Hello, this is Mike Merrill, the host of the Mobile Workforce Podcast. Today we have an amazing guest on Mr. Brent Kedzierski. Brent is very well celebrated and recognized in the circle of expertise as it relates to human relations and productivity in the workplace.

Been involved in many different industries and has also published and been recognized by Harvard Business Review and also PBC News. So definitely an expert and somebody that you're going to learn a lot of great things from. I sure enjoyed the conversation. Listen in and I'm sure you will too.

Mike Merrill:
Brent, thank you for joining us on the podcast today. Super excited for this conversation and just appreciate you joining.

Brent Kedzierski:
Hey Mike, glad to be here and thanks for having me on the show.

Mike Merrill:
Awesome, you bet. And of course, like we were talking, one of the main reasons we wanted to have you on today, I know you've got a very extensive experience across a lot of industries that are related to mobile workforce, like nuclear defense, oil, gas, energy, mining, and also heavy construction type projects. So what do you feel like is a common denominator as it relates to human behavior across all these different industries that you have experience in?

Brent Kedzierski:
Well, there's a lot of common denominators and I know we talked a little bit about that earlier on when we caught up. But what I would like to do is I always like to start these things with like the safety and the

industry that you focus on. And I know you focus on the construction industry. And I always like to do my homework a bit. The construction industry had the most fatalities of any industry last year, both in the number of deaths and the actual overall fatality rate that increased.

And they still fight these fatal work injuries that they have in terms of the fatal four, the falls, the struck bys, the caught in betweens, and the electrocutions. And it was interesting because as a historian, I study fatality in industry. And probably one of our peaks was in 1907 when a study group did the Pittsburgh survey about the steel mill and about the working conditions in railroads and coal mines. At the time in Allegheny County that had a hundred thousand workers, at the time there was a death rate of like 590 some people annually. Now, you know, I think like in the construction industry in 2021, there were like 761, you know, fatal work industries.

Then in 2022, for some reason, and I can't figure it out, there was almost 5500 fatal work injuries. So that was a huge increase. And then in 2023, it went down to 1069. But that rate of fatalities was like 9 .6 people per 100 ,000 US workers. So extremely reduced from 1907. But still when companies like Shell and others have a goal of you know, goal zero, no harm to any person. You know, we're still talking about construction being like the leading industry in terms of fatalities and cause of death. So I don't know if you had any thoughts around that or not and what you're seeing and what your experience has been, but wow.

Mike Merrill:
Yeah, I, you know, I always wonder and I know the pandemic and things around that get, you know, get blamed and credit positive or negative for all kinds of different things. I wonder if just the human mindset and just our overall presence in different situations was different just because of the other things going

on. And so maybe people weren't as focused or they weren't as conscious or they or they just approach things differently.

Do you have any thoughts around that or do you think there's anything there maybe?

Brent Kedzierski:

Well, I think that, you know, since the pandemic, it, you know, the workforce has really changed in terms of what they focus on, what they're interested in, what they're paying attention to and what they really care about. Cause it really shook the human being up in terms of what is work and what do I value work or life. And, you know, this, we used to have this work life balance concept where you just wanted to kind of, you know, not be overworked so you can live a little bit, but it's really changed since the pandemic where people want to, you know, not, you know, live the work, but, you know, work to live. And, you know, they really want this, you know, work isn't what defines them, how they live and what they do outside of work is what defines them. And it's more about work to compliment their life, not be their life. So, you know, so you have to close this out. The one stat that I was looking at was one in three, fatal falls occurs from roofs. So, you know, if you think of housing and construction and things like that, boy, if you just fix that problem, you know, you'd start to really cut things down. And I'm sure there's some technologies or something we could do. But, but anyways, I always like to start and understand, you know, what do industries do in terms of, you know, employing the number of us workers contributing to the GDP and what are they doing in terms of not only attracting workers, but keeping you know, keeping them safe. But anyways, you know, and there's a whole bunch of other things like the non fatal industries and construction and the mental health statistics. So I think I'd encourage your listeners if they're interested in your industry construction to really dig into that a little bit more. But I also think of what we're going to talk about today is going to help with this. Okay. And I think you said, you know, well, what helps with this and what are we going to talk about today?

And what we talk about in my realm of the world is what we call this human performance framework. And if you look at any industry, I've done it for all types of industries, all the same, and it just gets applied and laid over the industry. So there's three environmental factors if you look at construction. Did the construction community have clear performance expectations of what they're supposed to do? And do they get clear feedback on how well they're doing it?

That's one thing. And actually, when that goes belly up, there's a likelihood of human error happening. So if somebody's not clear on what they think they're supposed to do and how well, oftentimes that will lead to a human error. And then the next pocket is, do they have the right tools, the right information, and the right resources? So think about the guy or the gal that doesn't have the right ladder and tries to make a makeshift ladder or doesn't have the right information to cut something or to size a pipe or do something. So that's the next thing. And again, if any one of those things fails, you might get another 10, 15 % probability of human error. And then the last thing on that is the actual incentives to that worker. This goes in that whole idea of if Joe is the best drywall person, Joe always gets drywall work, but Joe might not like it. And so... him being the best is really punishing. So he might want to mess up a little bit. So his name doesn't always get pulled. And then you go down and you go to this individual level. So are you hiring people with the right skills and knowledge? But the biggest thing today are behaviors. The skills and knowledge are what get people hired on the construction site or any site, but the behaviors are what gets them fired, right?

And then the next thing is how are these new connected worker tool sets augmenting or enhancing human capacity? Can I do more? Can I lay more brick? Can I do more XYZ with the assistance of some kind of tool? Can it make it easier on my back, neck or shoulders? And the last thing is, you know, the human motivation to perform. Are we designing work so that humans actually think it matters? They're motivated to do it.

They are excited and engaged in doing so. So when I talk about, you know, that model, that's where we're at. And I want to talk to you now a little bit about trends in the construction industry that I looked at, but they're really in all industries. So what's your view before I talk about that?

Mike Merrill:

Right. Well, I think, you know, I know you have some background in, you know, Six Sigma or lean manufacturing. I mean, there's some efficiency approaches that historically have been very successful at performance and being efficient. But again, you talk about the work -life balance and that quality of life approach that is probably more centric to this at this time, you know, having gone through what we have as a society. So I think there is a balance where we can be safe and effective and efficient without necessarily overworking, but still remain productive. And I think that the goal is to really find that balance where people are actually happy and enjoying the work that they do. They're feeling good about their production and that it's also profitable for the business while also maintaining safety. I mean, that's the ideal. And my view is because of software and technology, there is a lot more that we can do to make sure that we're maintaining those standards. It's more just how are those industries adopting and plugging into those tools and is it having an impact at this point?

