these architects and designers bringing us in very early to just to find out these errors and so forth like that, before it even gets out to the field or to the general to do their bids and stuff like that. And on top of that, we draw it up for them. They can visually look at it.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah.

Cameron Cranford:

So the owner can say, hey, you want to look at this building at night or during the day? We can do that for you. You want to add people in this lobby? Sure. We'll mock up some people, eat lunch, everything else, uh, up to ten years ago, so it was unheard of. They were doing the little stick models and stuff like that. Uh, Popsicle Sticks and stuff. And we're like, no, we can draw you up, put you in there, set the sun at this pace, put clouds in the sky, change out your landscaping, all that type of stuff, virtually.

Mike Merrill:

Well, now you've got goggles, right, that they can put on and actually walk through it. Right. You guys do any of that? You gone there yet?

Cameron Cranford:

Uh, yeah. You put on hey, put on an Oculus and let's go, and I'll walk you down. Hold on, let me change a couple of things for you. Oh, you want the different finish, we can change around the fly for you and continue on from there. Uh, another big thing is, so you look at the wall, and you can look at it with the goggles, and you can take the sheet rock off and then see the studs, the electrical is at everything else to see where different components are at.

Mike Merrill:

That's truly amazing. I mean, you're literally bringing people's dreams to life, right?

Cameron Cranford:

Yes. Before they even got the final plans ready to go. Change orders, which everyone loves. Change orders.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah. Right.

Cameron Cranford:

So, yeah, it helps prevent, uh, those things that the owner can say, I don't like that. Let's change this, or, I don't like this way beforehand. Yes.

Mike Merrill:

And I think most of us, we'd rather just do it the right way in the way that we want to do it from the beginning. Nobody wants to tear out the work they completed and redo, even if there's money in it. I think, generally speaking, it's not, you know, companies that rather just drive on to not have to go through that.

Cameron Cranford:

Yeah, definitely. Uh, we got to demo something twice. I just spent four weeks in here doing this, and I got to rip it out and do it this way. Now, how you said, just, let's knock it out, continue on, let's go down the road.

Mike Merrill:

Love that. Yeah. So I mentioned earlier, um, I always see your LinkedIn posts, and not just, uh, the awards for longevity for employees, but some of the huge projects that you do. I mean, there's some really cool stuff that Baker Triangle has their stamp on. I, um, did notice I watched a YouTube video of the Ross Perot museum of nature and science. And, in fact, we'll put a link in the show notes because, uh, that's a really cool that's a really amazing project, like nothing I've ever seen. Next time I'm down there, I got to go check this place out. So why don't you tell us a little bit about that? I mean, how did you guys do that job?

Cameron Cranford:

So that was probably one of our most and this job was also ten years ago, so you got to think how things worked ten years ago. Um, not even rendering the architect and some of the designers, they literally drew stuff on cocktail napkins and was like, this is the idea. We think of this as possible. And all these components and stuff, they're not something, uh, you just buy and install. We custom made and mocked up so many different designs for this. Uh, if you look in the theater room, which it will show in the video, we put up an oxblood camera to take time lapse footage of it. Uh, you can see the different elevations. Just the different elevations and everything else, how they want to look with the COVID and everything else, the structural steel and everything else. We laser bear, we cut out in the. Steel, the elevation to where it needs to be at, what piece it is, and everything else, uh, with TD and the same thing within the lobby ceilings, uh, there was no product that you could buy to install. It was all custom made to make look like sand dunes and everything else. And it literally came from a cocktail napkin. And, uh, the video kind of shows you that architect going to show you the little different things of, hey, we want to kind of do this. And we said, sure. Uh, we're not following your typical construction here. This is going to be a unique product for Dallas itself, and it is a very beautiful job. When they first opened the museum, they actually had an exhibit dedicated just to the construction of the building. Uh, they had different pieces of it, videos. They had all kinds of they had a whole exhibit dedicated just for the construction of, uh, the museum, of every little piece and things that came up to make this an idea.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, the video shows this, but you guys actually stamped out sheet metal instead of trusses. You actually made these. They're perfectly cut out. And the drywall, the seal, everything follows the contour. Like you mentioned, it's a sight to behold, and I'm shocked to hear that it was ten years ago, because that means you guys have been really innovating for a very long time, right?

Cameron Cranford:

Yeah. Uh, I didn't realize that until the other day. I was like, man, that job, it's been ten years now that and I've been there several times and school field trips with my kid. Uh, it's still already, when you're looking at it, just like, this is a very advanced, uh, just the architecture and everything else, it's different, you know what I mean? And wow, he actually thought of us and built it from a crazy idea.

