

Episode: 109

# Kipp Sorensen



## Mike Merrill:

Hello, and welcome to the Mobile Workforce Podcast. I am your host, Mike Merrill, and today we are sitting down with my friend Kip Sorensen, who is the Director of Collaboration and Content Management and soon to be the Chief People Officer at, uh, Journey Team. Journey Team is an award winning winning Microsoft Gold certified partner that specializes in all three Microsoft clouds, including Modern Workplace, Modern Azure, and also Microsoft Business application. So, in today's episode, Kip and I are going to talk about data and its design and also organization and what healthy relationships between those data points look like. So thanks for joining us on the show today, Kip. Excited to have you, dude.

## Kip Sorensen:

It's great. And I love, uh, my friend, although we may have never met in person, so we're just friends on the Internet, which just sounds weird.

## Mike Merrill:

It's a modern time, buddy. These are new friendships, right?

## Kip Sorensen:

You call whenever you want, but it's awkward. Yeah.

## Mike Merrill:

Well, now that we have that out of the way, uh, let's talk about actually, before we get to the data thing, I just got to say, I mean, I've been a longtime listener of several of podcasts that you've been on historically and that you helped co host and lots, uh, of interesting things. But one of the most interesting factoids that I know about Kip is I see that there's a rumor you might have started that you're actually a black belt in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. So what can you tell us about that? Is that a true rumor, or what's the story there?

## Kip Sorensen:

It's a true rumor. However, anyone that has a black belt, uh, in Jiu Jitsu, you would prefer people not to know that you have a black belt in Jiu jitsu. The joke is that it's just a darker target for all the other people to, uh, want to try to destroy you. Um, there's way too much pressure that comes with that title, but someone somewhere thought I deserved it, and thus I have it. But, uh, I'd much rather be probably a purple or a blue belt if I had my way.

## Mike Merrill:

Nice. Well, that's pretty awesome. I do know that's probably the hardest belt in all the martial arts to earn. You don't trip and fall and, uh, earn a black belt in Jujitsu.

## Kip Sorensen:

Yeah. It's been 14 years since I've been training, and, um, if you want to insult anyone that does Jiu Jitsu, and they say, oh, I'm a black belt, you are responding with, uh, my son Timmy, he's a black belt in karate. And you making those seem like they're the same thing is the ultimate way to insult me. They're not the same. No, not at all. In fact, in Brazilian Jujitsu, kids, you can't even get a blue belt until you're an adult.

## Mike Merrill:

Wow.

## Kip Sorensen:

And that's like, belt number two on the adult level, right. And so it's one of those martial arts, uh, there's no hiding m let's say one of my favorite analogies is, and I'm not making this up, this is reality. I could train with anybody and if they didn't have a belt on and we rolled, I would tell you what their belt was when we were done. You know, there's no hiding behind some pads and like pretty technique when you're grappling

with someone, you know where their knowledge is, you know how good they are. And there's all kinds of other things you learn about people. If they're a, uh, passive aggressive personality, if they have anger problems, all those things actually show up in regards to how you train. It's super insightful. Such an amazing martial art.

**Mike Merrill:**

Wow, that's incredible. Well, congratulations on that achievement.

**Kip Sorensen:**

It's training sometimes.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, sounds good. I might need a slice of humble pie.

**Kip Sorensen:**

So I think that's 14 years later, I'm still getting humbled. Even today, I just got my butt kicked a handful of times, so it doesn't stop.

**Mike Merrill:**

That's awesome. The reason I bring it up, it's not just because it is very interesting, which it is, but also how instructive has that journey been in your journey with Journey Team and the business and how you look at the world. Because I've got to imagine it probably crosses both directions where jiu jitsu helps form how you look at the world here, but also the way you look at the world has also helped form how you've approached your training in Jiu jitsu.

**Kip Sorensen:**

Without a doubt, I haven't told anyone this. I actually have started writing a book around those principles between Jiu Jitsu and life. And I'm not joking, we could spend 8 hours having this conversation, but the most obvious is intent. And I think that's probably the biggest lesson, right? Like most people, when they start jiu jitsu let's throw out some statistics really quick. There's roughly only about 5000 black belts in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu in the world.

**Mike Merrill:**

Wow.

