

Mike Merrill:

Hello, and welcome to the Mobile Workforce Podcast. I am your host, Mike Merrill, and today we are sitting down and excited to, uh, visit with our guest, Ryan Naylor. Ryan is the CEO and founder of, um, Viva HR, and also an entrepreneur that has been, um, on The Shark Tank. I'm sure everybody knows that show as well as featured on Business Insider as well. So today, Ryan and I are going to talk about the value of building your business, this with the right foundations, using your marketing, and, uh, a special phrase that Ryan has coined called cultural marketing. So thanks again, Ryan, for joining us. We're excited for the conversation today.

Ryan Naylor:

Uh, Mike, I'm excited to chat with you and share what I can.

Mike Merrill:

Awesome. Well, looking forward to this. Well, you're a smart guy, and I did look up a few things on you and your background. You've been at this game quite a while. And I guess just, uh, to start the conversation off, we have to mention Shark Tank. I don't want to get too deep into that, but, um, maybe just high level. What are some things that you learned, um, going on Shark Tank, and how has that helped you years later in your role? Today.

Ryan Naylor:

I jokingly share with people. The only thing real about reality TV is that it's on TV. There's a lot of stuff that kind of goes on behind the scenes. But I will tell you this. Um, in preparation kind of leading up to Shark Tank, you're meeting with your producing team. You get assigned a junior level producer and a senior producer, and they work with you on practicing your pitch dozens and dozens and dozens and dozens of times. I mean, it was relentless. The amount of times, okay, again, and we would go through it, and it really from that and

other areas of my life, but that specifically really taught me the importance of, uh, no matter what pressure you're under, if you're prepared, you're going to get through the moment. And there was in Shark Tank, the magical doors open, and you walk down the corridor and you got the sharks in the aquarium, which is not real, um, tight of you. And you have what you're told, three minutes of uninterrupted elevator pitch time. It's yours, right? And I got into it, and I had practiced this three minute pitch dozens of times with these producers, and I was approximately 18 seconds into my three minute pitch, and Mark Cuban said, I'm out. And now I think a I was in shock. So I didn't really know how to really, uh, compute that, but I had done it so many times. Then I got interrupted again, then I got interrupted again. But it didn't matter. I knew where I was in my moment, and I, uh, was able to get through those hardships. In the pressure of 18 HD cameras, all calibrated to your face and your sweat and they want to see you just really grinding through it. But the preparedness drove a great outcome, and I think that that's kind of my big thing for me, is I got through it. I was fine. I knew who I was in the moment, I knew who I was when I left. And I know that they try to do the gotcha quite a bit to drive that emotional reaction. And to me, I had so much preparedness, I was fine.

Mike Merrill:

That's awesome. That's a great takeaway, for sure. And it's been quite a few years, hasn't it, since you were on yeah.

Ryan Naylor:

I think six or seven years now.

Mike Merrill:

Okay. Wow, it's cold. Well, I did remember your episode when I watched it back. I'm m like, oh, that's right. I remember this guy. And I remember them just being relentless and very, almost unfair, it seemed. And even

the Esso watches, um, I've had the bands, the magnetic things, and the ion charged devices, and I've had good results with it. So it's funny to me that, uh, people want to pile on the bad wagon like that. Uh, now that we've got, uh, that one out of the way, let's talk a little bit more about what you're doing today. So, uh, I know you're heavy into the HR space, and that's the business that you've built and are continually building. And also you got a lot of talents and abilities that you focus on related to marketing. So when you use the term cultural marketing, that phrase that you've coined or created, what is it exactly that you have, uh, behind that idea?

Ryan Naylor:

Yeah, well, I mean, I'll tie in the shark tank, uh, to kind of where I am today, because it was really a pivotal moment. At the time, I owned a digital marketing agency, so the Shark Tank thing was nothing more than a side hustle. It was staying up late nights watching Sports Center and doing some work with the laptop on the lap and just kind of jamming through it. But after Shark Tank, I remember going specifically back to my hotel room. They put you in these, like, holding hotel rooms to make sure you're going to survive the night.

Mike Merrill:

A guppy tank? Is that what they call it?

