



Mike Merrill:

Hello, and welcome back again to the Mobile Workforce Podcast. I am your host, Mike Merrill, and today we have a very special guest on, and it is Mihaela Berciu, who is an architect of leaders. And Mihaela is actually in London, England, today. So, um, she's also the host of a national TV show viewed by hundreds of thousands of people and an author of two bestselling books. Books. The first one is Dress for Success, and the second one is Successes and the Details. So two things that I really like and, uh, looking forward to exploring on topics today, we're going to talk about how we are able to gain respect, inspire others, and also removing false beliefs within our organization. So thank you, Mihaela, for joining us today. Very much looking forward to the conversation.

Mihaela Berciu:

Thank you, Mike. Thank you for inviting me. I'm, uh, excited about this conversation.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, me as well. And I told you good morning earlier, and you said, well, it's actually afternoon for me, the beginning of my day is the end of yours. Right.

Mihaela Berciu:

Exactly. And that shows how, again, perspective changes everything because we're together in this. But the way you're approaching it and the way I'm approaching it is very different.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah. I love that. This is going to be a fun conversation. So tell, uh, me about why you wrote the book she wrote. I'd like to write a book one day. I haven't done that yet. What is it that inspired you to do that and finally, uh, take the plunge? And what's been your experience of going through that?

Mihaela Berciu:

Um, well, I've actually, uh, almost finished writing the third one, which I'm even more excited about. Uh, and, um, it started with in my coaching business, uh, I work with people one on one, so I can only help a certain amount of people. And, uh, I thought, seeing that there are so many commonalities between my clients yes, their, um, businesses are different, their lives are different, but there is a common thread that, um, I noticed. So I thought best way to go about it is to put it in a book. And, uh, it's my attempt to translate the one on one process for the many and with the guidance so that, uh, um, they can approach this, uh, my uh, process, uh, on their own with me sort of like just, uh, a voice, um, if you'd like.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, that's fascinating. And then also, obviously, on your television show, what is the difference that you enjoy about that versus a book? And maybe what are you experiencing there?

Mihaela Berciu:

Um, well, the television show, it's done. I'm, uh, not doing that anymore. Uh, but that was actually an amazing channel to reach out to people, because there although it's sort of a one way conversation, I still see it as a conversation. And my, um, aim is to, uh, trigger people, uh, as much as I can in a positive way, in the sense of trigger their thinking, challenge their beliefs, their current beliefs, and always, um, put things in a different perspective, uh, in a way that even if they say, oh, my God, that is what the hell is she talking about? That's so much BS. Um, that's still a good reaction. That's a very good reaction because I know those people will be the ones that later on will be like, well, but what if I wonder, was she thought wrong? Or what the hell was she on about? And they will try to understand a bit more. Um, and the TV show was um, a great channel to do that because m, they've seen me and they heard me. Because it's very different to hear

someone say something and to read, uh, something that someone, uh, has said. So even if it's the same thing, if it's said, it triggers one reaction, if it's read, uh, it triggers a different reaction.

Mike Merrill:

Uh, yeah, it's like texting. I always tell my wife I hate texting because there's no emotion behind it and you don't know what someone's intention is necessarily. There's no body language. You really have a hard time understanding for sure the way that it was meant.

Mihaela Berciu:

Exactly. And actually there is emotion behind it, but it's the emotion of the reader. It's not the emotion and the intention of the sender. And the reader will relate to it and will read it through their own filters. And most times we uh, end up in hot waters when our intention was actually very good.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, that's a great insight. So thank you for sharing that. I love that.

Mihaela Berciu:

You're welcome.

Mike Merrill:

So you're obviously uh, a subject matter expert in this area. You have a lot of experience in helping people be more effective as leaders and um, guiding others. How does a leader command that respect that they need in order to gain that authority and the voice that people will actually follow?