**Kip Sorensen:**

Okay. 80% of people who start jujitsu, only 20% continue. Out of that 20% that continue, only about 1% of them actually get their black belt. So this isn't a martial art that people like sign up and then they succeed. This is a martial art where most people sign up and they quit. And they quit is because back to our conversation earlier before we hit record, they don't want to check their ego because like I said, there is no hiding. So if you don't know what you're doing, you will be humbled over and over and over again until you slowly start learning, period. And I think in society we think and that's the key here, because I think it is a lie, but I think in society we think we can kind of go around and smoke and mirrors and have our stuff together and be a valuable contributor to the company and not be, quote unquote, found out. People know that's the lie because most people know if you're a good contributor on the team or not. You're the only one believing the lie. But in Brazilian jiu jitsu you're forced with the lie. And I think that's why most people quit, because they're unwilling to maintain some humility to grow effectively. And that's really the lesson of Jiu jitsu. Even in those early days, it was about, oh, I want to get a black belt. It didn't take long for it to be no, it's not about a black belt. It's about how I show up today. It's about learning the battle that is placed before me today and learning today. And that's it. And being present in the moment and focused on incremental growth. And that's the same approach that we need to take continually in our jobs, right. Is how do I improve what I'm doing, check my ego, so I'm willing to be humble enough to admit what I don't know and learn, and being able to be open to new things, right, and learn new things so that way I can progress.

**Mike Merrill:**

Well, that's well stated. So, I mean, a lot to unpack there, but I guess steering it back towards the conversation that we're planning on having today, jujitsu data. Uh, what's the correlation there between Jujitsu doesn't lie your training and data?

**Kip Sorensen:**

Yeah. And if you don't mind me adding a little context data in the element of what we see as consultants. Right? And so I want to make actually one distinction for all the tech guys, because we're going to get beat up M by a bunch of people if we don't make this distinction. So we're talking knowledge primarily. Now, is knowledge a form of data? It certainly is. What we're not talking about is normalized databases in SQL and Oracle, right? So what we're talking about is data or knowledge within your organization. Okay, now those correlations, man, how's this? This is one of my favorite distinctions about Jiu Jitsu. So one of our top black belts, the guy that I may have only caught like, once or twice, and I'm hesitant to even say that right now because he might hear this, and then I'm going to be on his hit list, and then he'll just destroy me for the next six months. In Jiu Jitsu, we submit each other, right? It's grappling with chokes and hyper extending bones. And I tap really fast so no one breaks my arm, right? Like, that's kind of the game that we're playing. And one of the most dangerous guys at our gym is about £145. I'm about 200. I am stronger than he is. I am longer than he is, so I can maintain better distance than him. Um, and he might be just a little bit faster just because he's a tad younger. So what is it that allows him to dominate in a grappling match with me? Knowledge. And that's what technique is, right? Technique was an outward expression of his knowledge. That's it. And that's why Jujitsu is such, like, the superhuman power. That's why it's so great from a self defense perspective, because I don't have to be a world class college athlete to defend myself in a fight. I actually can just use my brain. And that's why you see so many of these young kids, kind of nerdier kids get into Jiu jitsu and they blossom because it requires knowledge and the acting of that knowledge to be amazing. And isn't that ironic that our organizations are exactly the same exact way? In fact, on this? And um, hopefully I don't mess up the quote, but, um, one of my favorite quotes on the subject, actually, I do have it here because I wanted to bring this up. It was a former CEO of HP, his name was Lewis Platt, and he was quoted by saying, if HP knew what HP knows, we would be three times more productive. Can't we all say that? I know I could say that without a doubt. If Journey Team acted on the knowledge that's floating around this building and in the brains of our people, and we could just get to it more effectively, dude, the possibilities of what we could do

would just be amazing. But that's not the reality, right? The reality of it is, is our organizations have, uh, a huge depth of knowledge, but it's scattered, it's covered up with noise, with a bunch of nonrelevant data and all this other stuff. And we're ineffective because of our inability to get to that knowledge.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah. So you're talking about information architecture, right? So it's packaged properly, so we can consume it and make better decisions from it.