Brent Kedzierski:

Right. Yeah, I mean, that's something I like to talk about. You know, if you look at the last, you know, 120 years, you know, so we go back from, you know, 2024 to even a little bit before 1924. You know, you had this guy named Frederick Taylor, and he was doing this thing called scientific management. He went to construction, you know, so what he would do is he'd say, can I design a shovel for shoveling coal and what would a shovel look like for shoveling mulch and what would a shovel look like? So he tried to give the worker the best tool to do the job, but the worker was only viewed as an extension of the tool. So it was just, I'm just trying to put a better handle on the tool, which is the human being.

And that was great, but that was like, you know, making the worker, you know, as productive as they could be, but also trying to just make a human a tool. Then you had Henry Ford come in with the assembly line. Well, Henry Ford in the assembly line was really trying to dumb the worker down to give them a little three by five space on the assembly line, make work as simple as they could, you know, make the person on that job an interchangeable part. So, you know, all day long, and they just put in four drill bits or they put in four

bolts and it moved on like a candy, you know, Lucy's candy express machine, you know, and that really dehumanized the worker and took the human element out. And then, you know, after, you know, the big war effort, you know, World War II, that was, you know, mass production. And so we looked at all these ways to mass produce. Well, then what happened?

After World War II, we started to get a lot of competition from Japan and other people for automobiles and from other consumer goods. And so we started to look at these things about productivity, Kaizen and Six Sigma and TQM and productivity management and business process re -engineering. And so that went on from the mid 40s to the 90s. But then we got out of that stage and it was more about engaging the worker, you know, because we found out it wasn't just enough to have the war for talent, get people in the door, you wanted to give them some kind of work experience that they actually wanted to stay. And we don't have these big, huge turnover rates like we have today. So in the 90s and 2000s, we did a great job of like, you know, building the best teams and getting the best, you know, player profile, but we didn't keep those players, you know, they went off the free agency. And now the big work, is trying to build that human experience in work that people come to work, they want to do the work, they feel engaged in doing the work, you know, instead of being 80 plus percent disengaged, we got to figure out how do we engage these workers and we got to figure out how we build these pipelines to various industries like construction and such.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, we've had customers come on and share some of what they're doing. And one that comes to mind, and I've shared this with quite a few folks and everybody thinks it's a phenomenal idea. We have a company that's a customer long time now for well over a decade, K -post Roofing and Waterproofing out of the Dallas, Texas area. And they have a lot of employees that are from different countries that are international immigrants that have that have come to the United States and relocated here. And what they do is they have the flag of each of those nations of the employees that are there hanging in their shop. And so every one of the employees, no matter where they came from, is a part of the K -Post family and K -Post recognizes

and honors and spends time focusing on each of those nationalities and cultures and appreciating them. And I think... That's one way that they help their employees feel connected to the company as well.

Brent Kedzierski:

Yeah, and you hit on something that I want to get us to talk about a little bit later. But the other thing I wanted to talk about is these trends. Because I know that we talked earlier, and I talked about, boy, I go into so many companies and so many meetings, and these companies are all facing the same problems. And if you look at the construction industry, there's a big heightened focus on sustainability and efficiency. Now you've got these big environmental regulations coming on.

You've got these consumer demands for greener buildings. You've got digitization and generative AI that people are getting all psyched up about. And they want more efficient operations, more sustainable. You've got all these things coming on. But then at the same time, you still have market uncertainty. And that's driving changing operating strategies. You've got... with everything going on, you've got this supply chain disruptions. So we might put in policies in the US like, you know, build America, buy American act. But when construction people go to suppliers to get American products, they're facing challenging, you know, in getting US made, you know, just doing, you know, due to manufacturing, you know, capacity limits. So, you know, you got all this stuff, I think you've got inflation and material costs, you know.

I look at the home construction, I mean, what it's gone up just because of inflation. Then you've got a lot of these smaller construction businesses, they've got delayed technology adoption because there's not an exponential leap for them in doing that. And then you still have the safety and health risk and all this stuff. But above all that, and even though other industries are facing the same challenges, you've got the new workforce norm.

What we talked about, you know, it's post pandemic, you know, you got labor shortages. And I think there's a stat that like 90 plus of contractors said they've got difficulty in hiring, you know, there's a skills gap, there's an aging workforce where I think only 20 %

of all construction workers, you know, 20 % are like 55 or older, you know, so you're losing all that tacit knowledge, those characters that can just smell by the wind what's going to happen. So you've got a lot of lower skilled workers, but we're not building these strong talent pipelines to make the industry attractive and plausible for a lot wider skill pool. And more women in construction, you want better representation, all those kind of things. So I think that... That's kind of the trends that they all go the same. So, and just like the human element, you still got the labor gap, you got gaps between job openings and availabilities, you got these Gen Zers that want more remote work and flexibility. Well, you don't always get that if you're working on a construction site. You got wage competition, why is somebody gonna go for a construction wage with health and safety risks and other things when... they can maybe go to an industry paying comparable without the risks and other things. So I think that you've got a lot of challenges and you've got to figure out how do you prioritize worker safety, how do you offer competitive compensation, how do you make it appealing by harvesting robotics, automation, cutting edge tools, and how do you improve inclusivity in hiring?

So I think that's what all industries are facing, quite honestly. I mean, I can give that same talk to oil and gas or mining or any other big industry. So it all goes to the human challenge and why humans are changing and how they're changing in our companies and work structures adapting fast enough.

Mike Merrill:

Well, and I do think it's like, you know, like any industry, usually stiff competition with a lot of market opportunity creates better companies. I mean, companies learn to be better and more efficient. They learn that if they don't take care of their employees and have a good culture, if they don't have, you know, whether I'm not talking just gym passes and snacks in the kitchen. I mean, that stuff can absolutely help. And some companies probably would do well to implement other employee perks besides just a raise, something that increases and enhances their quality of their life. I know you talk about the Gen Zers. One thing we've heard a lot of companies doing is getting involved in some local charities or doing food drives or doing sub for Santa, doing things where their employees are

able to plug into the community and be recognized by members of the community is, you know, kind of like ever since 9 -11, I know I've noticed and personally, I'm just way more thankful and aware when I see a fireman or a police officer or someone in the military. I'm grateful for the work that they're doing where prior to that, I just don't think the awareness was there as much. So I think whatever companies can do in their local community to be more visible as doing good and they're building, in our local AGC chapter here in Utah, they have a We Build Utah campaign. And so they have that everywhere. They got commercials, they're talking about it. They're showing these projects that these companies are doing to better the road and bridge systems, to build conference centers and places that are going to bring in more tourists and more other businesses to come and have conferences you know, other things that build the community. So I think some of it's just an awareness visibility issue. I think some of it's, you know, maybe digging deep and doing some extra things. And then also the adoption of technology to make things more efficient and also safer. So it's probably a lot of things. I mean, would you agree with that as well?

