

Drag Racing Legend John Force Shares His Leadership Secrets

Jacob Morgan 00:00

I started out with a very basic question when I wrote this book is vulnerability for leaders the same as it is for everybody else? And it turns out the answer to that is no. I interviewed over 100 CEOs, I surveyed 14,000 employees around the world. And I have some amazing, amazing stories, some fascinating data, things that nobody has ever seen or heard of before. So how do the world's top leaders tap into vulnerability into the right way so that they can lead through change, unlock the potential of others drive business performance, create trust, if you want to find out, preorder your copy by going to lead with vulnerability.com and you'll get access to some really cool bonuses there as well. Again, that's lead with vulnerability.com

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The key to my success was surrounding myself with the right people don't sponsors to give me the money to hire the people. I build on people right now putting into place mechanics for the future drivers for the future marketing people. I've chased money my whole life.

01:06

My guest today is John force drag racer and owner of John force racing 16 Time funny Car champion holder of more all time records than any driver in an HRA history 155 career victories and leader of the organization that has won 22 N HR a World Championships. How did you get into racing? What was your background like when you were very young,

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my dad taught me to work, you get up every day and you work. I was cooking in restaurants in a local foster freezer at Taco Bell. I never worked for McDonald's. But bottom line, you get up every day and you go to work and you wake up motivated. I never had time to feel sorry for myself. It's just not in my mindset. Some people say I'm a workaholic, you surround yourself with people, and you build motivation. And the key to that motivation. It isn't a paycheck. The key to that motivation is about winning.

Jacob Morgan 02:01

Hey, everyone, welcome to another episode of great leadership. My guest today is John force, drag racer and owner of John force racing. And I just want to read a couple stats. And John, you can correct me if I have these Correct. 16 time funny Car champion holder of more all time records than any driver in an HRA history 155 career victories and leader of the organization that has won 22 N HR a World Championships. Did I get all that right?

02:30

You gotta write? Thank you. Thank you for the blog. Thank you, I'm allowed to get my sponsors in here. And that's what it's all about. Yeah. That's the way the game is played.

02:39

So I wanted to talk to you for two reasons, which I mentioned before I hit record here. So one, I'll admittedly be candid and say, I do not know a lot about racing. I mean, I've seen probably like a lot of people, I've seen some of the races. But I have no idea about what goes into it, what it takes to win. And one of the reasons why I wanted to talk to you is even though I don't know a lot about racing, I know that to win as many times as you have won probably takes a lot in terms of collaborating with a team motivating people coming up with new ideas, being able to deal with failure, being able to get into that mindset of winning. And I think there's a lot of applicable lessons from your success and your victories that we can apply inside of the business world. And so I wanted to actually start with your background, because I understand that early on. When you were much younger, you lived in logging camps, in trailer parks, you had polio as a child. So can you take us through a little bit about your childhood where you grew up? How did you get into racing?

03:45

Okay, well, can I just take a minute to backup answer one of your questions there. You asked, what is drag racing? Yes. First of all, it's an HRA drag racing, National Hot Rod, Racing Association. Our sanctioning body has, they run it all from track to track they even own tracks and Indian Florida and different locations. Drag Racing is worldwide. There's other series, but we are the biggest, you know, we compete not against IndyCar or f1 or or NASCAR. We always say NASCAR is our big brother. But, you know, drag racing is huge. It's it's it's, it's worldwide, but here in America, it's huge tracts all over the country, hundreds of them. And, and it's one thing that, you know, IndyCar NASCAR, anybody can be a drag racer, grandma and I can say it because I'm a grandpa. You can get in your your Chevrolet or whatever you drive for a car, put on a seat belt, put on a helmet, go down to the drag strip, and you're a drag racer and race for a trophy. But the ranks of coming up like my grandchildren now. My daughters drove in The professional classes one championships, my daughter Brittany is still driving for flavor pack and Monster Energy. She's still out there. So women can do this sport a lot different than a lot. Okay, NASCAR IndyCar they do have female drivers, but we have lots of them in every category. So that is basically, in HRA, what we do travel around the country, pretty much year round starting February go to November, Christmas. But at the end of the day, we're talking about cars in my professional ranks, Top Fuel, funny car, Pro Stock and Pro Stock bikes. We're talking about the brand new car, I drive funny car, the Top Fuel dragsters, we run down 1000 foot just short of a quarter mile, we run at speeds at over 335 miles an hour, in less than four seconds. Okay. And my if not myself, or my teams, we own a lot of those records. But you're talking about an engine that runs on nitro methane, that makes 10,000 horsepower from a dead stop at three to four G's that people are compared to the spaceship. Okay. So at the end, you put a parachute out at the other end, win or lose the race to get the car stop a lot of safety and play. They're put in by an HRA, but that's given you up a little bit about our sport. Buy a ticket, every tickets a pit pass, you can come into the pits, get an autograph of the drivers, get a, you know, a photograph, have some great food, watch some race and watch them tear the cards down, put them back together. I'm trying to give you a little bit if your listeners don't know what drag racing is, yeah, but it's the greatest show on