Mihaela Berciu:

I think it first starts with them fully accepting uh, the position they're in. Uh, in most cases, people end up being promoted in leadership roles, uh, without their emotional maturity to match that position. And that triggers uh, a lot of insecurities, uh, triggers a lot of fears. And that shows, uh, in many ways to the people, uh, they're leading. And even at an energetic level, if you want, if you're not confident enough in

yourself, no matter how hard you try to pretend that you are, people will feel is that gut feeling when you meet someone and then you say, I don't know what was wrong with that person, but something was off, something was not. And you can't really pinpoint it, but in reality, your energy is not aligned with the other person because they're not being authentic. And we feel comfortable around people who are authentic. Um, so that would be probably, uh, the most important thing for them to actually embrace fully and accept that, uh, if they've been promoted in that, uh, position, it means they're good enough to be there. And I know it sounds a lot easier than it is, but it's a good start, uh, to ask themselves, am I really fully aligned with this? Am I fully embracing being, uh, the leader? In my experience, uh, most of my clients, um, start by not enjoying being leaders very much. And they see it as a pressure. They see it it's a big stress, uh, on them, because I think the society today has built a bit too much, um, aura, too much, uh, um, expectation around being a leader. Um, in reality, we are all leaders. We are leaders from the minute we wake up to the minute we go to bed. Uh, that leadership shows in many ways in our lives. And, uh, I've made the focus of my work, um, and this third book is about leadership of self. Because once you can lead yourself, then you can lead anyone. Uh, but if you avoid yourself, and if you avoid what's going on, um, your fears, your setbacks, your holdbacks, um, then there's no way you can be an authentic leader that others can follow, uh, openly and willingly. And furthermore, inspire, inspire people. Um, so that's, uh, uh, almost choosing to take down the role that you're in, uh, from the pedestal that it's being on, and then the connection becomes much more authentic and much more, um, m natural.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, I love that. Uh, here in our business, we often do, a couple of times a year, a book club. And one of the books, in fact, a couple that we read, but one of the books we read was leadership and Self Deception at the Arbinger Institute. I'm not sure if you're familiar with that book. Um, and another one is Ego is the Enemy. And I think those two really work together. We're now doing atomic habits. And so it's like really getting down to the finite things and not having an ego that gets in the way of, um, serving and helping and being authentic, as you're saying, is really the best way to own being a leader, but also appear with those

you're working together. It's not you're in, uh, an ivory tower, pointing down and commanding what needs to be done, but you're actually digging in and working together arm in arm with those that you're leading.

Mihaela Berciu:

Exactly. Ego is our worst enemy. In reality, ego is not only holding us back from, um, authentic and true connections, but it holds us back from our development, own development and growth and, um, um, being more aligned with who we are. Ego is just fear all it is. And I sometimes hear people say, oh, no, it's good ego and bad ego. No, there's only bad ego.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah.

Mihaela Berciu:

There is no good ego.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah. Confidence doesn't mean you have an ego. It means that you believe in your ability to figure it out. Not necessarily kill that on everything. But you can get there. Right.

Mihaela Berciu:

Because you're willing to put the work ah, so right. That's exactly what confidence is, knowing that even if you don't know the answer, you will find an answer.

Mike Merrill:

And I think what you're saying, and I absolutely love this, you're saying, own that. Embrace the fact that I probably, uh, am inadequate today for this title or this role I've been given. But I'm anxious to work with you to get there. And I care about our mission and our cause and what we're trying to accomplish. So I'm willing to step up and dig a little deeper and put in a little bit more work and sweat to rise above, um, maybe what I was doing before. And together we're going to be able to accomplish this goal. But I'm going to need your help. And I'm not perfect. And I recognize that. Yeah. It disarms people, I think, is what

you're saying. Being authentic. And then you can work together. Right?