**Kip Sorensen:**

Exactly. And ironically enough, who's the consumer of that structure of knowledge or information people? So this is a human thing, right? This isn't like real chip, you know, I indexed a database and I aligned everything. Well, no, no, no. Humans don't work that way. Right. What's my relationship with knowledge? Right? How do I find it based upon the context by which I see my job and the personas and the roles that I play in our organization? And that's the conversation of we just don't roll out, let's say, Microsoft Teams and SharePoint and document management solutions and go, well, just search and find it, right? It's not that easy. And there's some design around it, human design around it, that will allow employees to be more effective.

**Mike Merrill:**

So in your mind, what causes that data to either fall apart or never fall together? What is it that causes that?

**Kip Sorensen:**

Probably a lack of discipline or intentionality. I'll, uh, give you an example at least in our ecosystem, right? And then this happens all the time. So anybody that's on Microsoft cloud Microsoft 365, they'll all relate to this really easily, right? There's a tool in there called Microsoft Teams. And so many of our clients will be like, oh, we signed up, we moved over to Microsoft 365, we're using teams. But they weren't intentional with how they're using teams. And so a year later they call us up and go, um, it's out of control, right? Like there's teams everywhere. Someone joins the company, they don't know where to go for what data. There's five different teams that represent a single department and

what's the difference between one versus the other? And data is just everywhere. It's a lack of discipline and intentionality around the conversation. And I'm sure we have the same problem back in the day. Uh, I was sharing this example with someone on your team earlier, just the other day. It's like, Mike, you're old enough to know we used to use file servers. You remember those?

**Mike Merrill:**

Oh yeah, okay, sure.

**Kip Sorensen:**

Anyone old enough, right? Back in the day, you'd have a file server sitting in some crappy broom, uh, closet in your office, even though you know you shouldn't have done that. I'm sure at first it was just a file server and a single mapped drive and all the data was just there, right? And then we eventually like, hey, that's not really effective guys, right? Like maybe we should organize the folders a little bit. And so we maybe put some structure to the folders. And then someone brought this idea of like, well, a bunch of those folders I don't even need to see because I don't even have access to them. So let's map a drive and maybe we'll grab the H drive and we'll map it to the HR folder. So when the HR person logs in, they only see their stuff. Uh, there's an idea they don't see all this other stuff that they don't need to see, right? And then we'll assign P letter to your personal drive and that's Mike's personal cloud storage or not cloud server storage. And then maybe we'll have a drive for the entire company to share and we'll call that the Sdrive. That was a poor man's version of information architecture, right? And we got to that point through probably trial and error of like, this is not really effective, let's start doing something. And then it's kind of interesting. All of a sudden web technology comes and as you know, there's a lot of intentionality to empower our workforce, right? Back in the day to get those drive mappings, who had to do that? It had to do that through a group policy and all this other stuff. And then we get into the cloud and Google and Microsoft are like, if the employee needs the space, you just hit this button, they get it. How awesome is that? Well, it's awesome until they all do it. And now all of sudden, A, we have no idea where the data is, right? And so I think that Sprawl has gotten bad enough that now organizations are like, OK, we should have had

some intentionality and thought process around this and really drove forward in a direction that's best for the organization all up and the reason why. And it's out of ignorance. It's not like a, uh, mean spirited thing. But the reality of it is, Michael, if we take knowledge and we put it in a pie, you know what you know, right? You know what you don't know. But there's a bunch of knowledge that you don't know that you don't know it. And that's what our employees are doing all the time. They don't know that these other things are happening over here. So it's out of ignorance that we're sprawling. We're carrying more collaborative spaces and knowledge and repositories and not realizing we're creating more ineffectiveness within the organization.

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, we're burying data in a bucket and it's layered up on layered up on layered up on layered data. And like you say, it's not funneled appropriately, intentionally. There's no organization to it. So back to that architecture.

**Kip Sorensen:**

Yeah, totally.

**Mike Merrill:**

So obviously, our listenership is, uh, primarily in the construction space. I know that this is a huge problem for construction, but where else is this a challenge out there in the world today?

**Kip Sorensen:**

Everywhere. Seriously. It's a problem everywhere. In fact, it's so much of a problem that we don't do. So my team, particularly in regards to collaboration, content management, we implement systems in the great if I had to simplify it right, and remove the technology. We implement systems to help our employees or help our clients implement systems that allow employees to get to the right data at the right time. That's all that we're doing. We don't do those projects, Mike, without information architecture, period. A client goes, oh, we want to migrate a bunch of data into SharePoint. Awesome. We don't know what we're migrating into unless there's a blueprint. Well, can't you just throw it in one big thing? No, we can't. That's a bad idea. And

let us tell you why. Because we don't want to just have this giant bucket, to use your analogy, and just plop everything in a bucket, that's not going to help us.