Brent Kedzierski:

Yeah, I think the theme you're on is what I promote is this concept. I want to take a look at every industry and I want to say, okay, Mr. or Mrs. industry, how do you support healthy, productive, you know, engaged workers because when you have a motivated, engaged worker, they go home at night to their family happy. They're not unhappy. So they don't kick the dog, you know, they don't lay right on the couch, get a beer and pass out. They go and they do things with their family. They have dinner and they build in turn a strong family unit. And then that family unit becomes strong and they build a strong community that they live in. And they do the things like you talked about, giving back. Then that strong community in turn builds a strong society. And that's what we want. Now, if you take a look at that kind of more human approach to industry, it aligns with these Gen Zers. You know, we used to do D &I because it was, you know, it was something that was you should do. And I think you brought a lot of people kicking and screaming into D &I, you know, workshops and things like that.

Well, the Gen Zers don't see D &I that way. They believe in equitable treatment of all employees, all different races, and they've grown up with all different races as opposed to many people that are now maybe 60, 70 years old. They didn't grow up with a multitude of races. But the Gen Zers, like my son, he has a lifetime experience with all types of nationalities, all types of creeds, credos, races, all those kinds of things. So he's very articulate in terms of... the wonderful matrix and bounty of humanity. So they're into that. They're also more so into quality of life. They've gone through these things and they've seen it. And I think they really understand and appreciate life's limitations. And they understand they're only gonna have so much time on this earth. And I don't know why it took humans thousands of years to figure out that life's finite and you better start making the most out of it and enjoying it. But they also want like this greater flexibility and adaptability. And like you said, they want this corporate social responsibility. They want to know that they're, you know, they're making a social impact. You know, they want to make a positive impact on the world. And so they're, you know, they have a lot of things and they have a higher need for trust and authenticity than I think people did before. So, you know, whether it's leadership or the corporate responsibility.

So, you know, it's changing. And so you've got society changing. And again, I think this is a thing that people miss. Every generation has grown up being impacted by the time in which they grew up. Then when they mature and they become a mainstay of the workforce, they shape that workforce based on how they grew up and whether they went through a depression or a recession or wars and it impacts what the workforce actually looks like and what they value. And I don't think people study that enough and understand that enough. So, I mean, that's your feeder pool. But yeah, I think you're absolutely right that, you know, companies have to come to, and I talked about, you know, the whole Taylorism, Fordism, and I'm getting to this place now, we, you know, we talk about like industry four, which is all technology centric, it's the pillars of technology, and how technology is going to make the smart factory and everything's tech, tech, tech, tech. Everything's transformed digital, digital. And it's like an overbearing leaning on technology, but it forgets the human element. And that's why this concept of industry five has come around. It's because it's taking

the technology and saying, wait a minute, you know, humans still are going to be around. And, you know, the new world of a circular economy, waste reduction, sustainable industry.

You know, environment, social responsibility, you know, human evolution, those are things that industry has to be concerned about. And so now it's saying, how do you take that technology and get humans to embrace it and actually get it to help evolve the human species? You know, and I always say, you know, humans have been conditioned to fear technology for, you know, 120 years with... I always talk about our fables of Paul Bunyan and John Henry and Pecos Bill and all the industry kind of superheroes. And they were all facing technology, whether it was a steam engine or the lumberjack with the chainsaw and all these kind of things. And we were conditioned to fear technology.

Well... And even companies, you know, the US Steel Corporation took this poor guy, Joe Magarac, and he made him the seven foot tall superhuman steelworker. And they actually put cartoon books about him and gave him to the US Steelworkers to say, this is how you should be. He has no family. He works all day, seven days a week, 24 hours a day. He never gets sick. He never misses a day of work. He never takes a holiday. You know, and they were conditioning their workers to say, this is what we want you to be.

So, I mean, we've had this whole social industry and even like the singers like Bruce Springsteen who'd like sing for the working man or, you know, Aunt Pauly Jackson who would write about the Appalachian coal miners and things like that. But anyway, so, you know, we've got to change and that's why I go to this thing. You know, there was a big thing years ago when, before the depression to get us out of the, you know, FDR did like the New Deal and a lot of people thought, whoa, wait, it's too left wing and some people thought it was perfect.

But we get into this idea of workers versus the company. And still, we've always had workers against the company. And the big thing was like the unions to help balance that. And we know that that succeeded and failed on different levels. But the new DNA is more about equity and company versus the worker and company versus supplier. And instead of it always being competitive, you know, oh, we're going to...

rip off our suppliers and we're going to get at the lowest bid and we're going to squeeze the workers wage and we're going to do that. It's now coming to say, I think everybody can get along well. I think that we can have a win -win for everybody. And that's what the new stage of post -sportism is going to be, is how do you take all these things in a circular economy and take the diversity of that and blend it together to create not only a better balance, but you know, deal with the realities of a modern industrial society, and just make these better production factors. And again, you can have this diverse workforce. I mean, we used to have white collar and blue collar. And now if you think about it, we've got green collar, the environmental folks, we've got pink collar, which was originally women in the workforce historically. And now it's expanded to say, well, this is the service industry.

This is retail, these are salespeople, and then you've even got the new caller, you know, which are people that are just getting the shorter technical skills that can pivot. And then you've got even what they call the no -caller. These are the free spirits, the artists, the people that promote their passion and personal growth over their financial gain. So, you know, I think you've got this entirely new... melting pot of a workforce that again, we've got to address. And I really think that by 2030, you're going to see this new turn where all the tension points of industrial society, whether it's politics, whether it's consumerism, whether it is technical achievements, operational requirements and demands you know, are all going to come together that really are going to shake up industry and say, you've got to change and you're not changing fast enough.

Mike Merrill:

So in your opinion, are you seeing or have you noticed companies that you've worked with or been affiliated with that are doing some unique things that you're like, man, that is really a great idea. I mean, this is cool.

Brent Kedzierski:

Yeah, you know, I always try to tell companies, I said, look, you know, you think you've got a burning platform around, you know, your tenure rate, you know, you've got an aging workforce, everybody seems to have an aging workforce. You know, you've got you got that lousy talent pipelines, you know, you're not

creating the strong growth oriented talent pipelines. You've got you know, attrition rates that people are leaving 60% 40% annual turnover. Now let's figure out, well, how do we deal with that? I've just told you what Gen Zers want. They want flexibility. So I worked with a company, um, that created the work week. A worker would come in Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, then they were off Friday, Saturday, Sunday Monday, they had a four day weekend with their family whatever they wanted to do their four days off work Then they went into the next week Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday and then they had a two -day weekend and In the you know, now when you say that the other like industrial companies Oh, well, how do you gonna manage this and it's gonna increase this, you know, they're always giving you the why it can't work Well, I'll tell you what when?