Mike Merrill:

That's, uh, just so and again, as a father, that's got to make you proud to be walking your son through that project that you guys were able to deliver. And really invent almost, right?

Cameron Cranford:

Yeah. Just walking nieces and nephews through and saying how they did this and pointing up there's different things of how to come together. It's just not something you go all by off the shelf and put in. It's all custom made and showing them different things. What makes up this is different welding from here to there to how we had to hang it, the different clips to install. There's, uh, a lot of pieces to it. It's not just like, oh, all they did is put a couple of screws and screwed into the wall. No, that's not the case at all.

Mike Merrill:

Well, and then because of that, um, what other successes have you do a project like that? A showpiece. I mean, truly a showpiece. What does that do for your business? Or what have you seen from that?

Cameron Cranford:

Yeah, we won numerous awards on that one. We've won numerous, ah, Eagle Awards as well for some of the other projects. But with that comes with more architects and owners, see, okay, wow, it's doable this and that. We want to get them involved early on to start pricing out to see what's going to take to do my project or whatever else. Or, um, a lot of, uh, alternatives, like, I want to look like this, or if I use this product, what would it look like? Because they already know we've done it and they're not letting, uh, no worry about, oh, well, this contractor has never done this type of thing. They already got experience over here and willing to take that leap of faith to come up with different, uh, ideas or looking at things differently as well.

Mike Merrill:

Well, it just makes me think back. And I remember when I first came to your office down in Mesquite, and, ah, when you guys were going through this, um, trying to decide what software systems you're going to innovate with. And at that time, I think you were an assistant It director, or you were, uh, more of an underling right to the role that you're in today. Um, you had to have something in you and your pedigree, just like Baker Triangle has in their pedigree right to the top. Steven Baker is obviously a masterful innovator and a visionary, right. And you fit that same mold in my mind. And I know there's you guys deal with 15 or 20 different systems that all work together and integrate. And I mean, it's not just, again, putting a couple of screws in some drywall and calling it a business. So, um, your path to Prefab started long before Prefab. So what kind of contractor that's listening to this, it says, these guys sound amazing, but I could never do that. I mean, what advice would you give to somebody that's hearing this and has interest in maybe moving that direction?

Cameron Cranford:

Well, first, it's definitely going to be buyin from your executive, uh, staff or even partners in your business as the buying. We got to try this out, uh, your key stakeholders, we want to try this out before this is not a failure. We're going to learn from this. You know what I mean? It's going to go both ways, but it's not a failure.

It's not like, oh, we just lost all this money. Definitely you want to jump into it, you got to have buy in from the top down. You can't just have this person, this person, and then everyone else is like, no, because you're going to have all this, I guess you say, negativity towards it. So now that if you want to get into Prefab, uh, there's, uh, several companies out there now that have Prefab. It's all over the United States now. So I suggest reaching out to we have sister companies that are similar size us that we go and visit and bounce ideas off of precision. Uh, drawer would be one of them. That uh, they came to us and we came to them. Bounce ideas like, okay, how did you do this? And that's another big help now. Especially since uh, it's growing, it's going to continue to grow. And it's either you're going to have to adopt, you're going to have to adopt it, it's not going to go away. And put it that way. So uh, it's the same when I first started here next Hills. The number needs cell phones. They got a next bill. And now all my guys, they have iPads, iPhones, they're tapped in now. They just need a Next helmet and that's it. No, they got a fleet of tools now. It's not just an iPad, it's an actual tool that they use now. But um, definitely getting that buy in is number one key right off the bat. And mentioned before, earlier to visit some other and not just in your region alone either. We went and visited uh, up north. Uh, we're in the south, we're in Texas. But we went and looked up north, looked in California in different areas too. Because like you mentioned before, we didn't really thought about the weather. This is snow and ice here. But when it does here in Texas, it's a huge, huge deal here. Especially ice. Because we just don't have the infrastructure. We don't have the fleet of dump trucks and all that stuff to clear the roads out like they do up north and everything else. So we got a spectacle. We can close your building in faster to do this or that. Um, to help speed things up. And you get a baseline from visiting these other places. So you're not just dumping hundreds of thousands of dollars into well, they

Cameron Cranford:

had this CNC machine, we need the same thing.

Mike Merrill:

Okay?