06:48

earth. Yeah, that sounds fantastic. out I put you to sleep there, Jacob. No, no, that's, that's fascinating. I mean, I didn't know about a lot of that stuff. I mean, three to four G's. That's, that's

Jacob Morgan 07:01

that's crazy. You know, some people have Tesla's out there and they think that puts a lot of pressure and force on the body three to four G's is enough to probably put a lot of people unconscious, get them to black out. Let's talk a little bit about how you got into this because it looks like you came from a very interesting background when you were a kid. So how did you get into racing? What was your background like when you were very young?

07:26

Well, growing up I had I had there was a total of children, mom and dad, of course the children. Five of us brothers and sisters, and you grow up in a we lived in a trailer park. My dad was a trucker. You know, my mother was a cook. I I was a fried cook. And Denise, I've done a little bit of everything soled shoes. I've done it all. But along the way, living in that little trailer house. You know, my children today, they don't even know what a TV tray is. You know what I mean? That's what I we grew up eating Papa. You know, not a big exotic dining room with all the relatives come in, you know, 2030 people, you ate off a TV tray and you watch the you know, the late night? Well, I was before Johnny cars. So what I'm getting at is you want to get away from that trailer as quick as you can. Yeah. So the first opportunity to leave that trailer was get on a motorcycle. There we go. Next was getting to cars. There you go. So along the road, I grew up and it was all about automobiles, motorcycles, cars, whatever it was, that could get me away from that trailer outside. There was nothing wrong with my life growing up at a great family. But along the way, it was an escape. So only natural later. I always wanted to raise cars professionally and I did it my early days back right out of high school in 67. And it kind of evolved and but racing became a way of life. I did drive a truck. I was a Teamster for a number of years supported my own race cars. And in 1974 1975 I went to Australia and they wanted Americans down there. Put on a cowboy hat and a Racing Jacket. I was sponsored by right here in LA Wally thorough School of trucking. And they just thought we were all cowboys like John Lane. And we weren't I never been on a horse in my life and I wear cowboy boots. But that was because of polio. It helped keep my feet straight. So in the middle of it, I wanted to play college football. I got there to college and the coach said There ain't no future here for you in doing this so Rasen did the running for me. And down in Australia. I got a taste of it. I ran in the ample series down there and 75 and I came back I've been racing ever since. So that is just the beginning.

Jacob Morgan 10:01

I'm curious about your mindset as you were growing up, right? Because it seems like you grew up from pretty, you know, pretty tough background, you were in trailer parks, you didn't have a lot of money, you probably didn't have a lot that maybe some of your your your friends had. Did you ever feel sorry for yourself? Or did you use that as motivation to kind of, like you said, get out of that trailer park? Like, what was your mindset that allowed you to kind of keep growing and building and succeeding, because I don't know, part of me feels like today, a lot of people when they are faced with a difficult challenge or uncertainty, we don't have that same mentality anymore, right? We, we tend to fall more into, it almost

feels like victimhood in a lot of situations instead of trying to figure out, you know, what we can do to succeed. And I have Russian immigrant parents from the Republic of Georgia, actually. And you know, they came to this country, dirt poor, no money didn't speak a language. And I always talk to my dad, and I say, did you ever see yourself as a victim? Did you ever feel sorry for yourself? And he's like, What the hell are you talking about? Like, I, I worked my ass off. I, you know, I see this as the greatest country in the world that gave me this opportunity. And it's just such a different mindset of positivity and optimism. And sometimes I wonder if that got lost in today's world? So what was your mindset? Like when you were younger? And you didn't have a lot?