Mike Merrill:
Yeah.

Brent Kedzierski:
You know, a company that you're competing against works it out. Wait till you see their talent pool and, you know, the pipeline for people droving into their company, increasing and retaining those people while, you know, they're taking every talent pool away from you and you're not going to be competitive. So would you rather be the first to do that and take a little bit of the risk or would you rather be a laggard and feel the effects of it?

Mike Merrill:
Yeah, you know, it's funny as you're speaking, I'm remembering back because I was a general contractor. You know, I grew up in the construction industry and I could think back to so many times. I'm a bow hunter. I like hunting and the outdoors and I'd be on an adventure in the mountains of Wyoming or up in Montana or over Colorado or Idaho, you know, surrounding states to Utah where I live. And... many, many times, more times than I have fingers and toes. I had to come back early from a hunt or from a, because we were setting trusses or we had, there was some reason why my adventure got cut short. And if I'd had just one more day or maybe two, I would have come home successful. I would have had the adventure of a

lifetime. My cup would be filled and I would have been back and ready to work and excited to be back and happy with how everything went.

But when you come home early and unsuccessful because you didn't have time and then you can't get back there, you know, if you're, you know, you have some of these hunting seasons are only once a year. So, you know, or maybe you have a limited permit or you're not going to get these chances again, potentially, maybe even in your lifetime.

Brent Kedzierski:
Right. Right. And I'll tell you what, I will not hear that story from my son or his counterparts because they are going to tell the company, you know, forget about it. You know, I, my life and what my agenda in my life is more important than the job. I'll find another job. I mean, they talk about finding jobs where they want to live. I mean, I used to travel to jobs that

I don't know if I want to live there, but the job's there. And the manager at the time would say to me, well, I'll tell you what. If you want a paycheck, that's where you're going to go to get it. Or you might not be there, but your paycheck will be there. Or a paycheck will be there. It might not be yours, but somebody's going to have it. But here's the thing. So we've got to create. I talk about this thing called the disengagement factor, the anatomy of work.

Mike Merrill:
That's where the work is.

Brent Kedzierski:
And this is this idea that 60 % of everybody's work is unproductive. It's unrewarding. It's nonsense. It's non -value added. So if you think about your workday, this is why everybody says, well, you only are productive for three or four hours a day. And it's true if you look at the research. You're in unproductive meetings, unnecessary meetings. You're doing unnecessary, crazy emails or whatever you're doing. You're miscommunicating or you're not communicating.

You're doing redundant rework. You're doing all this junk work that takes... There's a statistic that says

we spend more time talking about the work we're going to do than actually doing the work. So, you know, this is a problem. And this is why I go into these connected worker ecosystems, because I want to build a work environment that takes that... Because just think about it.

We could have this four day weekend if I could get rid of 60% of the junk work, right? I don't need you in there for 40 hours a week if 20 some hours are junk work, fixing things or redoing things. So this is why I look at all these products. If you look at some of the connected worker products, they are here to support those human performance elements that I talked about, like better collaboration or communication. I know like, Hexagon has these like smart materials for construction. They do their construction management software and they're designed to help manage the products and the resources and to give workers information through 3D models, 2D design. And then they let people see things that they're working on. So it increases collaboration or it takes out and spots risks that are out there. So it improves safety.

Mike Merrill:
Yeah, clash detection, yeah.

Brent Kedzierski:
Yeah, it does all these like decision support systems and, you know, fabrication and all the things that like are going into each of those worker issues, you know, whether it's shared design, you know, this is like visualization of, you know, pipes and materials. And so it's basically taking each one of the things, say, how do you help the worker? How do you remove the junk work? How do you make the worker more motivated, engaged, and content. And these are all about connected tools. And that's what the idea, I mean, I think about the connected tools like in construction. Well, probably the first construction worker connected tool I ever saw was driving to my camp when I was about seven years old, and I'd get stopped by the walkie talkie and the guy or gal in the jacket with the flag waving me stop or go, or the stop sign, you know, go or stop.

Mike Merrill:
Right, right.

Brent Kedzierski:
And that was the first connected worker tool. They were, hey, can this guy go? Sure, this girl can go, you know, and you did that. But now we've advanced that we've got to use these connected worker tools to improve the quality of life of the worker. And that improves the sustainability and the attractiveness of the work, increases talent pipelines, you know, so it's those kind of things. So, you know, you've got to start with building stronger talent pipelines. And I will tell you, the Gen Zers are shifting.

And that's why the blue collar industries and the trades, if we do it right, they're going to be stronger because the Gen Zers are in this perfect spot where they're saying, I would trade a Harvard degree or Yale degree for going to a lesser regarded school, but I don't leave that school with huge debt. That's one thing. So they're saying, I wouldn't get a scholarship. I don't leave school without debt. But then you've got a whole other segment. It's like, I don't even want to go to school because I don't want my parents to pay or me to pay a quarter million dollars where I go out and I become an electrician or become a welder. And I might make $75,000 a year versus some entry level engineer making $85,000 a year, but I've got a more flexible job. So I think that the perception of a college degree is going down with the Gen Zers.

They don't necessarily think that's the gold standard of the value of their existence and them as meaningful, value them as a human being. I think if they say, look, I can be a trades person, make just as much money, but I have a way better quality of life and I got a better probably sustainability in the workforce to have an independent career being whatever I want to be, plumber, electrician, welder, you know, and again,

with these new connected worker tools, they might be a specialist in 3D design or in drones or sensors and things like that. And I think it's going to create a whole new opportunity. And you're going to see this workforce, the composition change in what these younger generations value. And that's going to drive the industry to shift.

Mike Merrill:

So what do you think companies can do today to prepare for that or sort of lead the duck, so to speak, and get ahead of it to where this isn't such a different change of direction for them as things continue to evolve?

Brent Kedzierski:

Well, I think what companies have to understand is there's a new set of what we call power skills in and across all industries. And the first thing is because organizations are changing from very siloed, strict, hierarchical chain of command to more matrixed and integrated and, you know, supply chain and circular and all these kinds of things, people have to be more collaborative they have to be able to know what the old silo is doing in terms of the new matrix. And they have to be able to go up and down, across, sideways and vertical. So they have to be collaborative. And not only with other human beings from other divisions, branches, sectors, units, but with automation. So they have to be able to collaborate with new analytics and sensors and data and 3D and 2D and all these kind of... new inputs coming at them and they have to learn new skills for that. And the new skills are going to be requiring them to be more cognitive in their work. Cognitive in terms of their ability to take a much wider and very branch and sector and sections of information and use it to make decisions. And those decisions are going to be more insightful because they're coming from multiple sources, multidimensional data sources. And so you're going to have to be more cognitive.