### **Mike Merrill:**

Well, that would be like, uh, somebody saying, I need you to build me a building without plans. What kind of building? What is it, three storeys? Two? One? Uh, needs a blueprint, as you're saying. So how big is that problem? It sounds like Fortune 500 companies. I mean, everybody, right? Is there a number you can throw it up?

### **Kip Sorensen:**

Yeah, there's a report that was done probably about 510 years ago. So this is bigger than this. Right. But Fortune 500 companies, this is a \$31.5 billion annual cost related to poor knowledge sharing. That should move some people, right? That's listening, like, oh, man, that's a big problem. Forget about the number. Look at your current organization right now and you tell me how effective it would be for you to be able to get to the data you need when you needed to do it, right. And I want to be really clear, if you don't mind me sharing a story, because I think this illustrates it really well, right? And there's some humility in this, so since you're trying to work into getting some humility into bee. Okay, so my wife and I, we just got married, and on our honeymoon, um, we went to a surf town to go surfing. Now, her family is from Hawaii, right? There's some just built in genetics that proves that she can surf better than I can surf. And I'm the white boy from central small town Utah. Uh, I get nervous. Anything deeper than an irrigation ditch. Okay, so you get this idea, here I am, let's go surfing. Now, what I didn't tell her is I was scared. I'm thinking the ocean, which I've only been in a handful of times. We're going to go out there with those giant monster waves are going to kill us, right? But I want to come across tough. We just got married. I'm not going to expose my weaknesses too quickly into the marriage. So I'm like, yeah, that sounds great. We're getting ready. And after she explained sets, I mean, that's a whole other bad. Like, I was trying to swim out and I couldn't swim out because I didn't understand what sets were doing and all this other stuff. But anyhow, at, uh, one point she goes, oh, I almost forgot. If you ever get disoriented in the water, like you're kind of underwater and you're not

sure which way is up, reach down and grab the leash on your ankle and follow it up to the board. Um, first off, that scared me even more, right? Because I'm like, well, who's going to be destroyed? So nonetheless, you told me that, right? I get surfing and within the hour I just get eaten by a wave and I'm underwater and I'm swimming and I'm starting to panic and I'm swimming. And then also, I remember what she said and I reached out, I got my leash, and that leash took me the opposite direction that I was swimming, right? And I get on the board, grasp breath, and I go, my gosh, right? Like, I could have died if you didn't tell me that. Oh, really quick, let me not forget, right? And I'm like, man, that's really dangerous. Now, at the time, I didn't make this correlation. I made this correlation later. But that is the opposite example of corporate America. If that was most of our companies, that would have been in the employee handbook that under page 20, you first got hired and you would have glazed over it and never looked at it ever again. Or it would have been an email that gets blasted out to the entire company saying, hey, if you ever happen to go surfing and you get disoriented, uh, blah, blah, blah. And what would I have done in the moment when I see that email? Well, that is a waste of my time. I'm not surfing, so let me delete the email and forget about it. Or if I'm ambitious, I'd drag it over to a folder and Outlook or whatever and think, I'm going to go read it sometime, and then I'd go surfing six months later and drown to death. That is corporate America's approach, right? We think we just throw knowledge on people because it's important. But, uh, the context is not important in the moment. So we can't rely on that type of communication and knowledge. We need them to go find it when they need it, not when you wanted to give it to them. Otherwise we're not going to remember it. And anyone that knows, like Bloom's Taxonomy, or you look into learning organizations, that's not how humans work. We don't learn through data being thrown at us. And then we focus on being able to regurgitate it well enough for a test and then move on. Now you learn meaning I have a context and I have a current scenario by which I need to address and I'm researching and resolving a problem. It's knowledge in action, which means I need the knowledge when I'm in the action.

### **Mike Merrill:**

Right. Uh oh. Wow. Such a profound story. I appreciate you sharing that. Uh, I think there's a lot of takeaways

that we can take, not just in business, but in life generally, on that leash. I mean, I've been surfing and I know what it's like to be disoriented. And nobody told me to follow the leash up. Right.

