

Jacob Morgan 00:00

Oh, no, sir. Okay, and have you ever used Riverside before?

Mike Sarraille 00:05

We use it for our virtual podcasts as well. Alright, so

Jacob Morgan 00:08

you know not to like hang up right after we're done. Yeah,

Mike Sarraille 00:10

let let it download it and I can see the uploading up in the upper right hand corner. So alright, cool.

Jacob Morgan 00:15

So I'll push record on my camera over here. And then I'll jump right in unless anything else? No, sir. All right, and then we'll do a longer intro later. For now we'll introduce you, CEO of talent war group and author of and then uh, you know, I mentioned your book, and then later on, I'll do a much longer intro before it goes live. Yes, sir. All right. I'll jump right in. Hello, everyone. Welcome to another episode of the future of work. My guest today is Mike Cirelli. He's the CEO of talent war group and author of the best selling book, The talent war, how special operations and great organizations win on talent. Mike, thank you for joining me,

Mike Sarraille 00:53

Jacob. Thank you for having me.

Jacob Morgan 00:55

So you have a pretty fascinating background. And so I wanted to actually start there, before we start talking about your book and some of the stuff you're involved in now. So give us a little bit of background information about who you are, what you've done, and how you ultimately ended up writing a book and being the CEO of a company.

Mike Sarraille 01:12

Yeah, absolutely. You know, fascinating background. I appreciate that. Everyone has a background. As we know everyone has a story. I just have my own. So born and raised in the Bay Area, after high school did a very small, unsuccessful stint in college, just

Jacob Morgan 01:29

bay area by the way. Okay, whereabouts I used to live in Alameda,

Mike Sarraille 01:34

Alameda, okay, I was down south, we started in the city moved down to Palo Alto. And then so, you know, went to college for a very short stint, just the maturity wasn't there, I didn't have the focus on wanting to be out doing seeing the world. So I enlisted in the Marine Corps became or went into their version of Special Operations at the at the time, which is evolved. And then eventually, the Marine Corps sent me back to school, I made a decision to switch over to the seals, finished my 20 years in the

SEAL teams. And then ultimately, you know, had to learn a new skill, namely business. So at the age of 39, amongst a bunch of 27 year olds, I went and got my MBA. And from there, I recognized, you know, one, I started on a finance track. It wasn't playing to my strengths. I enjoyed new venture creation. I enjoyed the consulting side. So I focused on new venture creation. And yeah, I've started a number of startups, both on the social entrepreneur side, in the traditional business side, some a failure by textbook definition. But I learned a whole hell of a lot from those experiences. And then, you know, we wrote a book, because I was focusing on something that I was passionate about, and that is people, not only the leadership development side, but also how do you find talent? How do you assess talent? How do you bring it in your organization, and we obsessed about this within Special Operations, not just the seals, the you know, the Army Special Forces community, which in this is coming from the seal, in a lot of ways, set the bar on how to assess and select people into into their community. And so a gentleman who also was in the army, who had 20 plus years in talent acquisition, we came together, good friend, and we said, hey, let's write a book, in a business case, examples type, you know, scenario, using special operations as the sort of the study on how they've built these just high performing dynamic, innovative teams. And that's how the talent war, how special operations and great organizations went on talent came about. And from that, we started a consulting firm named talent war group that focuses on executive search, HR and talent, consulting, and then also the last component leadership development.

Jacob Morgan 03:59

Very cool. You're actually the second seal I had on here. I had Jason Redman, as a podcast guest a little while ago. Do you know Jason?

Mike Sarraille 04:05

I know Jason. Now, that is a remarkable story of resiliency, given what he went through.

Jacob Morgan 04:13

Yeah, yeah. He, he was on here, I think a couple of months ago, and the story that he shared about almost just dying was just nuts. So yeah, he's gone through a tremendous amount. So first, of course, thank you for your service. And I was hoping you can share a little bit before we jump into some of the stuff that you're involved in now. Just so people can understand what it's like to be a seal what life is like what training was like because I you kind of just like flew over it. Yeah, I used to be a seal and Alma entrepreneur, but that's a big deal. Right? And it's, you know, very few people get a chance to accomplish that. It's what considered probably the most grueling training in the world. So can you give a little bit of insight around what that experience was like, and what did you learn from it?

Mike Sarraille 04:57

You know, I'm very Be proud of my military service, it will always be part of my DNA without a doubt, and I learned so many lessons there, on how to do things, right. That could be applied to the business world, the military also does some things very poorly compared to the private sector. But you know, when you're so passionate about something, regardless of your profession, and you pour into it, and you're surrounded by people who feel the same, then you get to experience a level of camaraderie and esprit de corps homecoming and belonging in mission focus that is just an rivaled you know, the thing that makes special operations so unique, that it's it's significantly harder for the private sector to

achieve is what I just explained is everyone has bought in, because you had to go through anywhere from 12 months to 16 months of hell, the interview process for army green berets or Navy SEALs to get into the organization. That's just the entrance exam,

Jacob Morgan 06:07

by the way. So when you say 12 to 16 months in hell, some people listening might be like, okay, yeah, it was probably hard. How, what is it actually like, so people can understand just how tough that is.