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I mean, the world we live in now it's not. And I won't, I won't get off track and talk about things I don't know about. Yeah, but it's different than the one I grew up in. But I got no complaints about my childhood. My dad worked hard. My mother worked hard. They fed the children. They sent us to school, they put us on our feet. But my dad, my dad taught me to work. Yeah, you get up every day, and you work. And I was, I was cooking in restaurants. In a local foster freezer at Taco Bell. I never worked for McDonald's is one thing. One day, I'm probably gonna go back just to say I did. But bottom line, you get up every day and you go to work and you wake up motivated. Never had time to feel sorry for myself. It's just not in my mindset. Some people say I'm a workaholic. But in the middle of it never felt sorry for myself, never had time to do it. You know, you know, it just go to work and build a future. And along the way, you know, four beautiful daughters. I always wanted sons to play football. I get my daughters run the company, my daughters drove race cars, they've won championships, I've won races. They've done all of that. So everything that I ever wanted, but here I am. 70. I'm going to be 74 next month in May. And here I am still driving a racecar. When people are retiring at 35. Maybe they reach 50 or 52. And maybe they'll go to 60. But the majority, you look at IndyCar NASCAR, they're retiring, but race is what I love to do. A guy said what would you do? Don't audit face don't know how to golf. Tried it all. If I retired tomorrow, I go get a race car and I go racing. Yeah, that's maybe that's how stupid I am. But maybe that's how loyal I am the sport of NHL a drag race. And because it's been good to me. It's kept me financially stable. I can retire right now but retire and do what? Yeah, I don't even know. So no, life is good. And work is what I do. But the key to my success was surrounding myself with the right people, it took sponsors to give me the money to hire the people. But I'm building people right now putting into place mechanics for the future drivers for the future marketing people. You know, I've chased money my whole life, Robert might come to work for me 25 years ago, and he basically runs the day to day operations. So we continually chase money and we got a marketing team that does that. We have our own TV production company here that my daughter actually runs. So a lot of things that I got planned if I ever get to retirement Yeah, I just resigned with Pekin Chevrolet, I'm not going anywhere. So

14:10

we'll talk about surrounding yourself with the right people in a couple of minutes. But I want to get back to kind of just the aspect of racing because a lot of people who are not familiar with racing, they think you just get into a car, and you just push your foot down all the way on the gas pedal and whatever the car does, it does. Can you talk a little bit about what's required? Like what's what's the team that goes into a funny car? I mean, you mentioned mechanics, for example, like give us a sense of what is actually required. What is the team look like? What are you constantly doing to try to win? What

innovation like what does that mindset the actual tactics of winning look like? What does that team look like specifically for the car

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will understand to race professionally, and there's a lot of kids out there or that are very talented, and they could win, but you need financial backing. So it isn't just building a team. It's finding the money sponsors like peak Chevrolet Auto Club, you know, the list, I could go on forever. Okay. But that is the key. And then you put together a team back when I started, I had guys that worked for free. You know, the old joke, you know, couldn't afford to pay him. They did it because they loved it. And we raced on the weekends, we'd go north, to Seattle, and Portland and Sacramento and, you know, over to Arizona, but then 75 When I started racing, professionally, then it became a way of life. This is all you do. And so you got to find the right people. And along the road, I teamed up with a guy out of Chicago named Austin Coyle. He owned the shutdown hustler with a couple of partners. It was time for him, you know, to get out of trying to run it all and get into running a race cars what he did best. So he was very key. But there was a lot of crew chiefs before that along the way that taught me the trade. But in the process, you build the team, with a leader, like a crew chief, that leads the team, you hire the people around him, the ones that drive the transporters understand. I had a pickup truck and a small trailer in the beginning. Now I've got 1018 wheelers, I've got buses, I've got hospitalities I've got had 120 employees. I think I got close to 100 right now. So but those employees know the job so well. They pretty much run it ourselves. We do hospitality at the races we do racing, you know, you know, we meet with the sponsors. We're always you know, looking at new programs to build with potential sponsors. It's an ongoing thing. It's seven days a week.

16:50

What about just the team required for the car? So you have a crew chief? Like what does the structure of the team look like as far as the car because I'm certainly not familiar with it. I mean, I'm familiar with the concept of a crew chief. So you have a crew chief, you have a driver, you have a couple of mechanics. How big is that team and what actually goes into making the car able to do what it does.

17:14

We have four teams. I drive peak we all drive for Chevrolet, we have Montana brand and a top fuel car with Austin proc that drives that car. My daughter Brittany drives for a monster energy and flavor pack, a Robert hight. He's got three sponsors right now. And that's really tough to put together with flavor pack for a number of races. A Cornwell tools bought the majority of the races and of course Auto Club, a longtime partner that's with us, but so many of the races. So each team would have like a crew chief, a backup crew Jeep, and a car cheat. They overlook the everyday the tuneups, that computers, everything runs the car, me we have weather stations, where we get stuff, National Weather, we get information that comes out of Arizona from specialists that can give us water grains and all this kind of stuff. It's very complicated. And I'll be honest, I'm not smart enough to explain it all. But then you've got eight employees that work on the car not Top Fuel may have only seven that's the long skinny dragster with with the motor. Ours is the funny car which is shorter, but as the body okay, like like a Chevrolet car, we run commercials. So in the process of that, you probably have 10 Min. To a team. But then you have your hospitality. And you'll have five or six people running that cooking food all day preparing, cleaning tables, taking care of the customers, drivers go in for autograph sessions, all of that. So in the