And that means how do you critically think about things? How do you make sense of things? And then the last thing, they're going to be using all this new collaboration, new ideas, a diverse set of ideas and people they're working with and this data insight to be what the people will do in the future, more so than automation. They're going to be creative. So that's the trilogy. So you got to have all these new inputs. You got to be able to use your big brain as a human. Then you got to use your big... soft skill set, how do you get along with people and work well and more diverse, wider channels. And then how do you use all that to drive creativity because the products and solutions, your homes, your designs, people want higher concept, higher touch solutions. A bedroom isn't a bedroom anymore. It can be a poker room. It can be... transformed into five different things. Closet isn't a closet. All these kind of things that you want to be able to do. They can adapt. They're more agile. They're more dynamic. And people want them geared more towards their personal preferences. Because instead of mass production like Henry Ford, we're living today in mass personalization. So everything's more personalized than the human being.

And that's what companies have to understand. And this, again, goes to this whole pluralistic system idea of understanding diversity of the world and how do you accommodate that a bit better.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, we've had a few guests historically and I've been to a lot of conferences where we've had a speaker or someone present a session on tools they use to assess personalities and to find the right fit for the right role for individuals based on that personality type. And so have you seen or worked with companies to do something like that to help make sure we're matching the right people with the right job?

Brent Kedzierski:

Indeed, indeed. I have worked with several companies that are doing that because, you know, they're scratching their head and saying, OK, we get them in the door. But, you know, six months after onboarding, they leave or orientation. They leave. Now, that's partly a statistic of poor onboarding. But, you know, what they're doing is they didn't have the affiliation. They didn't have the aptitude for that kind of work. And so what we're doing is we're using the old mental model of hiring. You know, did you do it before? Yeah, they might have done it before, but they hated it. You know, so now you've got to, you know, and here's the thing. I do a lot of work on this and there's not a lot of people doing this, but you know, I've done a lot of competence management in my, my history and most companies, all they care about is their workers skills and knowledge to the job.

Mike Merrill:

Right.

Brent Kedzierski:

They hire you to say, do you have the skills to do this job? Do you have the knowledge to do this job? That's 20%. The 80% of whether someone's going to be successful on a team, in a job, in a role, in a company is what their motives are. What motivates them to work? What kind of work motivates them? What kind of colleagues and working conditions motivate them?

They like fast pace, slow pace, they like a lot of change, they like little change. What are their traits? What are their top three traits that they are great at today, but will get them in the current job and make them successful, but then what traits do they want to build to be successful in the next role? So traits are always going and we're getting more and more traits. And then it's all about, well, what social role do they want to have in the company? So,

Mike Merrill:

Yeah.

Brent Kedzierski:

I've got people that I never want to come see coming in the door through for one of my meetings. And I got people that I don't want to start a meeting unless they're in it. You know, so that's a big, big denominator. And you know, what's their self image? You know, do they see themselves being the best, you know, sheet drywall person or do they see themselves being, you whatever it is that, you know, you want them to be. So, you know, it's all these, these, these things like this that companies need to start paying attention to appreciating and then building because that's the human person in the job and in the Gen Z 'ers today, they don't want to just come and grow skills for their company. They want to grow experiences, you know, have that kind of star, you know, interview technique to say, what was the situation, you know, task, you know, what was the assignment and how did you respond and what made it interesting and unique that gave you unique skill set that makes you employable and transferable.

So, you know, this is what companies have to sort out. And if you still do that Taylorism, like I talked about earlier, if you still think of people as shovels, you know,

you're not going to have, you know, your shovels are going to be walking out the door and you got to make sure that they are, you know, they're personalized, they're adaptive, they're dynamic, and they're adding value through not just their skills and knowledge, but, you know, the social role they're playing and are they, you know, that have a great self -image that represents the company and represents the brand. So it's these kind of things that companies don't put enough spit polish on.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, I mean, one thing again that keeps coming across my mind as you're speaking, and it's been kind of throughout this discussion, and I just know by your personality and the things that you are passionate about, the key is number one, measuring things, performance, results, efficiency, but also the method at which you're measuring and what you're choosing to compare it against. And then based on that assessment, what corrections or adjustments need to be made, whether it's in personnel, whether it's an approach, whether it's just identifying the real weak spots or the gaps in a process, tightening those up and then, you know, stitching it back together with this adjustment in place. What are you seeing companies do to better measure and assess the results and make those adjustments, if anything?

Brent Kedzierski:

So again, if you look at industry, I mean, we've been kind of, you know, fat, dumb and happy, I guess you'd call it. In the 1940s, it was about a massive war production. So we produced, produced, produced, produced. And then after the post -war era, we started to run into quality issues. And, you know, and we threw out all of our great quality advocates like Deming. And so Deming went to Japan and he helped the Japanese beat the Americans in auto manufacturing.

And then we had this, you know, again, productivity was coming back and how do we do quality? And then we got into, you know, re -engineering because we said, well, how do we create a whiteboard and start over again and fix things and, you know, all that. And then so we finally got our sense together, you know, in the 21st century and said, hey, I think it's about making

sure people are set up for success and they're happy and doing what they're doing and make that a bit more of a focus. So I'm sorry, but I lost track of your question. What was it?

Mike Merrill:
Yeah, so what are you seeing companies do to implement metrics or benchmarks to measure the successes they're having and put, you know, adjustments in place? You know, what are they using to accomplish those incremental improvements?

Brent Kedzierski:
Okay. Yeah, no, that's great. So, okay. So the last 30 years, we were so proud of ourselves because we got what we called descriptive analytics, which were typically in a spreadsheet in columns, you know, and they described what happened in the past. So we had this kind of turnover or we had this kind of quality errors on, you know, paint chips, or we had quality errors on, you know, defects here or whatever it was.

So they were kind of historical and they described what happened. And then we advanced to these diagnostic analytics where you could put column one with column two and say, well, was there a correlation and did that indeed mean causation? And so it was really about, well, why did it happen? Why did we have so many bad paint chips and scratches or why did this not work out the way we wanted it to? But then we started to advance and we got the cyber physical connectivity of multiple data sources that you could combine and blend together that we got what we call predictive analytics. So we let workers look at data and say, well, can we predict what's going to happen or what we think will happen given the next variables? If we try something different, what's the likelihood this will happen? So that was the next big thing that companies were doing.