Mihaela Berciu:

Yes. Because in reality, professionally, these people, these leaders are very good. Otherwise, they wouldn't have risen to that level in their career. What's happening is their personal the belief in themselves, in their personal, uh, attributes, not the professional attributes, that is, um, making them feel, uh, inadequate. And because they can't m consciously, they don't make that difference between the professional attributes and their personal attributes. The fear, uh, coming from, um, let's say, um, lower level of trust in their personal attributes tends to then be transferred, uh, onto their professional attributes. But in reality, professionally, they are very good. It's just matching the personal with the professional, where the trick is, yeah, I.

Mike Merrill:

Love the way you phrase that. They have done enough physical things to obviously, um, be awarded an opportunity in that role. But then it's time to get to work on the back side of that, under the hood, uh, and rise to the level of, uh, that leader's position to properly lead. Right.

Mihaela Berciu:

Correct.

Mike Merrill:

So, uh, what do you think people that are put in those positions of leadership can do to avoid the judgment or avoid the negative side of people? Maybe, um, looking down upon them or feeling like they need to pick at them because, oh, well, now they're my leader, so I've got to start complaining about them, so to speak.

Mihaela Berciu:

Well, to begin with, they have to understand that you can never avoid being judged, because being judged is not about you. Being judged is about the other person, the one who is placing the judgment. You can be the most perfect person in the whole world, and there will

be someone who will say, yeah, but if only they could be a bit slimmer, or if only, um, they would be, um, a bit, um, um, friendlier. And also, it very much depends on the day of the person who judges, because today, or even the hour, uh, right now, they might be in a good mood. So they'll be absolutely happy with whatever everyone does. But then something happens. Maybe they get a text message where they read it wrong, um, and their mood switches. And all of a sudden everyone around them is a bad person. And it's annoying and it's frustrating. And so they start placing a lot of judgment. So accepting that you can never escape being judged, um, it's the first step and the second step, it has to do with what we discussed, um, at the beginning. Uh, and that is, uh, when you work with your insecurities, you stop needing validation from others. And as long as you need validation from others, you will always be exposed to the fear of being judged. Because again, the others will validate or invalidate ah, you and your needs according to their needs, which you can't control, so to speak. Control, uh, I don't really like this word, but anyways, um, because it's a false sense of control anyways. But at least when it comes to our, uh, emotions, when it comes to how we react, uh, or rather, how we respond instead of reacting, and how we interact with others when we're in charge of that, then we don't need, uh, the external validation. And then there is no fear. And then that judgment that it will still exist. But to us, uh, becomes an opinion. And opinions are fine, because opinions, uh, don't carry the judgment. It's a fine line, but, um, it's an important one to understand because people can have opinions and people can have different opinions than ours, but that doesn't mean they're judging us.

Mike Merrill:

I love that. So don't take it personally because somebody doesn't agree with you. Right?

Mihaela Berciu:

Yeah, exactly. And actually, when someone doesn't agree with you, that's where growth comes in. Because if they disagree, then there's, uh, uh, uh, a chance to understand that maybe, just maybe, your point of view or the information that you have, um, uh, can lead to a certain belief or a certain opinion that maybe can be, uh, can be expanded, can be changed, can be, um, uh, can lead to progress, uh, of some sort. So that's when

you need to start having a really good conversation. When someone says, m, are you sure about that? Because my belief is different or my understanding, um, is different.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, I love something you mentioned there about growth. And, um, I think when we have empathy, and I think empathy is the key to try to understand someone else's perspective. Um, they talk about walking a mile in someone else's shoes. Um, until you've done that, you don't know what their experience is or what their challenges or struggles could be. But um, having empathy and recognizing that maybe from their perspective, uh, it looks different. And maybe they were raised different and taught differently and come from a different culture or background, where the emphasis of importance was somewhere else. I think, to your point, understanding other cultures, understanding other value systems, uh, is a great equalizer in giving perspective to different people with different experiences.