Mike Sarraille 06:19

So, you know, my story is unique in that the Marine Corps laid the foundation for me to be successful. Everyone wants to talk about the seals, I love to talk about the United States Marine Corps, which is a storied organization, which, you know, there's two organizations in this land that wrote the the manual on leadership. And I suggest every MBA program adopt at least a three credit semester course on them, is the US Army in the US Marine Corps, not the not the US Navy SEALs, this navy seals are an amazing organization. And they've evolved from the army in the Marine Corps in a way. But my toughest challenges, were actually becoming a recon Marine, which they have an assessment selection process similar to the Navy SEALs, but different. I mean, traditionally, when you ask a lot of people about SEAL training, they'll say it's the toughest training in the world. It is a marine do actually, a recon Marine, one really has two functions, depending on whether you end up in a recon battalion or force recon battalion, and they've evolved now to something called Maher sock, also, you know, also known as the the Raiders, but deep reconnaissance was our primary mission. So, you know, go deep behind enemy lines to, you know, provide intel on enemy positions and enemy disposition. relay that back to the Marine Infantry, for them to conduct a follow on assault. And so we even though we're special operations in the Marine Corps, we were always in support of the United States, Marine Corps, infantry, the guys who actually win wars, and took that mission very seriously. And if you end up in a force recon platoon, they do have something called the direct action mission. Think about it this way. You know, your local Swat, your police department knows where a drug dealer is, they know the house, and they go raid that house. And that's basically what a direct action rate is. But the point is, you know, that that training for my initial entrance into the military was tough. I was young. And after five years in the Marine Corps, they had prepared me for SEAL training. And it was actually a seal mentor, a marine major. That right when I got commissioned as a Navy Ensign said to me, he's like, hey, just one last piece of advice. When you go try out for the seals, if you quit, you're gonna embarrass the United States Marine Corps. And I laughed, I laughed, because he was kidding. But behind every joke, there's there's a lot of truth. And there was a lot of truth. I said, Thank you so much for that. And so I focused during SEAL training on being a leader within my class and being a rock that guys could lean against. And I think, you know, not not patting myself on the back. But there's something called the fire in the gut award. In the basic premises, who would you want to go to war with, and I was I wanted the fire in the gut award amongst all the seal candidates that made it through the training but SEAL training is, is highly professional. It's it's evolved over decades, think about this. This is the this is a decade long, or decades long hiring process that continues to evolve. Because what made a seal great in my era, during the global war on terror, doesn't necessarily make a great seal 10 years from now, where the battlefield will be different and the requirements and the attributes required are different. But the attrition rate is usually around 80% So usually 250 Kids, no, sorry, young men, all just exceptional. Young men

start the training and my class, you know, graduated Hell Week with I think it was like 25 out of those 250?

Jacob Morgan 10:01

And what is what does that training actually look like? What time are you up? What is your day look like? How intense is that training?

Mike Sarraille 10:08

Let you say I would never put myself through that voluntarily. If I if I didn't believe it's your reporting every morning at 5am. And you're going hard until about 6pm, you're they're putting you through physical training, swimming, running on not only running, but running on soft sand in combat boots, which is a little harder. You're putting boots on top of your head, in teams of six to eight that weigh about 200 pounds, logs on your shoulder that that weigh a couple 100 pounds. They are really in when when you're thinking about it, it's not. You know, the SEAL training isn't designed to be sadistic. It's designed with one purpose in mind, to push the candidates to their mental and physical limits, because that's when true character emerges. And that's what they want to see what is this person really made of. And so you have a lot of Olympic athletes, NCAA athletes that come to the training, and they don't last past, you know, week two, or don't last past Hell Week. So they're really they're really looking to it almost evoke failure, and see how people react to it gauge their mental toughness and their resiliency. And once they see you fail, and they see you getting back up, they're gonna be like sharks in the water, they're gonna come over and push you back down to see how you deal with that. So there is a very, you know, to the public, they may just see young men just being, you know, going through grueling physical training. Yes, they are. But there is a purpose behind it.

Jacob Morgan 11:40

Yeah. Jason shared the same that it's just it's very intense and very, very difficult.

Mike Sarraille 11:46

That's a good word.

Jacob Morgan 11:48

Yeah. One of the things I'm really curious about it kind of tangentially related to this, I'm working on a new book at the moment, and it's looking about, we're going to explore vulnerability and leadership. You know, putting people first kind of this connection admitting if you made a mistake asking for help. Did you find during your time, was there any place for vulnerability of any kind in any of the work that you were doing?