Now they're really trying to get to what we call prescriptive analytics. So think about construction and if you took all these variables and you say, well, can we prescribe what engineers should do or how we should order this or how we can predict this? And so I think that's what companies are trying to do is use the analytics and engineer the data sources to deliver because they used to just, they used to kind of hope,

you know, they could get data and they'd hunt and peck and say, well, what kind of sense can we make out of it? And in the last 20 years, companies got started saying, if you want to know answers to questions, you have to engineer the data sources. And that's this big thing with generative AI. And so, you know, companies are finally getting, if you want to use generative AI, well, the first thing you have to do is you have to build your data repository and you actually have to start structuring your data and tagging it and indexing it. So I think the number one thing that companies are doing today, the smart ones, are they're saying, what are all of our data sources? Are we managing our data as a true business asset? And what does an asset look like? Well, it looks like the data has been tagged with metadata. So, you know, it goes to this plant or this unit or this person or... you know, this workforce job category, is it rendered properly? So does it need to be visually, you know, a diagram or video or can it be a 3D animation? Right. And then how do we assign it and distribute it to people? And how do we marry it with other data sources? So now you've got all these, you know, what we call content component management systems that allow you to make your data smart,

Mike Merrill:
Yeah, charts graphs. Yeah.

Brent Kedzierski:
So it can be fed into AI systems. And then that's what you do. Then you can ask the AI system questions and your data can then answer.

Mike Merrill:
Well, and I think we'll both agree to this and this is another issue. Sometimes the prescription actually is, I mean, it's really not necessarily solving the problem because more data isn't necessarily the answer. We have more data than we've ever had. We're choking on data because now all of a sudden we have this technology revolution. There's so much of it available in so many ways you could get it. But if it's not, like you said, boiled down to a meaningful... actionable place where you can actually do something with it and take take steps to change, improve, or adjust what you're doing to change that outcome, then it's, you know, maybe it's just a hamster wheel, right? I mean, we

really got to plug it into where it matters and put it into something that actually makes a difference.

Brent Kedzierski:
Yeah, I mean, we've entered this era of what we call content shock because there's so much content out there. I mean, I love the Pittsburgh Steelers. There are so many podcasts out there on the Pittsburgh Steelers that I drove from North Carolina to Georgia, you know, eight hours. And I just flipped from Steeler podcast to Steeler podcast on the same day. And I filled my car with eight plus hours of Steeler podcast. And so, but what happens is there's so much content only the good stuff that rises to the top. And so companies are competing for people's attention because people only have so much bandwidth. Now I was sitting in the car for eight hours, but I mean, when people don't have that much time, they're only going to look at that, you know, 1 % of content. So this is why if you don't index it and tag it and segment it and filter it, you know, I know that I work with a lot of content. I, you know, in the order of magnitude of content, I've worked with like millions of digital pages.

Mike Merrill:
Beautiful.

Brent Kedzierski:
And when I rendered it and curated it, I could get that millions of pages done to maybe 60 ,000 pages because there was so much redundancy. And once I tagged it and rendered it, I might only have six pages for a worker in unit three shift two. And instead of them looking through that themselves, no, it gets filtered. This is the whole concept, the personalization and unique identifiers and the power to...you know, prescribe and predict what people need.

Mike Merrill:
Yeah, I, you know, there's another, another analogy or at least a, you know, a comparative that I've heard a few times and I've talked to people that have intimate knowledge and understanding of this, but some of the larger bridges in the country, you know, with the Brooklyn Bridge or the San Francisco Bay Bridge, they actually have, and I don't know factually exactly how

true this is, but essentially there's always a program for painting those bridges.

And they start on one end and they work all the way to the other. And by the time they get done, the other side needs to be started again. So there's a continual effort to repaint those bridges because that rust will catch up and get ahead and overwhelm if you don't. So I think, you know, in business, I think as individuals personally also, you know, how are we painting the bridge? You know, what are, what's the new thing that we're painting on the bridge to make sure that we're keeping fresh and keeping ahead of decay from stagnancy, from doing things the old way, because if we don't reinvent ourselves, if we don't evolve, if we don't adapt, if we don't iterate and adjust, we're going to become not only not competitive, but irrelevant. We're not going to survive as businesses in this technological economy that we're a part of today. Would you agree with that? And what are some examples of

Brent Kedzierski:
Yeah, I mean, you know, every, you know, I've dealt my career in global transformation of the complex and challenging dilemmas. And, you know, that's been my entire life and I've come to the realization that I've always entered what I call this arc of drama. So Steven Spielberg makes a movie or Stephen King writes a horror novel and you always have the protagonist and the antagonist. And that was always me, I was the protagonist. I was the Don Quixote, I was taking my glance and trying to fight the windmills and there were always the naysayers, oh, we can't do that, it's too difficult.

We're unique, it doesn't work here, blah, blah, blah. Our salespeople have a harder time. The product, whatever the millions of factors, people will come up to say, just leave me alone. Don't add any water to my bucket, it's heavy enough. And so you kind of get around that. And then you have this rising action. We're starting some momentum. And then all of a sudden, you hit these challenges and problems. We're running out of budget. We didn't expect this. We didn't think about that.

You hit this climax for everybody who wants your head, you know, and then you work in the all the drama. It's the you know, it's like the, you know, the the the the climax of the movie. And then you start to work it out.

Nobody's going to lose their job. And, you know, the the sky is not going to fall down. And then after all that pain, you've made some success or at least some learnings and you get some type of recognition reward. And then the cycle just starts again. And every project, everything. I mean, I don't care if I'm going to go and

You know, I was I was doing some yard work earlier today and you know, the hose didn't work. The nozzle was, you know, rusted on it and I had to get the wrench and I just, you know, nothing ever really goes smoothly. And I think if you go into anything thinking that aren't going to be challenges or setbacks or problems, I think you're fooling yourself. So you've got to say, I'm going to go into this task and whatever it takes to climb that hill, I'm going to climb that hill and, you know, expect it, you know.

And I think that's the whole thing about life. And I think that's the thing companies have to understand is, you human beings, there's four things I always say about human beings. Every human being, you, well, maybe not me, but okay, maybe me. We're all fallible. You know, we are going to make mistakes. And I do it all the time. You know, I was like, oh, you know, and as I get older, I probably make more mistakes, less, you know, less. But we're all adaptable if we choose to be we can be adaptable on the positive side or adaptable on the negative side. And hopefully we choose to be positive. And companies need to recognize everybody's fallible, it's going to happen, and they're adaptable. So hopefully they're willing to grow and enrich themselves. But they're also social. They need, in isolation, people won't be any good. They need a human mirror. They need to have social proofing. Are they doing well, are they not doing well, where do they stand in comparison to the line? And the last thing is they all need some kind of meaning and purpose in their life and without that they derail. And I think if companies understand that the human condition is as simple as that and are you giving people purpose? Are you setting up with a social community to help them realize that purpose and feel good about that purpose? Are you helping them to adapt and grow?

Mike Merrill:
Yeah.