middle of this, then you have the people that do our media, our social media we have a team of I think four people there that Ron that headed by Sarah, the girl that set this up with you, okay, young lady that said not girl, young lady that that runs, you know, all of our media and stuff. And then we have shooters for social media. And then a lot of the footage comes back and we produce video shows commercials. We do a lot of stuff right here and it seems like it but you were asking about the teams. They do the day to day understand they travel across country they might I had a driver just leave la for Gainesville. It took him a week to get there because he can't drive straight through. They got to stop. They gotta rest. But they're traveling continued my other teams will come out of MD and they will head in to not not Gainesville. They're heading to Charlotte. That's where we're going this week. And I'll be heading there tomorrow morning. So you're looking at roughly 10 people per diem. So that's 40 people right there. And you're looking at media. That's another four, five, then you look at hospital I'll be another four or five. It's a good group, I can be sure that there's some I could, you know, be talking to many, it all changes. And then we have our leaders. Okay. Explain all this. I apologize for talking to me.

20:13

No, no, no. So I'm really interested in, in the car aspect. So the day to day aspect for the car. So it seems like for the car, there's probably around eight to 10 people who are responsible for the driver, crew chief, back a crew chief and kind of the mechanics there. Can you talk a little bit about what goes into that aspect of the team? So you mentioned that you're looking at whether you probably have a lot of different pieces of information that you're looking at? Are you constantly testing things like different fuels, different things that you're doing to the engine, different types of materials that you're using? I would assume that there's a lot of innovation and experimentation that goes into creating a successful car. And so that's one of the things that I'm really interested in is the innovation piece, the thinking of new ideas piece.

21:02

Okay, let's back up here. Yorba Linda. The shop right here behind me is corporate offices here in California. It's got my TV production or theater here, all the stuff and a museum here for people to come. We've done Car Shows over the years, a lot of things changed since the pandemic, but then an ND is where our technology has built is a big operation. It's five times as big as this. This is over close to 100,000 square feet. India's huge warehouses there a lot of rentals on other properties that I own there and Andy, but that's where forests American made is. So that is where my team's house the 18 wheelers, each team has to 18 litres. There's four teams that say then there's hospitality and other 18 winner and it just goes on and on. But in Indy, they build the chasis. They design all the motor and the combinations. We build our own blowers, we build our own heads, we build our own engines, we build our own clutches, we build everything basically. But a lot of it comes from vendors outside. But we build the chasis we mount the bodies. You know, Chevrolet produces the bodies, we take them to the wind tunnels and we come in we mount them put the the den and all the stuff to mount them on the car. And the teams, there's a crew there of probably 40 people that run that day to day. So when you start adding it all up, I got a big group Coursers people there in the offices that do all that but the day to day on the cars after the cars are built designed, and the technology that goes through it. And these crew chiefs that I've got, they're smart men a lot smarter than me. They're wizards. They know how to figure out stuff, how to make it go faster. There's an old saying a drag race and you'll never slow drag racers down put a rule on them, they'll find a way to get around it and go quicker and faster. And so along that

way those cars are organized or put together and my teams are rolling tomorrow morning for Charlotte. When they get to Charlotte, they'll spend a day setting up the audience attempts. The big talk for PT Barnum coming into town with 1000s of other race tapes, okay, or so in the process of this. Then the cars are prepared, and they wait on the driver to show up. We do our media lobbying. I'm actually going to Richard Petty shop tomorrow to film some stuff for Molly one of our sponsors, and for weld wheel. So in the middle of that when I get to the racetrack in the morning, she set it up on the jackstands she's ready to go. And they put me in at the crowds already there. They packed the house they want to hear and smell that Nitro, okay. And they want to see the header fire and the explosions. So I may be different than a lot of interviews. I try to show the people listening to me what's actually going on, and we fire this car on nitro methane. We warm it up, okay, they check it, they look at their computers, they read all this stuff, and then we shut it off. Okay, and then it's ready. Change the plugs, do a few things in the fuel mixtures, nitro methane, and now we're heading to the start line. That is beginning of a day. You'll spend two days qualifying and making two runs a day. Okay, four runs and then on Santas on Sunday. Hopefully, you'll go four rounds, the crews will after they run the car, bring it back to the pits. You know what I mean? They wiped the bodies they repack the parachutes but they tear the motor down to the ground cleared down to the crankshaft. If the motors injured and a lot of times you'll see it and fires out there. So you'll have to get some footage of of a great run when you set national records that are run like I just came through being on fire at one of the ad Pomona. You know send a car burn it up stuff happens lost the whole car today. Close to probably 400,000 just gone up So in the middle of it, they take it apart, they put it together, and it's gone all day long. And that's what the fans get every tickets a fit, pass, they get to watch it get torn down, they get to watch the drivers and, and meet us and talk to us and get pictures and they get to meet the crews when the crews aren't working. It's an ongoing thing. And let me tell you, it's hard to find people that will live this, you know, the world's changing people. A lot of people want to work from home. Yep, the world's changing. We have our people work at the business so we can keep it afloat. And we try to get them home as much as we can. The ones that are in house, in your blender nd they go home to their beds at night, but the road warriors that live out there, yeah, hard match these type of people. And there's a lot of teams out there hundreds, we're doing the same thing.