Mike Sarraille 12:10

You've got to be kidding me. You just hit on what I speak to companies about so vulnerable, you cannot develop, in my opinion, a healthy culture, without vulnerability, which requires great moral courage to open yourself up to ridicule condemnation, you know, from from from others, but vulnerability was a key component of the Special Operations community. And we want to see it in training. Let me give you a story. Yes, please. So in our book, in our book, we interviewed a gentleman named Major General, Jerry Boykin, and Jerry Boykin was one of the early founding members of Delta Force, which, you

know, we all know, Delta Force, the premier counterterrorism unit in the world. And when we were interviewing him, he started talking about this emotional intimacy amongst the operators, that Delta Force, I thought he was pulling my leg at the time, I'm like, I've never heard those words, with regards to the Special Operations community, you know, the appearance of these big tough guys who everyone thinks are just closed. And he saw me smiling, and he said, Mike, what, why are you smiling and said, I'm sorry, I've just never heard that before. He said, Well, let me put it into layman's terms for you. He said, If one of your guys came to you with tears in his eyes, or maybe you just lost a teammate, or maybe a civilian was injured on a target, and they were taking it harshly, what would you do? And I said, Well, sir, naturally, I'd wrap my arms around them, and probably cry with them, or assure him that we're gonna get through this, we're gonna figure it out. And we're going to talk through it. And he said, Exactly. That's emotional intimacy. Some people call it vulnerability. And that's, you know, this is my post military career. And that made me reflect so greatly. You know, I often say in the military, we lead through love. And I don't want people to think that you know, that we're creating the soft spaces, the safe spaces within Special Operations. When I say lead through love. I lead my people because one, I love them, whether I like them or not, I love them. And I want to see the best I want to see the team win. But also, when you think about it, one of the highest forms of love or compassion is accountability. Yeah, is that when I see one of my men do something wrong, is I have to hold them accountable, not because I want to embarrass them in one of my I'm going to deal with no deal with it in a way praise in public punishing private, but I do that, because I want them to be a competent, high performing individual, especially when I leave the organization that they can take it and take the organization to the next level. So I want to dis spell what people think about special operations here is, you know, we're willing to have these talks in mentally if you're off, we want people to come to us and say, okay, hey, let's let's get, let's talk through it, or let's get you some help. And even one of the, in Jacob, I know being long winded here, one of our practices, one of our practices that we utilize in the military called the after action review. And you may have heard of this, some people call them debriefs in the sales world, they call them post mortems. But usually, they only do post mortems, when a sales call goes wrong, or they lose a bid, they say, Hey, what happened there? We do it, whether we're successful, or we fail, and we do it every single day after training, and we especially do it after every combat mission. And it requires a great degree of professional maturity in the ability to allow people to be vulnerable. Because in this forum, we're we're dissecting how we performed both individually and as an organization and what we need to do to get better, even if we were successful, there's always room for growth. And the reason I say professional maturity is if somebody says, hey, I want to admit, I made a mistake on the target that we just hit tonight, you know, somebody doesn't yell obscenities and make fun of that person, because they would shut that person down for the rest for every future, after actually, they would just not want to admit any faults. But that person does it, they open themselves, they become vulnerable, because they want the others to share in their corporate knowledge of what maybe what not to do, if they ever end up in that, that situation. And this practice, the after action review is probably the single greatest organizational tool for both individual and organization, organizational development, vulnerability, and self reflection. Simon Sinek has written about it. Dan Coyle wrote about it in the culture code, stealing fire by Jamie Kotlin. And I'm forgetting Stephens name. But I recently worked with a fortune 500. And I asked the question, they wanted me to assess our culture, just virtually talking with some, some senior leaders and I asked, I said, Can you guys willingly admit a mistake? And the answer was, Oh, hell no. That would put a bull's eye on my back. And I said, then we need to change your culture, to where you can put that bullseye on the front say,

Hey, everyone, I've made this mistake. And I want you all to know about it without any fear of being crushed by Oh, give me one of the back. Sorry about that. I don't know what happened there.

Jacob Morgan 17:38

That's all good. Is your microphone you might have to go to your settings. I still hear your other microphone. Not your good one.

Mike Sarraille 17:49

Okay, give me one second.

Jacob Morgan 18:09

Now you're muted. Say something. Yep. How about now? Yeah, I can't hear you. It doesn't sound like it's your headset, though.

Mike Sarraille 18:23

No, it's it's grayed out for whatever reason.

Jacob Morgan 18:29

Maybe it's because it's in the middle of a record. If I probably if I push stop record. Then it allow you to switch your settings, which are settings, I'm guessing. Let me see if that works. Let me see if that works. Say something again. Say something again.

Mike Sarraille 18:43

Yeah, it's still grayed out.

Jacob Morgan 18:45

Okay, sorry. Let me push stop record and then let us switch it and then we'll just replace these two things.

Mike Sarraille 18:51

Okay. I apologize.