**Kip Sorensen:**

Yeah, I could have died on my honeymoon if it wasn't for, uh, just in time knowledge.

**Mike Merrill:**

Wow, that's, uh, crazy. Well, and again, back to your point. You're talking about the practical application, which the word application infers action, which means I'm actually taking what I'm being fed and applying it now. So I now have experience and muscle memory. And again, I'm way more likely to remember that in a time of need if I've already practiced it.

**Kip Sorensen:**

You're ready for this? Good. On Instagram? Instagram provides two values for me. One, I get to see you run. And it motivates me to, uh, step up my game and get some action going. The second part is, uh, there is actually some valuable content, believe it or not, on the web this morning, I saw this post and I thought profound and ironically enough, related to, uh, our conversation here. So Dale Carnegie. Right? You know Dale Carnegie?

**Mike Merrill:**

Oh, absolutely.

**Kip Sorensen:**

Quote you cannot teach a man anything. You can only help him find it within himself. There's a big difference in logically understanding something well enough, and there's a whole other bag to get it. Getting it and getting it requires that context that you're talking about. We can provide and support our people, but they will learn on their own, not because we taught them or through data at them.

**Mike Merrill:**

Mhm, yeah, I love that quote. It is exactly in line with

what we're talking about here. It's needing access to the right information at the right time, and knowing where to find it quickly, right?

**Kip Sorensen:**

Yeah, totally.

**Mike Merrill:**

In your experience, you work with companies of probably all types of sizes, all types of industries. I mean, what's the low hanging fruit that somebody can take away and say, okay, my data is a mess? I don't know. We have this problem for sure. And most companies probably could answer the same way. Affirmatively. What is the first step in moving the right direction to getting control of that and moving in a better direction, for sure?

**Kip Sorensen:**

That's a great question. So the first comment I'm going to make is get past the pitfall that tech is going to take your broken something and then magically fix it. It's not technology. Automates what is already there.

**Mike Merrill:**

I love that.

**Kip Sorensen:**

Uh, so if your data structure, if your knowledge is disoriented and it's a mess, we're going to automate that and just going to make it worse. Right. You can't automate a broken process. Right. And that goes the same thing for how we organize data and knowledge. Okay. Now, with that said, here's the baby steps or the first kind of things that I think everyone can take. First off, it's unique to your culture. Words have meaning, right? Show me. Color doesn't exist. It's a word that represents something, but it doesn't exist outside of the context of its own meaning. Organizations actually have the same dilemma. So, for instance, I'll, um, give you a couple of distinctions. There's a big difference in a company that has an intranet. Let's use the knowledge that sits inside a company's Internet and the knowledge of a department. Those are two different segments of knowledge, and we actually treat

them differently. Right? If it's on the Internet, what is it? It's corporate approved. It's kind of polished. Ah. It's published. It's for consumption from everybody. It's kind of like word of law or whatever, right? A document sitting in the HR document library that the HR team is working on is a drop document. And they might be working on, I don't know, employee policy number XYZ, version two. Meanwhile, everyone's consuming version one on the Internet. This is work in progress. This is published content. Right. Two different distinctions, right? Collaboration versus publishing. Okay, now take that a step further, and here's the deal. You need to make that distinction. Employees don't know that. Right? What happens when I go you start muddying the water and I'm seeing a draft handbook versus the new policy versus the old policy. The work in progress. It's confusing. Right? Make it simple for me to get to the data, I need to do my job right? So that distinction needs to be clear. The second distinction I'd say, is not all collaboration is the same. There's a big difference between the collaboration of documents for, let's say, a finance and accounting department, and the collaboration of project, uh, team. And we and organizations even treat those things differently. Right? Would we ever purge that finance and accounting site if inactive, no legal requirements, all kinds of problems, right? That project will eventually die. So what do we do to archive and decommission? We treat that data differently over time. Right? So collaboration is not so simplistic as departments, right? Collaboration. Think of collaboration. Let me give you some examples. Collaboration is committees, battle teams, communities of practice, social interest groups within your organization, a, uh, department, project teams. And we treat them differently. Use the context of your organization to organize and classify your data appropriately. And then I would lean and it's kind of interesting because there's a dichotomy here and some people might lose their stuff over this statement. Right? And I get it. But some organizations will go a little bit more bootstrap Mike, right? They'll be like, we're open book policy. Everyone has access to everything and whatever. We're in the information age. Getting access to data is not the problem. The problem is noise. Right? That's why eventually some of us are high producers. What do we do with this thing? We start muting it. Why? Because it's a distraction. So don't get me wrong, there are security requirements, but sometimes I shouldn't have access to, let's say, that collaborative group over there. Not because some