Ryan Naylor:

No, they literally have you go talk to a therapist, like, right after the show. I'm like, I'm fine. I've had hard days. I don't care anyway. But I went down to my hotel and I sat there with a notepad, because they kind of have you locked up. They don't want you out there blurting things to people, and especially the guests, because they film all of them in the same week, so they don't want you rubbing shoulders with the other guests. But, um, I wrote down, what do I care about what defines me? And I wrote down a bunch of things, and I kept circling some parallels, and one that keep coming back to me was family. One of the most important things to me is the family unit. It's supported me. I have a non normal family situation. Um, but the fabric of my family, as unorthodox as it is, became a really powerful proponent for me to be successful in my life. It taught me so much. So I was like, okay, what

breaks apart the family? And you're like, oh, uh, sudden car accident or death or cancer, right. There's some really traumatic things, but what are some other things that are like the everyday things that kind of peel away the fabric of the family? And to me, I was super passionate about employment. And at this time, I had nothing to do with employment. But I realized at that point in the year that it was Arizona was experiencing one of the highest rates of unemployment actually in the country. And I wanted to do something about it. I said, you know what, I would bet that people that are unemployed or underemployed carry so much weight and stress when they come home to the walls of their family unit. Whatever that dynamic looks like, it's probably pulling it apart. And then you start to look at the divorce rates, you start to look at everything around. There's so much that comes to the point of, are people gainfully employed? Not just employed, but are they actually feeling a sense of purpose and passion behind it? And that really drove me to create a job board. And I was able to over the next six years, we were able to track we helped over 100,000 people get new work because of our focus to that purpose driven organization. So I was able to kind of peel back the layers and say, what did I learn in helping 100,000 people get jobs? We were renting out state Farm stadium and hundreds of job fairs. It was just an incredible experience. And it really came down to the Small Business America was struggling. They were the ones that could not craft the right story to candidates. These candidates were all going to one area, and it was the companies that emphasized culture. So it kind of married my world of marketing and company culture and created Culture Marketing as this framework to teach Small Business America on, uh, how to attract a players, retain great players, and create basically a flywheel effect of always leveling up your people. And ultimately, that spun out into Viva HR today, which is we bring your culture and your company to life through Culture Marketing and our hiring automation software. So long ways, kind of to get to where I am today. But the point is, understanding what motivates candidates to choose who to work for, but most importantly, who not to even apply to, is dramatic. We have to think about the candidates were not converting. What about all the candidates that just didn't apply in the first place? That should scare everyone. Uh, and as the owner of a big job board with tens of thousands of people a day hitting his website, I could tell you right now the companies that in their opening paragraph,

talked about who they are, what they do, and they anchored it with why they do it, were the ones that were always getting 500% more applicants than anyone else.

Mike Merrill:

Wow. So what you're saying is that when a, uh, potential employee or candidate for a job sees the structure, the mission, the value system of the company as, uh, displayed through that job posting, they're 500% more likely to apply there if it speaks to them 100%.

Ryan Naylor:

You tell someone, Go hike up a mountain, they're going to be like, Why so tedious? And there's, oh, you have these responsibilities, and you must have this experience, and you got to climb the mountain. That's your responsibility. You got to get there. Those are the tasks in which you need to accomplish. Okay, that looks difficult, but all of a sudden, you put your arm around them and say, listen, here's our purpose. There is someone critically injured at the top of that peak, and we have a focus of caring for everyone, no matter where they are, and there's someone showing, we're going to accomplish it together. I've got my arms wrapped around you, and here's how we're going to train you, here's how we're going to give you the resources, the tools, and we are going to accomplish, um, now when we achieve that goal, look at the outcome, look@the.net impact because of getting to that top of the peak. I think that we need to think about how do we tell the stories to not what you're going to only do for me, and you're going to be looking straight up a hill. But instead, how can I say, let me put my arm around you and you what we can accomplish together, and here's why that matters.

Mike Merrill:

That's very wise. So what are some common mistakes you think companies do in mismarketing, that, uh, mission mismatch, where they turn people off right away because of the way that they approach it?

Ryan Naylor:

Well, right out the gate, if you just start with roles and responsibilities. Here's what you can do for me. It's completely one sided. There's nothing to it. I mean, candidates are smart. If you throw out ten exclamation points to, we paid the best in the industry, it doesn't mean they believe you. Right. There's got to be more than just compensation, hours of work, industry, and a few bullet points on what you experience you should have. It really comes down to telling a story that aligns with their value system.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, that's great. So what you're doing is you've got a platform that helps companies more effectively do that, and, um, through that, your customers are gaining great success.