Mihaela Berciu:

Absolutely. And I work a lot with core values, and the way I work with core values is words rather than, um, sentences. And, uh, um, it's so interesting to see how the same word has very different meanings and understandings and ways of being expressed. Um, uh, it's almost like it has a different meaning for every person that, uh, chooses that particular, um, uh, core value. It's mind blowing. It's mind blowing because we tend to assume that the way we understand the word is what it means, but it doesn't. And we end up I've witnessed so many, um, conflicts around when really, those people were saying the same things, but they were so busy proving that the way they understand a certain situation, uh, is the way they see it and not open to listening, uh, uh, to the understanding of the other person. And then when you say, okay, time out, do you realize you're saying the same thing here? Then they're like, oh, are we? Yes, you are. But we've been fighting for, like, an hour. Yes, you are.

Mike Merrill:

Um.

Mihaela Berciu:

Like you said, the empathy, the willingness to put yourself aside and just listen to the other person with the intention to understand. Because if you listen with the intention to reply, just to show how much smarter and how much better you are, that is not listening. And that is not a conversation that will lead to any kind of growth other than the growth of anger.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, that's a great point. Uh I think we've all been in conversations, like you said, where you make a statement and maybe you make it in, like, 15 seconds, and then the person spends ten minutes trying to essentially rephrase what you just told them in a way that makes you feel like they're trying to teach you what you just share with them. But, uh, like you said, and the.

Mihaela Berciu:

Funny thing about that is, when someone tries to reframe it, uh, most times they're doing it for themselves to make sure they understood correctly your point. But it's the ego that steps in and says, oh, he or she, they're saying, you're stupid. They're saying, you didn't make your point. Right. So instead of saying yes, no. Right. This is how I see it. You end up trying to, uh, reinforce with force your point of view.

Mike Merrill:

That's a great point. When you're in a leadership position and you're trying to influence and inspire your team, what are some things that leaders can do to really get people to plug into the vision and put some work, and they're back into that effort together?

Mihaela Berciu:

Well, I think the most important one is show appreciation. If you show your appreciation to your team, um, they will trust you more, and, uh, they will build the kind of connection where they will support you. And they'll do their absolute very best to bring their very best, uh, uh, uh, uh, to work. And, ah, that's when, if you need them to do an extra hour for, uh,

something urgent, they'll do it gladly. They won't care about the extra pay. They won't care about anything. They'll be glad to be able to show you the appreciation back that you're showing them. So I think, um, nothing beats appreciation. And it's very overlooked. It's very overlooked. And I've heard so many leaders who say, well, why would I show my appreciation for work well done? Isn't that what I'm paying for? Isn't the fact that they receive their salary on time every month my appreciation for their work? Uh, no, it's not at all. Because, um, uh, salary is not showing appreciation. Salary is contractual. It's an exchange. I give you my knowledge, my experience, my expertise for your business. You pay me back for that. We agreed on that. We actually signed a contract for that. It's a pure exchange. Appreciation is, um, showing, um, or I don't want to use the word repay, because it's not a payment is a connection. Appreciation is connecting to the human, not to their, um, capacities, to their professional knowledge. It's connecting to their human attributes, to what will make them from doing a good job to doing an excellent, um, job.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, I love what you're talking about there. I think in construction, um, the market that we serve a lot, and we talk to a lot of construction companies and contractors. The difference to me feels like when, uh, I hear you explain this, people are actually working with their heart instead of just their hands. The hands is the part you paid for. The heart is engagement and care and concern earn an interest. Right.

Mihaela Berciu:

Exactly. It's very right to continue on. What you just said is, uh, when they come to work with heart, they will help you be more efficient. Because they'll have ideas. And they'll tell you, you know what, if we did this instead of that, we gain more time, or we finish the work on a site a week earlier, or we save money, or whatever is, um, when they're engaged, uh, to their work, you will get innovation. You will get creativity, efficiency. Everything becomes, uh, uh, much, um, more positive. And then the whole culture becomes a culture of positivity, uh, and growth.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, I think that what you're talking about, too, is that employees are invested in the result, not just exchanging time for money on the work.

Mihaela Berciu:

Exactly.

Mike Merrill:

Personal.