authoritative position I should be able to see that data and I shouldn't or what? No, it's noise and it's not applicable to what I need to do so because it's not get it out of my radar. So it's not noise when I now search or when I go to collaborative spaces and I don't see things that are relevant to me, give me the content relevant to what I need to.

### **Mike Merrill:**

Do to segregate the data to appropriately serve that team, those people where again, it's not noise. It is applicable, it is pertinent, it is imperative. And if it's not move it the crap out of the way. Right?

### **Kip Sorensen:**

Totally. And stop using email as a form of giving knowledge to people. What a horrible idea. That is your analogy of a bucket, that's what it is. Your inbox is just a bucket of just random knowledge being dumped in there. The perfect example of this that I use all the time is if you are going to start a journey team and I gave you access to the company's Internet, if you can't from there, from that site, if you can't go from there and actually get to the data you need to get your job done. We have failed. It shouldn't be hard. I shouldn't get trained on how to get the data to do my job. That's a bad sign. So figure out how do you organize it. Right.

### **Mike Merrill:**

Well, the other side of that is as an organization, as a company, I'm a business owner. I know you have been also, I've failed as an owner if I have not prepared that information appropriately so that the lowest common denominator knows what to do. Right. If they don't know what to do, then all I've done is strapped myself to now having to circle back and to go back through and maybe over communicate, right. Sometimes that extra double check actually causes more confusion and harm and delay than it would be to just trust people to take clear direction and move, right?

### **Kip Sorensen:**

Oh man, you're singing my song man. Just think about the power. So we can look at decentralized command, we can look at the power of communication and most importantly from a cultural perspective, the

power of trust. Imagine when you are clear in desired intent and you empower your people to execute and they know how to get the job done, then you don't need to micromanage things. But ironically enough, a system doesn't necessarily do that. It can support that. Right. But you still have to be very clear in your communication in regards to what that looks like.

### **Mike Merrill:**

Yeah. So what I'm hearing you say, and I absolutely love this timing matters like uh, the timing of how and when that data is communicated into who is critical to make sure that again, you don't inject new noise into a simple process. Right?

### **Kip Sorensen:**

Totally, I love that.

### **Mike Merrill:**

So in your mind when a company needs to um, disperse this data or divide it up appropriately, how do they go about organizing that in a way that makes sense for them as a step one?

### **Kip Sorensen:**

Yeah. My fear is that people might be struggling what we're talking about. Right. So let me try to simplify this really quick. Okay? So let's first say what is our distinction of collaboration? What does that mean? What does it mean to have a collaborative group in Microsoft Stack? And I would argue this is in every stack. So this is not technology specific, but let's talk through this. In Microsoft Stack it looks like this, right?

So if I have a department and we're a collaborative group, we have files that we all have access to, we have access to notes for notetaking, we do task management. We might have a task management tool that we all are collaborating. Whether it be a project plan or combine board or, you know what I mean, a Gantt chart or whatever. Right. But there's some form of task management associated to it. Our team has a calendar, calendar of events of what's going on. From a scheduling perspective, our uh, team might even be part of that email distribution list. So we're part of a communication group as well.

Then we have chat where we're communicating with chats and different. Then we have links to resources and links to other systems that we use. That is my definition of what I'd say is collaboration. And the more that I can be set up my environment when I join a team, when I join, let's say the finance team, I'm now part of all the collaborative tools that make up for finance. That is an ideal state, and I'm now part of that single group. And now we can increase on boarding, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. So when I'm talking to collaboration, now the lowest hanging fruit of this is just files, right? So if you want to talk about the simple version, what are we talking about? Access to resources and files to do my job, maybe those are standard operating procedures, links to common systems and resources, templates in which I need to do my job effectively, right?