Ryan Naylor:

Yeah. At the end of the day, we're an applicant tracking system, so we're in the software category of, uh, we help you take your job posting. We publish your job posting to close to 100 different job boards, and you get organic reach. So we train you to say, here's how you optimize that job posting. So instead of being position 544, you can be position six. You got to get to the top of the search results, and you don't need to pay to be in the top three, because if you know the stat that every candidate applies to seven jobs per session, why pay a premium to be number three when you get the same candidate at five? Doesn't make sense in my mind. And instead, you win them with experience. You win them with culture and nurture, and you really bring that to life.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, that's very smart, very tactical. Again, fifth is fine because they're probably going to go all the way to seven is what you're saying, per session.

Ryan Naylor:

Right. Tomorrow might be another day, and they're bouncing through other jobs.

Mike Merrill:

Okay, cool. Yeah, I love that. So what are some areas of culture that, like, say I run a construction company. What are some things that you think would appeal to candidates for? Say, I'm a roofer and I'm looking to hire more guys for my roofing crews. What are some advantages or ideas that you could share that, uh, someone could take advantage of and leverage?

Ryan Naylor:

No matter where you are in your business lifecycle, celebrate it. I see a lot of small businesses kind of like that almost apologetic tone, like, we're just a small business. Like, no, celebrate that. Hey, you get to work right side beside the owner of the business. You're literally going and sitting in the driver the owner's in the driver's seat. You're in the passenger seat. We're going to the gas station. We're getting drinks together. We're doing lunch together. You get to learn from my decade's worth of experience in building a business and see firsthand how to do it. Celebrate it. The candidates love that kind of transparency. But part two of that would be if you really want to win, candidates, really focus on what the goal centered vision is. Your A players care about outcomes. They care about measuring their way to be successful. You want to attract a bunch of C level, D level candidates. Be very vague and act like you don't measure anything, and you will attract D players. And I'll tell you, one of the quickest way to get A players not to work for you is to hire a bunch of C and D players because they don't want to be around underachievers.

Mike Merrill:

Interesting.

Ryan Naylor:

Yeah.

Mike Merrill:

So hire A players and you'll attract more A players is what you're saying.

Ryan Naylor:

100%. One thing I've seen a lot of employers doing that I love to measure. Uh, it's great because I get data and access to the best performing companies, and I love to go in and kind of see what they're doing a little bit different. How they're getting creative. I love the companies who demonstrate a sense of hiring, transparency, and they'll even put that in the job posting. Here's our hiring framework for the first seven days, we're going to collect all the resumes. On day eight, we're going to analyze and start inviting people into a group interview. By day nine, we're going to bring you back for a manager's interview. Your job offer will be coming to you on day ten. Should you meet the criteria, give them a path. Ah, don't hide it. There's nothing you need to pretend that's there. But I will add, if you want to really transform your business, get the candidates into non interview interviews. What I mean by that is create opportunities to get them into your office, to put your arm around them, to celebrate them, learn about who they are, what they like, their interest level, and let them intermingle with all of your other employees. A great example is a company here in Arizona. I was just dying at this example. What they did is they took their top candidates and they invited them all to their Friday afternoon fish off. They invited families. They had a little barbecue, and they met at, like, this little community lake. They didn't get crazy. Had a bunch of fishing polls out there, and they just did a little they broke up into little teams like, oh, you're the blue team, you're the red team. We're going to do a little competition for the 90 minutes who can catch the most fish. There's a category for who catches the biggest fish. And by the way, do you want a hot dog or a burger? Let's get you a drink. Are you kidding me? Now all of a sudden, those candidates, would they accept the job offer with anyone else? There's no way. There's absolutely no way. People are complaining to me. All they only care is they chase the next paycheck. Well, that might be true in some instances. I'll tell you, if they feel like they're at home and they feel like they're with family, fifty cents, two dollars an hour, or whatever it is, is not going to be the deciding factor. It really will not. That excuse is, to me, just lazy at this point. There is a cornucopia of candidates that want to be with good companies, and they're willing to compromise even the premium dollar figure

Ryan Naylor:

if it means being in a secure, established, high quality business.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah. And I think, uh, companies shouldn't have to beg. They can be Prithy in their request for someone to come and join their team, but they don't have to beg or, again, just overshoot the pay scale in order to attract top talent. What you're saying is really let the culture speak to them. Let your vision, your mission statement, let your goals speak to them personally, and then find a way to connect to them in a more personal way as opposed to the typical resume bullet point. Here's the questions, here's the answers. Do I like the way this guy answered this, the way this guy answered that? I know you've shared in some of the things that I saw from your Shark Tank experience. That seemed to be one of the frustrations you had is at least during the show and the recording, they really didn't have a chance or take the opportunity to get to know you as an individual or even understand what your vision was of your business. They got focused on the product, the features, all the things that it's like, yeah, those are a dime a dozen, but who's behind this? And that's really the secret to success of what makes a business work, right?