Cameron Cranford:

You know what I mean? They could say you might need a CNC machine but you don't need this model. You can get actually a better one that does more stuff or different things. Um, they could tell you those type of things. Like you need XYZ, but you don't have to give up all the bells and whistles you can do with this other model and stuff like that. So you're not just jumping in spending hundreds of \$1,000 or if you want to get into it as well. Most of these will actually um, we have our own subdivision called Quick Shapes. They actually will design and do majority the work to ship to you. So you can finish the rest of the product yourself. So we uh, make our own studs type thing. Uh, so we can do a lot of different things. And then make those components for you and then sell them to you. And then you know, you can build up your rest. And this is not just related just in Texas. It's everywhere. So um, I know we do a lot of work up in Colorado and Chicago, um, with some partners up there as well, just limiting components that we made. And a lot of these things too, with this prefab, uh, comes the BIM and BDC department. BDC department, they play a huge role in this as well, because they're the ones mocking it up and revit AutoCAD so forth like that, visually in the computer. So you can look and see there's two major components there, um, to start with. So making sure that you have a department, that you have a person dedicated to that virtualization, um, to start as well.

Mike Merrill:

That's just amazing. I had no idea that you were uh, building components to resell. That's brilliant. And again, that's a great way in for somebody that wants to get started without all that additional overhead before they make sure that they're really cut out for that type of no, ah, pun intended. Really cut out, uh, for that type of an approach to their business.

Cameron Cranford:

Yeah, we start out with code lighting like that. It's preassembled. You just go on site install, um, what uh, is that call, um, blocking, I'm sorry, wall blocking, stuff like that. For like TVs and different things like that. It's all prefabricated. And we even cut out to where it fits behind the stuff perfectly for you. I mean, there's a lot of different things and your DDC, uh, or Ben guy can draw it up for you and say, here you go.

Which would speed up in the field, installing these different items. It's always interesting because when uh, people ask, where do you work? And I'm m like, well I do it work for uh, a construction company. And they're like construction. And I'm like, yeah, I love it. Uh, fortunately, my father, uh, and his father, my grandfather, they ran a general contractor business for about 35 years. So since I was five, always been in the construction, uh, around it all. They did major grocery stores and anything else. So that's always been a passion of mine, uh, myself here. But in the 90s, uh, you all need to start looking at technology. You only start looking at computers and everything else. And so he put that on us, was like, you know, this is going to be the future. And it was the.com, and all that different thing. We had to bust from that. But I have a huge heavy my childhood was around construction. Then I got into computers and I love it. And I used to work for before this was an electrical contractor. And then this opportunity came up, as you mentioned earlier, I started out as It. Help desk, uh, starting out there, here. That was uh, 15 years next month. And then uh, just grew into numerous different roles. And now the director just having a passion for both, which is uh, fun. I get to see different things getting built and then seeing what kind of different technologies we can do to improve it, to make it better, faster, or even documenting and everything else.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, it's truly incredible. Uh, it's been fun to watch you continue to fill those shoes that were already big and I, ah, think you've expanded them. And who knows where this is all going to head, but I can guarantee you Baker Triangle is going to be leading the pack in whatever direction it goes because you're relentless. You just never stop innovating. And I appreciate that about you as a technology innovator in construction, which we need, and also a partner that we've been able to work with closely. So Cameron, going all the way back, if there was one thing that you wish you would have known when you first started with Baker Triangle that you now have learned, is there anything that you wish you could tell yourself back then?

Cameron Cranford:

Uh, no. Uh, it's a fun, wild ride, I tell you that. It's been great. Uh, I get exposure to a lot of different things,

which, uh, is really great. I get to help design, uh, just getting involved in a lot of different things. I'm not just strictly, oh, you just fix the computer and go on type of thing. So, uh, it's very appreciative taking input in from different areas of well, what if we do this or that, what's it going to affect? Type of thing. So that's been from since almost day one here, which has been really great. And the culture here seconds. It's very unique and I've never really heard it or seen it anywhere else.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, it is very unique. Well, that's been really, uh, fun for me to learn more and I know the listeners feel the same. What's the one thing, if you could impart words, uh, of wisdom to anybody that's listening today, um, what do you hope they take away from yours? My conversation today, I hope they get.

Cameron Cranford:

Involved with getting with their peers and everything else to look at. This is coming down the road. I mean, this is what's happening already. It's been happening and it's going to continue. So what can we do to help us get on that so we're not behind the curve, getting that buy in talking, uh, to leadership, to, hey, I want this as a little pet project. I want to do cool if I do, to kind of look into it and see what we can do to make us more efficient within their company, uh, to help, just help it out. Just helping. Big current.