Mihaela Berciu:

And then going even further than that. They will then speak so highly about the company they work for that the company will attract really good talent. The company will attract really good people. Whereas if they're not invested and they're not engaged, then they'll badmouth the company. And all the potentially really good, um, candidates will just go somewhere else.

Mike Merrill:

M. Yeah, I think another thing that comes to mind here, there are leaders that have a false belief that maybe are looking down on, uh, people that work underneath them, so to speak. Um, what do you think are the false beliefs they're operating under when they do that? As opposed to getting down on the level with their team and digging in personally and really investing themselves personally in not just the work, but the growth and the opportunity to not just build a building, but build people.

Mihaela Berciu:

Well, probably, at least in my experience, the biggest, um, sort of fear that these leaders have is, uh, the Imposter Syndrome. So, Imposter Syndrome is very present and is very strong. And there are people who become, uh, very arrogant when under the influence of the Imposter Syndrome, uh, because they're almost like bullies, they become bullies, um, because they think if I appear to be very confident and very strong and very forceful, then everyone will do what I tell them to do. And somehow, by magic, nobody will realize that

I'm actually really, um, out of my depth here. Um, uh, and I think probably in your industry, uh, you will see this, um, a lot more than in other industries. That would be seen as a bit softer, maybe, um, ah, because there being an industry that is predominantly male still, um, and the leaders are also, uh, predominantly male. They will try to, uh, pose themselves as stronger, uh, because they think most men um which is a false belief coming from childhood of most, uh, boys, sadly, who become men. It's, again, the society created this image of what a man is, what a true man. You have to be strong, powerful, forceful, authoritative. But if you take each and every one of those attributes and look at them, they are so misunderstood. And, uh, actually, a, uh, man who displays or a person who displays all of those attributes, um, could be so much softer, so much more connected, so much, uh, more impactful, and so much more inspiring, uh, through compassion, through empathy, through the admission of I'm, uh, not perfect. Um, you're my team. We're here to do it together. You're not my team to execute my orders. Your authority, again, authority is so misunderstood, um, as a concept and the impact that it could have. Um, so, uh, another false belief is this I have to be very manly, very strong, very powerful to get them to do the more they fear me, the better it is. When, in reality, the more you fear someone, the less respect, the less trust and the less invested you are when it comes to interacting with that person. Or, uh, with the job, for that matter.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, I think one thing that comes to mind, and I agree with this, i, uh, hear you saying there is more strength and kindness than in anger.

Mihaela Berciu:

Absolutely it is. Yes. Very right. It's seen as weakness.

Mike Merrill:

Uh.

Mihaela Berciu:

To be kind, to be, um, soft, but not soft. In approach, yes. Thoughtful. And to listen again, to listen, to understand rather than, um, to reply. And it doesn't

matter whether you are a man or a woman or whatever, um, other option is out there, but, um, as a human being, it's as simple as that. The kinder you are as a human being, the more you get out of people.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah. I love that you brought up a term, um, imposter syndrome. And I was recently at an event where very, uh, well known author, especially here in the states, John C. Maxwell, uh, who's written more books than anyone in history on leadership, uh, and, uh, a lot of the things that we're talking about, especially as it relates to, uh, in business, and I asked him I was in a smaller group. We had a meeting after his keynote speech, and there were about 50 of us in the room. And I got the opportunity to ask him a question. And I asked him how people can, uh, avoid imposter syndrome as they continue to rise in their career and work towards their goals. Because I think we can all relate to one day you wake up and realize that you've achieved some things that you maybe worked for decades to accomplish, and all of a sudden you find yourself there in that place. And you might for, even if it's for a moment, feel like, do I even belong being here? Do I deserve this? How did this happen to me? Or people are interested in listening to what I have to say, or they want to be around me, maybe. And that little boy in me or in us, uh, as a man, can come out sometimes, and you feel those emotions of, am I good enough to be on this team? Or am I good enough to be in this place? And his response was that we all just need to remember that even the most famous people, even the most well known athletes or actors, or people that have fame and fortune have the same beating heart. They have to breathe the same oxygen, they've got to put their pants on one leg at a time, just like the rest of us. That they're all like, all of them are also still trying to figure things out every day, just like we are. And that was a great reminder for me to look at myself, um, through that same lens, uh, that I think they look at themselves, which is, I'm just doing the best I can to figure this out. And that's the point of this existence is that journey and that growth opportunity. And none of us ever get to the top. There's no top.