Jacob Morgan 25:46

So there's a lot of technology and data that goes into the car, right? I mean, it sounds like fuel mixture, like can you give me a sense of what what are some of the things that you look at? What are some of the the elements that go into the car? So you mentioned fuel mixtures, you mentioned like the materials that things are made out of? You mentioned that you look at weather patterns, like how much data and technology are you guys actually looking at it before making changes or deciding what to do? Or is it kind of like once the car is there, that's it, you just get in and it is what it is?

26:17

No, they change it continually. Because the weather changes daily, if you go on one of our trailers, and they've all got it, you'll go in and you'll see three giant TV screens, okay, and that's all computer networks have everything the car did on the run, it shows where the driver is steering the car, if he's over steering it. So that was part of the reason I'm Christ got too aggressive, changed the car around and I got too aggressive and they had to slow me down. So they figured out how to slow the driver down when he's wrapped up mentally, you know, running on living on the edge, we call it. So in the

process of that, you know, mixing fuel changing the percentage depending on the conditions outside of the weather, the heat, the track condition, they got to change the clutch, but all that is putting in to a computer where the you pull it up on the screen and you go, we need less clutch at 200 feet, we need more clutch at wherever. And that's what is going on all day long. And these kids that do it. You know, I've got crew chiefs that have been with me 35 years. And these guys would be bald changing the next generation, most of them have their kids working underneath them, or growing up or the kids on the race car. So it's really it's you couldn't set her explain it if you gave me a 10 hour window. couldn't explain. But it's an ongoing, but it's very exotic. The computer age changed over 20 years ago came on board, you know, but the driver to take that car from a to b Oh, trust me. Yeah, it ain't just put on the gas, they fire the car, they put the body down, you roll into the Waterboxx you do a burnout, you know, to heat the tires to get heat in the motor. You Back it up, you pull up, you stage it that are lifting the bodies looking underneath to make sure there's no leaks, and they send you and then you got a Christmas tree you got to level Yeah, that's probably the hardest thing. Because of my age that I fight with. It's a Christmas tree staying in the game with these young kids. So what do you got to do? You got to live in the gym every other day, I'm in the gym for a couple hours, I have to eat right after diet, right? I can't drink like I did in the old days don't even want to drink at all. What I'm saying is, if I'm gonna stay up with these kids that are half my age, most of them, you know, 18 19 20 years old, you know, I got my work cut out for me tonight. But I really do love it. Yeah, it's not a hobby, it's a business. But I still look at love doing it. love going to work.

Jacob Morgan 28:49

Leading with vulnerability is about bringing together both competence being good at your job, and connection. And that's where vulnerability comes into play. So how do you do it? What do the world's top leaders do? How do they tap into vulnerability in the right way. So that they can lead through change, unlock the potential of others drive business performance, create trust. To figure that out, I interviewed over 100 CEOs and companies around the world. And I surveyed 14,000 employees. And I put all of that into my brand new book leading with vulnerability which you can preorder by going to lead with vulnerability.com. And if you preorder a copy, a hardcover copy, you're gonna get access to some really cool bonuses, which you can find out about my going to lead with vulnerability.com.

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We all talked about what we really disappointed about with ourselves and what we'd like to change.

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The easiest one is COVID Nobody knew what COVID was. You have to rely on a whole lot of people and you have to let people know that we don't have all the answers right?

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You feel incredibly grateful that they trust you enough to share something and makes you feel like what you've tried To create in terms of culture, who's actually happened.

Jacob Morgan 30:06

Tell me a little bit about what's required for collaboration. And this is where I think one of the things that business leaders inside of organizations can learn. What do you do to create a good team environment

to create trust? Because obviously, you have to be able to trust the people who are working on the car because you're driving it. And if they make a mistake, I mean, it could literally be life or death for you. How do you create an environment of trust, of collaboration where people can share anything with you and not feel like oh, man, that's, that's John, like, I shouldn't tell him if I made a mistake. How do you create that?