Despite what everyone thinks, despite the new generation, everyone thinks that all these new generation are just searches for everything that actually still only counts about your workforce. That will go to search first, so you still have to address the navigation to content. Okay? And when you go search for something, where's the file? You still have to organize it. So organize it well, right? And then you address both needs. Right? So the question then would be, if we go back to the poor man's version of knowledge management, and if I'm on a file server, I'm using Google drives OneDrive SharePoint whatever, dropbox whatever, break down the types of ways people collaborate into classifications, so that way you can treat those data repositories differently. So it may be as simple as we have a classification of departments and this is all their departmental data. We have a classification for committees and social groups or projects, and we classify them by the project ID.

The point is, if you can't easily navigate from point A to point B to find the file you need, it's not right, and so do the necessary investigation. Understand the language of your guys'organization. What logically makes sense. Now, this is not as big of a problem when you talk about file servers, to be frank. It's a big problem when we talk about I'm using Microsoft teams, I'm chatting, I have files, I have task management, I have a team calendar, I have this, I have that. And you expect me to be effective in my job and not navigate all over the place to find what I need?

**Mike Merrill:**

Yeah, uh, I'm sure you can relate to this, too. And in fact, it just happened to me today. I got a Slack message from one of our team members, and then, uh, I answered it in a text on my phone, and then they responded in Slack to my text. Now I knew what was going on, and I needed a link, and it was easier to get through from my browser. That shows you both the power and also the double edged side of the sword. With modern technology, at least it's cloud based. So the Slack I get to my phone or my machine, doesn't matter which one, whatever, but like my text, that's not integrated into Slack. So it's, uh, an example of exactly what we're talking about. We've got to have a known process for keeping that data in those proper lanes, right? Those swim lanes. So we're not over the map. Right.

**Kip Sorensen:**

And we will treat data differently based upon how we get to it. Right. Like, the analogy I use sometimes is, like, if our employees got, like, a text message saying, hey, we got bought out, we're laying everyone off. We'd be like, AHA, joke, emoji, emoji, whatever. Right?

**Mike Merrill:**

Right.

**Kip Sorensen:**

You switch it over to an email and everyone's like, Updating the resume. Right. What's the difference? The medium? We treat it differently. So people have human behaviors that are different based upon how we consume, um, content. And we need to be aware of that. And to your point, we kind of have to get the buy in from the employees and then expect them to be empowered and have the discipline to use the right tooling for the right thing. Right. And we want to discourage and promote certain ways of doing knowledge. Because your slack example is a perfect example of, well, this team uses Dropbox, this team is using Google. This team is using SharePoint. And this team's holy crap, what's our process here? Right? And we need to be consistent. Yeah.

**Mike Merrill:**

And I love your example of the employee buy. And that's the thing. I know, especially with our audience, they're dealing with, uh, blue collar fieldworkers in a lot of cases that they're trying to get to adopt these technology solutions. It's a whole other layer and, uh, more of a challenge. They're not in an office environment. They're on a job site where air compressors are going off, someone's jack hammering here, someone's drilling there. They're pouring concrete. Like, who knows what environment they're necessarily going to be in. And so if they don't know how to get to and properly document or collect and share what it is that they're working on out there, you could forget about it. There's just no way.

**Kip Sorensen:**

Totally. Yeah. And if they're not bought in, they're not going to use it. And they'll bypass it and they'll start texting. They'll start using whatever will work. Trust me, we will find a way to make it work, or whatever. You do a good job and they'll use something you're used to, or they'll use something that's more effective from before the new policy.

**Mike Merrill:**

Right. So to your point, how critical and I already know the answer, but I like to talk about this. How critical is buy in? Um, from the top down and the messaging behind it, like, that it has the full force and weight of the business owner and all the executives before these types of initiatives are pushed out to anybody.