Mihaela Berciu:

No, exactly. There's always an extra step further. I think, when it comes to imposter syndrome, there is one, um, thing that happens to all of us, regardless of culture, of background of, um, gender, education, everything and anything, is majority of us growing up, being told, uh, from a very young age, uh, that we can't do things. When you grow up, uh, the first things you hear is, no, don't. Then you grow up a bit and you say, um, oh, I want to climb that tree. Oh, no, you can't. You're going to fall. Um, and this keeps going and going and going on and on. Of course, it comes from a place of love most of the times, and to keep you safe. But what's not happening is when you reach 1617, 1820, nobody sits you down to say, oh, do you remember all those things that I told you you can't do? Well, now you can. Now go do it. You can do it because now you've grown physically and mentally and emotionally enough to be able to do all of those things that, uh, yes, at that moment in time, you couldn't. But not because you are not good enough. Because there are stages to development, there are stages to grow. So this you can't do stays with us. And until we work with that, and until we remove that false belief that we can do it, that we're not good enough. And we understand that the only reason we couldn't do it was because we weren't ready, for various reasons. But now that we are, the world is our oyster. Uh, these fears will keep coming back, and this impostor syndrome will keep coming back, because the little boy, like you said, in you, will come and say, well, Mike, you can't do this. You're not ready for this. Because nobody gave you permission. All those people that told you you can't do it, they didn't come back to give you permission to achieve, uh, the success, uh, you're achieving, because climbing that tree would have been success. And you were told no before you even tried. Or if you climbed and you couldn't, it only confirmed that you can't. So, uh, uh, it's a dance between the past and the present. The fears, what you couldn't do, what you can do, um, and understanding and embracing, uh, all of this that makes the difference. And that eventually you will learn that imposter syndrome is just the fear and it's not something real, and that you can achieve whatever you put your mind, um, to.

Mike Merrill:

That's beautiful. Well, this has been such a fantastic conversation. I've really enjoyed this talk today.

Mihaela Berciu:

Thank you. So have I. Thank you very much.

Mike Merrill:

Well, so are, uh, there any parting words or anything that else that you would share or hope that people take away from our conversation today? I hope, of course, they check out your books. Uh, and I can't wait to learn about this third book you have coming out. I will surely order one, uh, when it's available.

Mihaela Berciu:

Thank you. I hope it will make it in your book club.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, it. Very well could be. That's a deal. I'm going to figure out a way to get it in there. So what would you tell the audience to remember from this conversation today?

Mihaela Berciu:

Um, well, what I would like them to remember is always question your beliefs. Uh, and the stronger the belief, the more need, uh, it is to question it and just make sure it's a belief that helps you grow, and it helps you go forward with confidence rather than a belief that holds you back. It's, um, usually the really strong ones that tend to hold us back rather than allow us to explore what's out there for us.

Mike Merrill:

I love that you're recommending they all remain curious. Is that right?

Mihaela Berciu:

Exactly. Curious and open, uh, about the answers, because curiosity can also bring the answers that we're not open to hearing, to receiving. So, yeah, be brave. Be brave and, uh, allow them answers to come to you.

Mike Merrill:

That's beautiful. Well, thank you again, Mihaila. I thank you for your friendship and the opportunity to get to know you a little bit more, and I hope we have an opportunity to do this again in the future.

Mihaela Berciu:

Thank you. Thank you, Mike. Same to you. I really appreciate your interest in time. Thank you.

Mike Merrill:

Absolutely. All right. Be well.

Mihaela Berciu:

You too.