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You deal with people that you interview them, that's all you can do. But you tell them going out. If you've come from another team, or you've raced in the past, whether it's IndyCar NASCAR, wherever you came from drag racing. You might know the drill. But the majority of what you hire start now is the kids that come in that you kid might have a class one, he's a truck driver, okay. Another kid says, I used to work on the car with my dad. So you got to teach. But you tell them in the first month or so this is bootcamp That's like going into the military. Most, the majority won't make it. But they do it because a road warriors, they love the road, they love that lifestyle. They have fun lead the wives and the girlfriends at home. I don't know how they make it, I survived it. But it's a tough life. And a lot of them. After two, three weeks, they'll say this isn't for me, and they walk away. But then you get to road warriors, and ain't all about what you see on Sunday. You're out there on TV, and you're a hero and you're winning races. It's not about that. It's about loving to do what you do. You love working on cars, you love. I'm in the biggest trailer court in the world now and drag race and I grew up in a trailer court. I'm playing football with a group of guys, but I'm not playing football on drag race. And so I'm out there doing what I love to do. That's what's unique about it, and finding those road warriors, you better be able to trust him. And I gotta say, in my years, there's only been a few that I couldn't trust. You know what I mean? And I don't even blame, I think the work took them down a road, and they just weren't mentally into it. And they made mistakes, but the majority you can, because they know your life's on the line. You know what I mean? We lost a young kid that drove for us, in Gainesville years back, killed in a crash on testing on Monday morning. And it was very hard for me mentally, that I get in these cars, because other people tell me how to build cars. I didn't know how to build cars. I bought them from people that sold the chasis and sold me motors. And that's what I build American Made in Indy. I said, I've got to build cars, that'll protect you better. And I'm not saying that people that built weren't good. But I wanted to know, the cromoly that went into the car at that time. I wanted to know the aluminum I wanted to know everything about and we went to the military to the army to find out if the helmets that we wore were any good. You know what I mean? We learned a lot. Okay, so in the process of that, you got to trust your people. And you and you can't I don't go off to my car, I might have a guy and say, Hey, I watched what you did there. And that didn't look right, you might do that again. But I'll tell you, very seldom, and they do make mistakes as part of the business, but I love it. You know, God gave me I'm not gonna say a gift. But he gave me an opportunity as a gift to do what I love to do. And I've got to live it every day. And I've been through more crashes than fires than anybody. But I've been driving the longest. I am the oldest driver out here, I believe. But what I'm saying is I don't look for retirement. I know I'm gonna have to, it's only a matter of time. You get older and things change. And I'm going to have to change. But you know, hell I've got a movie script already written to do. They want to do three different movies. I've got a book script. I don't have time to mess with it. I work this every day just like my guys work every day. I call last night in India and they were at the shop at midnight. I said wait a minute, you got to go home, you can't work this many hours will lie to you. That's when they'll lie to you. So they're going to get the work done. So they don't even care about overtime money. And I'll pay it I'll

take care of her. But they live it because this ain't just about you, John, this is our team. Yeah, we love it. You may own the dollars, but this is what we do to go win. And Robert heights got that kind of team with Jimmy Brock. You know, proc does my daughter Brittany.

Jacob Morgan 34:51

Yeah, no, I love that mentality. But for business leaders out there who are not in racing, they're running a team. They're running a company where a function in sight of an organization they want to create that same level of trust and collaboration that you have. What advice would you give them? I mean, how do you create that environment where you're just not micromanaging? Everybody where you're treating people? Well, where you have that level of respect, where you have that culture where people actually want to show up each day, you have any suggestions or advice on how to do that in a business context? For example, you know, like, if you were in racing, and somebody brought you in, and they said, Hey, John, you are now the CEO of this company with 1000 people. And we want you to create a great culture here and get everybody to feel just as motivated. And trusting as they were when they were working at John force racing, what would you do?

35:39

Yeah, but it's got to be a way of life, I surround myself with good people, intelligent people, that are specialists in what they do. Okay? It don't matter if you're a truck driver, or if you're a welder, or you're a clutch man, or you service blowers. superchargers doesn't matter what you do. You gotta love doing that. And a lot of these kids come from racing backgrounds, and there's women in our sport that are working on these race cars that are very good. You know what I'm saying? So, what I'm getting at is I build I've surrounded myself with generals, is what I've done. And Am I guilty of micromanaging? Oh, I get beat up by Robert, he'll yell at me on the phone, or you are trying to run everything down to the littlest thing that's happening. You're a pain in the butt. It's what he tells me and I'm the boss. But he's right. I do try to micromanage if I pick up on something, I want to be a part of it. Because I've always been that way. Because I love it. And I work at seven days a week. And I'm guilty of sitting in the Catholic Church, and I'm running numbers in my head, how to keep this thing afloat, when I should be listening to the, you know, the free stuff there. But in the end, you surround yourself with people, and you build motivation. And the key to that motivation. It isn't a paycheck. The key to that motivation is about winning, and it's in their blood. And you'll get some that come in, and well, this is not what I thought, Okay, well, then you're gone. And you won't have to tell them to leave, they'll leave on their own. It's just a matter of finding the right people. And I've had 1000s and 1000s of employees, you know, you look over 50 years, I'm going on 50 years, I've had, oh boy. And you know what, I still look, I still go back to Austin, I still go to Bernie federally, I still go to people, crew chiefs, that are crew chief and on other cars that ran my car, I go to them now and say to them, you know, where do you go about certain things? Because I want to see the sport. Excel, I want to see it succeed,