**Kip Sorensen:**

Yeah, I think it's highly important. Um, and I would suggest that it can't be superficial because I do think that we do that sometimes. Right. We need executive buy in, and that means that they'll sign the check for the budget. Right. And we call that executive buy in. Right. Um, no, executive buy in is when it's hard and they don't want to. And they do it because they're also committed to whatever it is that they're bought into. Right. And they get it. They can emotionally get behind it. Uh, and that's what I'm looking for. Right. It's amazing. This is a fun conversation, because we do this, um, on our cultural side, is when we do quarterly plans and reviews, the conversation I'm having with my

employee is, are they fully committed and bought into what we're doing? And if they are, awesome. How do I keep you there? And if you're not, what's the blocker I need to eliminate to get your buy in? We're not about manipulating people, and we need to stop doing this, even from the technology side. Right. We think how's this we treat employees sometimes like their children. Now, this is the system, and then you're just supposed to use it. And what's, command and control? They're adults. I'm going to steal this from Jocko. I think if you can't passionately communicate why it's beneficial to them and convince them that it's beneficial, then it's probably not beneficial. So make sure it's beneficial and allow them to be adults and see the bigger picture of why you're doing what you're doing. And guess what? It's going to work. But it's going to take effort on your part to have that level of communication and buyin well.

**Mike Merrill:**

And I think this goes all the way into, uh, other parts of society. And, uh, I think to your point, you're saying if we treat them like children I think it's interesting the conversations that happen after the complaining of, uh, these guys are acting like children, and these people are acting like children. It's like, yeah, well, maybe you're treating them that way so they're responding appropriately and you're the problem.

**Kip Sorensen:**

Yeah, totally. Yeah. You didn't communicate clearly enough so they could see the bigger vision and purpose behind what you're doing.

**Mike Merrill:**

Well, in any relationship.

**Kip Sorensen:**

People, uh, will.

**Mike Merrill:**

Tolerate what you allow. Right. Back to the jockey stuff. Um, discipline equals freedom. There's so many great things that the application of the Seals teams has in business and in life and everything else. But it's like, I,

uh, know this. You know this in jujitsu, especially when you're getting ready to get choked out, you fall to the level of your training. And so we've got to get better training and help people have enough rope to fail once in a while so that we can teach them why they need to do it differently next time. So that when they're left to face this decision on their own again, and you're not there hovering over their shoulder planned helicopter mom or dad or whatever helicopter Boss that they will make the right decision and then in turn, have more confidence. So the next time they'll lean into it and be able to hold their head high and probably make a good decision.

**Kip Sorensen:**

Yeah. And help the next employee that comes along that you now no longer have.

**Mike Merrill:**

To help, which now equals a culture. Right?

**Kip Sorensen:**

Yeah.

**Mike Merrill:**

Absolutely. Love it. Yeah. This has been a really fun conversation. Um, we need to have more. We need to have another one, and then I think we need to have a jujitsu one down the road, too. But just to wrap up for today, um, what's the most, uh, important thing you hope that people take away from this initial conversation today?

**Kip Sorensen:**

Probably that don't accept the status quo. And I really feel like, I don't know, I'm getting a little bit on that tangent that we've kind of swung over into about empowering our people to make the right decisions. Right. And I really feel like if we do the right thing, um, people will adopt and use the system. Um, but we need to get their input right, and we need to actually be intentional about what we're doing. And I think the key things get past the downfall that we need to implement this technology and then it will be all be fixed. No, we need to if you can't organize knowledge

and documents utilizing a file drawer in some office somewhere, you're not going to do any better job, uh, digitally. So address how you plan to organize content, be intentional about it, and then mirror the technology to what you need. Um, and there's no reason that and it's a big problem, so there's no reason why we shouldn't be addressing it. It's a soft problem. Right. It doesn't show up on an invoice or on an accounting ledger. So it's one of those things that we have a tendency to kind of overlook a little too much and think, like, oh, well, people just need to double down. It's like, how many inefficiencies exist? Because I'm doing the same thing that you already did, and 20 other people did the same damn thing in another department, and we're just not communicating.

**Mike Merrill:**

Uh, that's great. Yeah. Get your house in order before you go trying to make sure everybody else is all right.

**Kip Sorensen:**

Yeah, totally.

**Mike Merrill:**

Beautiful. Well, very fun conversation. I appreciate the opportunity to sit down with you for a bit today. Looking forward to more of these. And, uh, just appreciate, uh, your friendship, mentorship, and also your wisdom sharing.

**Kip Sorensen:**

Yes, it's great to have a conversation, and, you know, I'm always up for a good talk.

**Mike Merrill:**

Sounds good, brother. Well, we'll do it again and, uh, we'll catch Chip later.