Brent Kedzierski:
And if they ever do make a mistake and they fail, will you be there for them? So, you know, I started one way and I went back with the work of the other way. So, I mean, you know, you have to start and that's how I feel. You know, people look at themselves one way, but the company should say, I'm going to support you this way.

Mike Merrill:
Yeah, well, I love I listen to a podcast that Jocko willing, you know, well known Navy SEAL commander and, you know, written many amazing books. And I've got a t-shirt that says good period on the front. And I can hear his voice when I'm thinking about it, you know, and and he he it's awesome because usually when he uses that word, it's after something that I would perceive as bad or negative happened. And he always says good.

And then he describes and explains why it's good. Why that bad thing is good. Why that difficulty is good. Why that challenge is good. Because now you know, now you can overcome. Now you can get better. You know, every time that you make a mistake, as long as you learn from it, you just had an opportunity to elevate and improve. So I think creating a culture within our companies that, you know, not that not that failing or having a problem is celebrated, but it is respected and used as a tool to get better. And it's a safe place to say, you know what, I made a mistake, but here's what I'm gonna do to fix it. And I think that's the key. Would you agree with that?

Brent Kedzierski:
Oh yeah, I think it's this idea. I mean, how many years have we all said people don't go to work wanting to do a bad job. Nobody wants to. And we know all these things. I mean, all this research has been done for years and years. We know what motivates people.

Mike Merrill:
Right, that's right, that's exactly right.

Brent Kedzierski:
You know, we know what makes people happy. It's not brain science, but what happens is, you people and humans get in their own way. And I'm a big believer

that everybody in the universe is connected. We're all in the human species. We all feel the same emotions, you know, the whole, you know, the whole spectrum of emotion. And, you know, we all have the same wants, needs, kind of desires and all that. We're just one big community. And that's why I opened when I talked to you about.

I go into these companies and it's all the same. They're still discussing the same problems, issues. Some are better than others. Some are 10 years behind others. This is why, how do people sell books? I mean, if you think about it, how the hell do these people sell millions of books? Because they resonate with people because people all have the same issues. And you go on Amazon, you say, hey, how many people looked and liked and bought that book? Well, because we're all pretty much the same. I mean, if you come and look at my library and somebody's in the same kind of field or have the same passions, they've got the same books. So I think that we really have to understand the human condition is there. I think companies that become more human centric are going to be much better off than companies that feel that, well, you know, the human is just a byproduct of what I've got to get done. And, you I don't have the residual emotional, you know, integrity and awareness to deal with that.

So you'll find that out. I mean, I look on Reddit a lot. It amazes me what's going on Reddit, what's going on in some of these little companies and things like that. It's just an amazing thing. But I think there's a new day coming, and I hope it's driven by the Gen Zers and the Alphas that are coming after them, that they will demand a new type of work environment and they won't be so quiet as the people in my generation have been to say, my role was to shut up, sit down, take it, shovel harder, shovel till you sweat, till your shoe soles are melted. And I actually did that on one construction job. I was shoveling asphalt and I was my first day in a job and I wore tennis shoes. And by the time the day was done, my tennis shoe soles had melted in the asphalt. But I learned a valuable lesson about hot feet.

Mike Merrill:
Wow, that's amazing. So I think we both agree. It sounds like, you know, I love this phrase too. It might get overused, but it says that life is 10 % experiences,

90 % how we react to them. And so, you know, I love some of the advice and direction you're giving on what we can focus on to make sure that that reaction is not again, adding to the problem versus actually working towards a solution.

Brent Kedzierski:
I know it's so funny, you know, it's the benefit of hindsight, you know, one of my greatest mentors Bill Donaldson actually unfortunately died this year I was fortunate enough to get delivery zoology and I remember one time I was working for Naval Air Systems Command and I was so upset about an issue. I wrote this Shraving memo back and he said BK Do me a favor print that out Let me put it in this envelope. I want you to set it here under your desk mat, not a desk mat at the time. And I said, let's read it tomorrow. And so I went home that night, woke up, and the next one, he and I sat down and I read that memo. I said, shit, I'm glad I didn't send that. And I mean, the benefit of hindsight, cooling down, managing my emotions, and doing what he called third party listening, step outside of myself and look at the situation unfolding and pretend like you're just sitting in a big high chair looking down on what's going on and rethink it and how you might act as a third party. And great advice from a great guy.

Mike Merrill:
Yeah, that's beautiful advice. You hear people say sometimes, yeah, write the letter, type the email, type out the text, just don't send it, you know, wait, let it soak. And yeah, you'd probably, you know, change it later.

Brent Kedzierski:
But it's amazing what people should do and they should do that more often. But in this fast paced world, if you all get to return an email in 30 seconds, that art is hopefully not dying, but I think it's getting socially pushed that you can't do that because everybody wants you to respond immediately when I think maybe the Gen Zers might probably do better in saying, look, I'm going to just chill out and I'm going to wait because it's more, and I think they do think it's more about the experience.

And I say that to my son, you his personal brand is forming the relationship that other people have with him and how he makes them feel. And it goes back to that whole person competence. Does he help motivate them? Does he help build their skills and knowledge? Does he help improve their traits and characteristics? Does he help improve their self image and their social role? And I think if you looked at him and they say, hey, wow, he's great because he does all those things for me.

And they want to go and be with him and interact with him because he is a positive experience on their growth, development and journey. And I think that we need more people that, you know, are helping people on other dimensions of the positive side of their existence, you know, and, you know, being a bit more helpful, you know, and a bit more, you know, promotional to say, hey, you're doing great and boy, you know, I like this about you and you know, maybe this will help you and I'll give you some also some honest candid feedback and I'll balance care with candor, you know, and I wouldn't even even saw there.

Mike Merrill:
Yeah, Gary Vee calls it kind candor and I love that phrase so much. I've learned as I've gotten older, the importance of, you know, using fewer words that add more meaning with more sincerity. And then again, you know, like you talk about, I keep thinking of perspective, you know, I've got a brand new little granddaughter that's, you a week old, she was born the first day of spring. It's like I could be going through it. It wouldn't even matter what I could get in a knock on wood, an auto accident or something, heaven forbid. And the next day, if I'm holding that grandbaby, then it didn't matter. I mean, I wouldn't be worried about any of that other stuff. And so I think when it comes to our work -life balance and also having a meaningful existence, having our cup filled, not only from the personal hobbies or whatever other things that we have going on with our family or home.

But you spend as much time or more with the people at work often than you do directly with your family, because you're either sleeping or you're getting a few hours in here and there. But usually work is the largest concentration of our time in our life. So it needs to be important and meaningful. Otherwise, yeah, it's

going to be a drain on the other part of your life. And nobody's productive when they're miserable. I don't care who they are.

Brent Kedzierski:
No, exactly. And I'll tell you, I'm just plugging in here. I don't want to lose juice.