37:46

what makes the winners? What is it that the winners have as far as mindset that other people don't have? Because, you know, it's one thing to say, Oh, you just got to hire the winners, it's in their blood. But when you look at people that have stayed with you that have gone on and become successful, and those who dropped out or couldn't make it or they failed or whatnot. What was the big difference between them? What what is that winner's mindset?

38:11

Yeah, but it can't be any different than try going on one of these phone lines where you get a date, you know what I'm saying? You don't know. You gotta you gotta talk to that person, get to know that person and try to build a relationship, but you can't with 100 employees. Hello, I can't remember all their names, as well. One of the things that that aggravates me the most, you know that you should but they come and go you you might have a strong team at the beginning of the year and you might lose six or seven. You know, in that period of time, sometimes I lose employees I don't even know that they're gone. You know, I'll get a call from Robert it'll say we let two guys you know in the machine shop go okay, are we let two guys on the team. Go they weren't they couldn't get along together. So the the key you don't know. You got to find people that love it. And it's real quick. When they work that hard. If they love it, they'll stay I even asked him sometimes kid Why do you do this? Why do you give up your life you never get to see your mother you never you haven't seen your girlfriend in three months? You know what I mean? And and how does it work? I've seen more marriages out here go down in this sport because husband goes on the road. It's like he went away to the military. You know and yeah, we we bet injuries we bet life and death. But But I gotta be honest, we don't compare with what the military what they do. Those are real heroes that we look up the police the fire department, the first responders. They're the real heroes, not us. We're drag racers we race We love it. And every now and then, you know, but sports really pretty safe. You know what I'm saying? And but you do lose the fuel on the way. But you'll find that you run a street and get run over by a trash truck. I don't think I answered your question. What was it again?

40:16

I was asking specifically around. What did I ask you?

40:23

You went I was micromanage

40:24

you went on? Oh, yeah, you went on to like this interesting story. So kind of got last, I think it was asking a lot around, if you were running a company, and you had to bring in that kind of that winning mindset, what what does that actually look alike? And if you were to identify the people that become successful, and those who don't become successful, what is it that the successful people have that the others don't?

40:45

First, you wouldn't go out and just hire a big group, and just bring them in. You have to handpick people, that some of them's got to be around this sport, to understand it, but the mindset is out no matter what the position you give an individual. They gotta love to work. You know what I'm saying? They, they got to dedicate yourself to it. It's hard to find people, when you use the word, would you dedicate yourself to John force racing to live this, like you own it? And I've had people get up and say, I want to be honest, and I appreciate the honesty. But no, I don't want to live your company, I want to come here and make a paycheck and go home on the weekends. Well, you don't work. Here we are. And we have people that do go home on the weekends, you got to just go through it. Can't go start a

team and one weekend and put it together and do what we do. But it's like anybody that evolves, there are winners. And there are losers. But then there's the in between the people that just want to be part of something, and maybe win. It's not everything that they need in life. You know what I mean? So why are doctors doctors, because they want to help they want to take care of people, why are lawyers, lawyers, they want to do good things. But what I'm saying is in some cases, but what I'm saying is, you're never going to find a group brand new, to go out and do what we do that I've never seen it done. It's you grow it. And there's teams that are starting now that I say to him, If you keep doing what you're doing 10 years from now, you'll be a world champion. If you can keep that motivation, you're gonna lose a lot of people along the way. But then you get drivers, you get crew chiefs, that live it, because they're the key to making the car fast, and the drivers are keen to win it. And you've got to have people that live every day for winning. You know what I'm saying? Yeah,

42:38

no, no, I totally, totally get it. And it seems like a different sense of loyalty, like in the corporate world. And I don't know how much you follow what's going on in the corporate world. But you know, in business, it seems like there's you don't have that loyalty, right? You see companies just fire employees by the 1000s, whenever their numbers don't look good. And then. So you don't have organizations who are loyal to employees. You don't have employees who are loyal to organizations, because as soon as they get more money somewhere else, like kind of jumped ship. And so but it seems like in your sport, at least in your area, it's different. Like you have that sense of loyalty that maybe doesn't exist as much in the corporate world. Because for you people are doing it because they love it. We're inside of most organizations, it feels like employees are there because of a paycheck, not because they love the work. And maybe that's a whole separate problem in the business world. Why that's even going on. And it seems like the loyalty you've been able to create some great loyalty, which is, which is fantastic. I was really curious if you've ever had, and I'm sure you have. What was the closest near death experience that you have had? I know you mentioned a couple of fires crashes? Was there one in particular that was the the scariest or the worst crash or situation you've been in? Can you describe what happened?