Ryan Naylor:

Yeah. You take that back into the resume. There's a lot of candidates we're going to reject based on their resume because they didn't have the right bullet points initially. But if you peeled that back and you got to know them and you found out that guy can slay those small math baths, that might change your perception just a little bit.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, you're right. Well, what normal, human just person to person conversations come up when you're fishing versus in an interview? That's stiff and there's pressure, and maybe you've got a designated amount of time, and, um, you're dressed up all perfect. You're freshly shaved. You're really on your best behavior. So that's not the person who's going to show up to the job the next day. You want to get to know that person.

What are they going to be like in a work environment? Not who can they dress up like, or what can they do to impress me during this 1 hour meeting?

Ryan Naylor:

Well, I'll tell you right now, one of the biggest pain points and I think this is going to resonate with a lot of people listening right now, one of the biggest pain points might not necessarily be candidates coming. Into my job. But it's the amount of candidates that know show to interviews, the amount of candidates that walk off the job after the first week. It's that they don't show up to their shift. And I'll tell you right now, you want to combat that. Uh, you implement culture, marketing. You create a framework where they feel like family, they feel appreciated, and then all of a sudden, you would not believe how sticky those employees are and how willing they're sprinting up the mountain the moment you ask them, hey, we need to get to the top of the mountain, because they're bought in.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah. They run through a wall for you.

Ryan Naylor:

Yeah.

Mike Merrill:

So you mentioned earlier when you were talking about your experience after the Shark Tank, you went to your hotel room. It was kind of this secluded, isolated thing, very intentionally. And that's fascinating to me that you took that time to write down your goals and some of those things, those life, uh, mission critical items that you felt like you were really reduced down to. And it sounds to me like that's really what you're asking business owners, especially construction business owners, to identify is who are we? What are we trying to accomplish? What is it that we hope at the end of the day, at the end of the career, at the end of whatever it is, before you hang up your hat or you go into retirement that you've actually stood for, and then share that with your potential candidates and your existing staff to build that culture? Is that kind of what you're thinking?

Ryan Naylor:

100%. And you think about the best performing businesses listening to this show right now. Chances are they were very intentional about the process of new customers. They're very intentional about the project that they're on. There's a standard of, uh, execution of that project that they are going to follow. Right. They're very intentional about that system, that process to make it be the best customer facing experience that they can. And the companies that create that wow factor in a repetitive motion tend to be more successful than those that don't. That's just fact. Great businesses always have great processes. If you're hiring failing, that means you probably don't have a good hiring process too. Right? Uh, you just got to look at the 360 degree version of that.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, that's a great point. So really, it sounds to me like you're saying even, and especially the CEO or the owner, whoever's on the very top of that pyramid, that they really have to be the one that is painting that vision, that picture, planting, uh, that flag on that peak that everybody's going to work towards. Is that right? And if so, how do they do that?

Ryan Naylor:

Well, I think it's a top down approach, for sure. I think it really starts at the top. And they've got to implement what they care about. We talk about core values, and it makes me sick as much as we talk about it. Never do anything about it. But for me, everyone in my company and everyone that comes through our hiring pipeline knows there are three attributes that I personally care about, CEO, founder of this company. When we're in growth mode, we're hiring. Everyone knows there's three A's that I care about. I care about your attitude, I care about your aptitude, and I care about your assertiveness. Now, you think that that carries through, and I hire someone and I tell them the reason you got this job, because you demonstrated this level of assertiveness to get things done. You went out of your way to get this online certificate in this space because you had a gap of understanding of what it was. And that demonstrates to me that when things get tough, you're going to go figure out how to get it done. Right now, that trait is going to carry through into their employment because they see how much you put

weight onto those attributes. So it's a top down. You've got to declare to your team, to your company, what are those characteristics that matter most to building a team of A players?

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, I love that. One of the things that we've done here internally that I think has been helpful is we've had a book club, and we usually do a couple of them a year, and they're usually some type of a business book or personal development book that can apply to business. And it's been amazing to see when we structure those teams, we intentionally make sure that those groups are dynamic and diverse. And, uh, it's been fun to see the friendships and the connections that our team has made with each other. That maybe the tech support guy and the programmer and then the marketing guy have this special bond that maybe in the past, they really would not have crossed paths or had an opportunity to get to know one another in a different way like that.