Mike Merrill:
And I'm sure you'd agree with that as well.

Brent Kedzierski:
Okay, yeah. And what I would say to this is, you know, the average person in their career will spend a hundred thousand hours at work and then they're going to spend another, you know, whatever hundred thousand sleeping, hopefully they have a good sleep. And then they're going to spend another percentage doing just life's admin. I got to shower and shave, do all this stuff. And so that pie shrinks and If you're having a bad work experience, I mean, that's a significant percent of your of your existence. And I think that people really need to make a clear priority of what they're all about. And they need to start doing that earlier in their life and figuring out what really drives them, what really is motivating that life wheel, that circle of, OK, I'm going to deal with my spiritual aspect, my professional aspect, my entertainment, growth aspect and all that.

Mike Merrill:
Yeah.

Brent Kedzierski:
And I think people are getting smarter to that. And I think that they're saying, look, if I'm going to spend 100 ,000 hours at work, I don't want it to kill me. I don't want to leave. Because again, if you look at work today, in the US, work stress is when primary care physicians, I think it's something like 70 % of their patients, they're seeing them for work -related stress. And you know, If you think about work -related diseases or work -related stressor leading to obesity, alcohol, drug abuse, cardiovascular disease, you know, all these things and work is killing people. I mean, you can research this and it's true. And I don't think the Gen Zers in that are

going to let their jobs kill them. I think they're going to bail before that happens and they're going to go and live in a tiny house and, you know, live in tiny means and...you know, all those kinds of things and go to thrift shops and buy their clothes. And, you know, they're not again, you know, cause our generation was about you wanted to accumulate as much as you could. And, you know, and then you are, you know, enhancing the accumulation and then you spend your last 20 years trying to get rid of the accumulation. So I think that, you know, people really need to figure out, you know, what's most important to them earlier on and not try to grow into it. And I would always do a lot of coaching at Shell, for example, and I would be talking to people and they want career advice. They were 40 some years old. And I say, are you not clear on what you want to be and what you want to do yet? You know, you're still kind of, but they've done that because the organizations would try to label them and tell them what they should be. And so the old corporations were trying to tell you, you should be this, just like the Joe Magarack story.

I'm going to tell you what you need to be and what creates value for you as a worker. And so I'm going to tell you how you're valuable or not. And I think it's shifting that the worker's saying, well, wait a minute, I don't need the company to tell me if I'm valuable or not. I'm going to define what value looks like for me, and then I'm going to aspire to it.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, that's awesome. I love the way you frame that. And I completely agree that as a business or as companies are evaluating their employees satisfaction and contentment, I mean, are they asking these questions at all? Do they survey and poll their staff? Are you happy in your current role? What would make it better? What do you love about it? Is there a different role? I mean, I never asked or have been asked until... maybe now we're with a larger organization and they've got some of these things in place and it's really actually pretty cool. But I don't think the vast majority of construction workers are being asked on a regular basis, what else would you like to do? Is there anything else you'd like to aspire to? Or do you want to try a different trade within the organization? Maybe there's something else they want to switch it up at.

Brent Kedzierski:

Well, you know, these big companies would do these annual employee surveys. It used to drive me crazy because there were a one -time, once -a -year event, and it might have been right after reorganization, or it might have been right after a low share price announcement, or it might have been after, you know, something, you know, an annual review project. And I don't know why some company, an idea out there, give me a partial credit or a proceed,

Mike Merrill:

Some other trigger, yeah.

Brent Kedzierski:

But they should build an app that, you know, it goes out to workers on their phone and it might be randomized, you know, like a sign on one of these, you know, tools and it's on a random schedule and the employee gets a survey of five questions on their phone. And it says, you know, were you collaborative today with your team? Would you get the right tools, knowledge, information? Did you have motivating work? Was the decisions time five questions or whatever and they get $2 for doing it. It's going be a lot cheaper than doing the annual employee survey. I guarantee you that when you hire the McKinsey's or the Accenture's or whoever you hire to come in and do those. And they get daily data from their entire workforce or semi -daily data or however you do it. And I think that is really true meaningful data because it's based on random experiences.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, and again, you know, to your point, there's not some other trigger that obviously the whole workforce within your company is going to feel impacted if there was a problem or layoffs or like you said, a low share price, some other external environmental factor is gonna have people afraid for their job. They're gonna answer in a way that will help them feel like they're gonna keep their job more than they'll be honest and give you actually real feedback so you know what's going on.

Brent Kedzierski:

Well, and to your point in that, I mean the amount of human capital insight that companies lose because of the psychological safety and the fear that people have, you know, people are afraid to speak up because they'll feel they'll get exposed. They're afraid to ask questions because they'll be perceived as dumb. They are afraid to make suggestions because they're afraid to be challenged.

And there's a whole ladder of these things that unfortunately go on with the safety of individuals that cost companies good ideas and, you know, emperors with no clothes to be clothed and, you know, all those kinds of things. And, you know, companies still because there is still so much hierarchical, you know, positional power in companies, which is a terrible, terrible thing. Worst thing in the world is, you know, positional power, you know, where you've got power over someone and that leads to coercion or abuse or whatever that is. And that's really cost companies a ton of money. And I've seen it firsthand.

Mike Merrill:

Yeah, this has been so fascinating. I'm not done talking to you. I think we have to have you back on. I think we could wrap for another few hours and I wouldn't even get bored. So hopefully you feel the same.

Brent Kedzierski:

It's been a great chat.

Mike Merrill:

Well, so I guess in closing, Brent, before we hang up for today, what advice or what would you hope to leave our audience with that they can take forward from our conversation?

Brent Kedzierski:

I think the biggest advice I always try to do is, man, life is a journey. And it is all a journey about getting to know yourself and figure out, I love the adage of what got you here won't get you there. And I always try to stop myself and say, okay, where am I? I know these things really got me to where I am today, but where do I wanna go? And how's what, how?

is what that I'm really strong at today gonna hold me back and I need to let go a good bit and what do I need to build? So like for example, I used to be really, you know, really super analytical. I would like really analyze things and I'd want to know all the answers and you know, all that kind of stuff. And I said, well, now I got to use that, but not so much. And I got to build a new set of skills because I want to be more profound and insightful, you know, so.

Okay, it's great to have all the details, but what are the bigger questions at large that we need to contend with? You know, so I think my thing is that, you know, we're all in this Ferris wheel and sometimes we got to get off, sit on a bench, look at the wheel go around and decide which horse to get back on. You know what I mean?

Mike Merrill:

Wow, nice. That's beautiful. I love that. I love that. Well, thank you so much. It's been an absolute honor and a pleasure. And I feel blessed to have had you on today and look forward to talking with you again down the road when we have the opportunity.

Brent Kedzierski:

Same here, Mike. Thanks a lot.