Mike Merrill:

Love that. That's great advice. So just to wrap up a couple of quick questions. So what's the most valuable thing that you have learned this last year? I know it's been unique and crazy compared to other years. What did you learn?

Cameron Cranford:

Uh, so what I learned, I guess my most valuable thing right now, this last year has been sleep. I had a daughter this year and, uh, congratulations right off the bat, you already know how that is. We have a newborn lack of sleep. So that is the most valuable thing I believe is the most important thing is sleep. And, um, I'm sure Lindsay would agree with me on that as, uh, we both are lacking some sleep, uh, especially we

had a rough night last night as well. But it comes with it. Um, but yeah, that's, um, here at the company, um, um, that's the word I'm looking for, basically keeping employees happy and giving them more ownership to things. You want to leave this project the way through. I'll give you advice and everything else to do this project, but unless you handle it all the way points through. So there's a lot of times I know that you check in with me when you're done with this or whatever else, and I'll let you know what the next portion is. So kind of giving them more ownership of items to do.

Mike Merrill:

I love that. That's great. On the sleep side, I promise eventually it'll be worth it. But yeah, I feel you're paying four kids of my own and now grandkids. So, yeah, it's, uh, uh, definitely worth it. But not easy. But love the advice on giving trust to your staff, to your coworkers, to those around you. I think that's how we elevate, right?

Cameron Cranford:

Yes, that's exactly right. That's how you're going to elevate and get them not to worry about you. Look at the life without blinders on. You can just obviously focus on one. You got to look at all the big picture ideas out there. Love it.

Mike Merrill:

All right, last question. So what product, uh, or tool do you think is just critical that you couldn't live without to drive that productivity that you seek every day?

Cameron Cranford:

Uh, it's this bad boy right here, my cell phone. Um, I do a lot of things on my cell phone. Most people only use it truly for just a phone. I mean, I can do a lot of things off my phone. I can remote in, I can troubleshoot advices. I can do a lot of things from my phone counter, look up things immediately, as long as there's some type of Internet there. But in my opinion, a, uh, phone is you have trouble with something, I guarantee you there's probably a YouTube video on it. You know what I mean? Like, hey, I need to change a battery and whatever. I guarantee there's a YouTube video on it. Nowadays, there's always going to be an article out there that fits

eight to 90% of what you're trying to fix or trying to do. So I think truly that having the phone, uh, or cell phone, you have the power of the internet in your hands. You know what I mean? You can research and find anything. And plus, you also have the entertainment too. You can watch TV. And right now, I'm bidding Yellowstone. Uh, right now I just started season one, so, uh, yeah, at night two, I play games with my son. We play Nerf as well on there as well. I think, uh, truly, I can pull my calendar up, everything else, uh, and you can do a lot off of it. There are times now that I wish I could throw it against the wall and not respond to it, but yeah.

Mike Merrill:

You could do that. You could try it. You don't want to take off your It guy.

Cameron Cranford:

I don't know if I want to do that or not.

Mike Merrill:

Right, well, one last question. So what's one thing, even in your personal life, that you're just most grateful for? Do you share that with us? Let us know a little bit about you personally.

Cameron Cranford:

Sure. Uh, I can it's, ah, Lindsay and my son and daughter. Right off the bat, I'm extremely, uh, appreciative of her and a, uh, bunch of different things. Um, there's always, there always supportive and, uh, my son is eight months, so, uh, helping them mold them into the future of helping them figure out what they want to do in life and, uh, help that path and help them choose not, uh, saying yes to the A. And in college, I know some parents are strict on what college you're going to know. If this is what you want to do, let's try it out. And it doesn't work out, guess what? We tried it's more than what most people have done, so we can try on something else, but yeah, uh, those three right off the bat and very appreciative.

Mike Merrill:

Uh, well, I love that, man. Uh, you're awesome. You're a great man and a good friend and I appreciate your friendship, but also your advice and the wisdom that you shared. I know the listeners are going to love this episode.

Cameron Cranford:

Awesome. Yeah, I appreciate it, man.

Mike Merrill:

All right, buddy, well, we'll keep in touch. We'll have to do this again down the road. I know you could talk about ten different topics for sure, but, uh, I thought this was a really good one for today.

Cameron Cranford:

Yeah, appreciate it.

Mike Merrill:

Alright brother, we'll catch you later.