Ryan Naylor:

That's a great idea. Yeah. Find ways to be cross departmentalized, get people involved. Build friendships beyond their immediate kind of touch points. I love that. Yeah.

Mike Merrill:

So I guess to wind up this part of the conversation, is there just, uh, maybe some key points that you would recommend to a business owner that feels like maybe they don't have this right, right now? There's some correction and maybe some changes that need to be made. What would you recommend they do to start moving their company in the right direction or in a new direction along the lines of what you're talking about.

Ryan Naylor:

With cultural marketing, I think you really need to build a scorecard. I'm a big believer in sitting down and saying, what are the KPIs? What are the quantitative elements we're going to measure for this new hire, this particular role? What do we care about? How do we measure, how do we even know if they're good, bad or ugly, and all the way in between? And then you start

to define what are the specific requirements that are going to impact those KPIs. So they've got to have this much knowledge because that directly influences this KPI that we're measuring. You've got to have this, um, amount of experience to know what to do in this environment that's going to influence this KPI. Have the scorecard laid out in a way that now when you post your job, your job, your job description mirrors what's important to you with the scorecard. And now when candidates come through, you'll be able to quickly ask questions and identify against the critical, most important things to your business. Nothing is more frustrating to me than, uh, hearing small businesses say, we hired ten people, had to fire eight of them, and they just couldn't get the job done. I think that's on them in the interview process that had nothing to do with the candidate. That's on them and so that would be my biggest thing, is identify score. Like, be intentional, build scorecards around the job before you even post your job.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, that's great. I'm having this picture pop in my mind, this analogy of, um, like, when you're putting a puzzle together, I mean, most of us I mean, I always do this. Everybody I see that puts a puzzle together always does this. We start with all the edge pieces and the corners, and you work that outside and get the whole thing framed. And then you find other sections that are light colors or clearly, this is this vehicle or this dog or whatever or this tree, whatever it is that's unique about that. But they organize that in a way that it's pretty obvious where those pieces fit. And, uh, as you're talking, I'm just envisioning if I'm trying to match puzzle pieces here, I think an effective scorecard would really help you do that right out of the gate. So people self identify. I'm an edge piece. And if that's what you're looking to hire, well, then you're at least talking to the right group of people, as opposed to sifting through hundreds of resumes, trying to pick the one that looks the fanciest or the prettiest or that had all the right answers versus they're really just not a fit.

Ryan Naylor:

That's right. That's exactly right.

Mike Merrill:

Love it. Well, this has been a super fun conversation. We had, uh, a little game we played. Also, we were trying to use some keywords, so, um, I assigned you a word and asked you to try and find a way to slide the word cornucopia into the conversation. And I think you did a pretty good job of that. You got it out early, so thanks for doing that. What word did you ask me, uh, to try and repeat, and how did I do at using it?

Ryan Naylor:

Yeah, you piggybacked right off when I dropped my word with Prithy. I thought you did a great job.

Mike Merrill:

Thank you. And you had to tell me Prithy is a polite request. Uh, so I learned something new on this episode, if nothing else. Right. Awesome. Well, uh, Ryan, anything else? Any parting words of wisdom or things takeaways that you'd like people to come away with from our first conversation here?

Ryan Naylor:

No. I really appreciate the time, and honestly, if there's anything we can ever do to help people, we've got a team of expert technical, uh, recruiters that just work, even inside our company. If you ever want to just jump on a call and say, hey, help me round out some ideas, some strategies, we're always open for those calls at Vivhr, so don't hesitate to do that.

Mike Merrill:

That's awesome. That's Vivah. ah.com. Is that how we find you?

Ryan Naylor:

That's right. Yeah.

Mike Merrill:

Perfect. Well, highly recommend the listeners check that out. I'm super fascinated at, uh, checking into it for our business here. Uh, we have a lot of these challenges that. You're talking about, Ryan, and we go

through some of these failed exercises. Also, it's really expensive to hire the wrong person, so I appreciate your wisdom and your willingness to come and share some of that vision with us here today.

Ryan Naylor:

Thank you, Mike.

Mike Merrill:

Awesome. Well, we'll connect up with you down the road again. I think we're going to try and get you on next week as well and talk a little bit further in some other aspects of this. How does that sound?

Ryan Naylor:

Fantastic. Uh, great.

Mike Merrill:

All right, we'll talk to you then. Man thanks.