43:52

Well, I know lots of, but I've been out here a long time. Yeah. And some days things go wrong. Maybe the driver pushes a car too far when he should have lifted maybe a driver. You know, the engine malfunction and caused a fire

44:05

was the one for you in particular, that was particularly bad or scary.

44:11

I had a fire in Memphis because it blew up at half track. And I had to ride it out. I couldn't get it stopped burnt the parachutes off. Ended up out in the field over a guard rail. I always joked when they ran up to interview me. I was climbing out of the car. It was burned to the ground. And I crawled out but I was okay. And you're What do you see? Well, I was I'm a big Elvis fan. I was at Graceland. I got a car there in Graceland. But I said I saw Elvis Elvis and 1000 foot and that just the media way crazy. My uncle always said when there's no one there's nothing left to win and there's an the cars burned to the ground. The only thing you got left is a story. And I come from a family of storytellers. And that's what

helped me in my career was You know, tell them stuff. I never lie, but I might embellish. But I crashed. I crashed in Dallas, and they've got it all on video. Actually, me and Kenny Bernstein. We collided, and my car in Dover and it was gone. But it broke my arms and my legs. And they took me out in a helicopter and told me it was done. And I was lucky I was in Dallas, because I went to where all the rodeo kids were. And what was my motivation to come back? The guy said, you'd be lucky if you walk. You know what I mean? And you'll be on a cane properly for a long time because you're a mess. And I've been real lucky. I've had a lot of head injuries, and they've put me in the Miami clinic. I've been everywhere, like the hit you took. You shouldn't be standing here now. But I've got a hard head. So I always survived. But in Dallas, I was in rehab. But I think the biggest thing I wanted to come back and my own PR guy de Densmore was there, like, all he talks about is coming back. And he looks like he's dead laying here in this bed. You know, I mean, I got were, you know, I laid in bed for 068 weeks, I couldn't raise. I couldn't lift my head. You know, because when you lay like that, now you can't move your neck. My neck wasn't broke. But they took me into rehab. And the first thing you know, I remember going down there like this, you know, and the wheelchair be down. And it's like, people are like, Oh my God, that's John forest. He's finished. And I never accept that. But I'll tell you it was the young kids. The Rodeo riders there that come in are six 718 years old, right? And bulls, broken arms, legs, right? And horses. Like, these are the toughest people I ever said, here. I am a grown man. And I'm gonna sit here and whine over this. No, I'm gonna go get well and fix myself. And I did. And I came back I won championships, I won races. And I just never take because I have that drive out to fight. You know, just like when I do your show, I want this show to be the best. I want to give you everything and I'm probably giving you shit you don't need

47:14

Oh, no, it's great. I love it. I'm sure people listening and watching can see your your, your passion for this, which is amazing. And you know, you just don't see a lot of that for the last few minutes or so I wanted to dive deep into a particular topic. It's something I call it the leaders toolkit where we pick it up.

47:34

And I never answered them. Did I apologize.

47:36

Oh, no, you did. You've answered a lot of a lot of these questions, which has been great. And you have this the stories behind them, which I think is very interesting. But for this leaders toolkit section, the last 1015 minutes or so, there are a few things I was really interested in. One is how you deal with stress and pressure. Because I would imagine that you frequently get put under a lot of stress under a lot of pressure when you're winning. When even when you're losing. How do you deal with the pressure? Do you have a routine or ritual that you do? Do you meditate like how do you just focus?

Jacob Morgan 48:13

My discussion with John force continues as a part of the leaders toolkit only available for paid subscribers at [Great leadership.substack.com](https://greatleadership.substack.com) Head over there and click the subscribe button become a paid subscriber today. And if you do so, then you will get access to this bonus episode which we are going to be releasing where John talks about dealing with depression, anxiety and stress, the importance of surrounding yourself with the right people and loving your job versus having a bad day.

What's the difference between the two? Just because you're having a bad day? Does that mean that you don't love your job we get into detail into all of these conversations and a couple others. Again, only available for paid subscribers. Head over to [great leadership.substack.com](https://greatleadership.substack.com) and hit that subscribe button. I'll see you there.