

Corey Andrew Powell 00:00:00

Randy Hetrick is a former Navy SEAL, 14 year veteran of the military and the creator of the TRX system fitness brand, Randy, joins me today to discuss how his diverse life experiences and military discipline helped him build a successful business. I'm Corey Andrew Powell, your host and this is Motivational Mondays.

Corey Andrew Powell 00:00:23

I am super excited today to be joined by Randy hetrick. 14 years in the military, a former Special Operations field commander and the founder of the very successful TRX fitness brand. Now, Randy as a Navy SEAL, you have been deployed all over the world. You hold a master's degree in National Security Affairs, an MBA from Stanford, and you head a massive community of gyms, personal trainers and celebrities all using your TRX workout system. And let me just first, say welcome to Motivational Mondays.

Randy Hetrick 00:00:54

Well, thank you, Corey. It's nice to be with you guys and all I can surmise from, from your preamble there, is that I must be getting old.

Corey Andrew Powell 00:01:04

Well, you know, whatever you want to call it. It's really impressive. I have never felt like. Well, let me just say first, I felt like I had accomplished a lot in life, thus far until I read your resume, and I was like, I'm clearly slacking because...

Randy Hetrick 00:01:17

It's still in front of you, you know, not all of it, but a lot more is in front of you, right? And that's kind of how it goes. I mean, I can tell by your youthful glow that you got plenty of years to go build big stuff still.

Corey Andrew Powell 00:01:30

Oh, well, I'm trying. Well, thank you sir. I appreciate that coming from you. That is a vote of confidence that I will accept and I will hold dear to my heart. So thank you sir. I do want to ask you though with that said that is a lot of accomplishment and it's all very high-level performing stuff. It's not like anything there that was sort of mediocre. That's all high-level performing stuff. So, I am curious to know where you always driven for success, even as a child or young person with aspirations and were you always interested in the military when you were younger?

Randy Hetrick 00:02:00

I guess I would say I was driven to success but early on it was really because I wasn't very successful as an athlete when I was very young. And I think, you know, some of that, it's funny

how life works out. Some of that left a little bit of a what call it a chip on my shoulder, maybe that I was capable of better than I had displayed. And I really believe that.

Randy Hetrick 00:02:23

But I was, you know, I was a, I was a young kid for my grade and a late bloomer both to boot. So it took me a few years to come into my own, and I think during that time frame, I got a little bit of a chip that both to myself, maybe to my old man, you know. I wanted to prove that I was better than what I had done so far and I think it just compounded, right? It's one of those things about when you set off to prove something to yourself, you got to be a little bit careful because you might get addicted to it. And that's kind of happened for me.

Randy Hetrick 00:02:54

I just kind of kept wanting to do something hard to show what I was made of, you know, I think anybody's capable of doing great stuff. If you want to work.

Corey Andrew Powell 00:03:05

In some ways you exploring your own path, was the better path for you, ultimately, anyway?

Randy Hetrick 00:03:11

Sure. I mean, my parents were mortified when I popped up my junior year in college and start talking about the military, right? And they were like what the heck. And I did have a pretty good history of military service in my family tree. And my stepdad had been a Marine Corp platoon commander in Vietnam and I always found that to be fascinating, right? I mean, it was, it just intrigued me as I was growing up. And the war was, I don't know, seven, eight years behind us, right? At that point. But I just got interested in it. But yeah, ultimately I think everybody's got to pick your own path and you're going to make your mistakes.

Randy Hetrick 00:03:51

That's part of it. And that's part of the path is making the mistakes because if you don't make the mistakes then you don't know what the right turns were. And so you got to choose your own path. Because if you're trying to live the life that your parents want for you, it may not be the life that ultimately makes you happy. And at some point along the way you start to realize that it doesn't really matter what anyone else thinks, even your family, right, who you love and who loves you, but they don't live your life.

Randy Hetrick 00:04:20

And at the end of the day, you will be the only one that's living your life. And so you'd better have chosen a path that you think you've got a pretty good chance of enjoying it.

Corey Andrew Powell 00:04:31

And for your path in the military, it's not as if someone sets out to go, I'm going to be a Navy SEAL, right? I mean, is there a point where you're like, I'm going to join the military and then you just begin to excel because you have a knack for it, If you will? You just began to really become adapted to that lifestyle? And then you elevate to that Elite level? I mean, how does that happen for you?

Randy Hetrick 00:04:50

I think it happens a lot of different ways for different people, for me. It really is goofy. It really was a very deliberate decision. You know, I was involved in some military stuff on campus at USC, my junior year with the ROTC program, but I wasn't ROTC. I was not on a scholarship or you know, ROTC scholarship. I certainly didn't go to the academy, which is where most of the naval officers in the SEAL teams come from. I just kind of got this wild hair that I wanted to serve.

Randy Hetrick 00:05:20

I wanted again to prove something, to who, I don't know. I guess we, but I defined my search. I thought I wanted to go into Special Operations and I literally defined my search by which unit had the highest attrition during selection. Which is not a smart way to approach anything. Right? Honestly, in retrospect. It's kind of silly, but it was what turned me on. It was like, well, where do I have the least chance of success and that's where I'm going to go.

Randy Hetrick 00:05:50

Right. And it's probably a pop-up pathology that I need some therapy to help undo. But that's what that was and the SEAL Teams had about an 85 percent washout rate. And when I found that I was like, man, there it is. That's it.

Corey Andrew Powell 00:06:01

And wash out rate. Meaning like people who don't get there, fully?

Randy Hetrick 00:06:05

Yeah. There's the initial selection course is called BUDS/SEAL - basic underwater, demolition / Seal training. It's six months of formal training and about a month of pre-training and during that and it's already pretty hard to get there.

Randy Hetrick 00:06:21

Because there's a lot of folks that kind of have this idea, oh I want to be a SEAL. And so there's a pretty significant whittling process to get down to the ones to the hundred and thirty or so folks that get to class up at the beginning of each of those classes as they go through. And then of those who make it that far about 85 percent either quit, or for one reason or another get what's

called rolled back where they get, you know, they get dropped from the class and they have to pick up with the next class coming through.

Randy Hetrick 00:06:52

Lot of times, rollbacks are from injury. Somebody gets injured. But you know the folks who quit, they just go back to the fleet and give whatever assignment gets handed to them.

Corey Andrew Powell 00:07:02

So I think why that's such an important lesson though is you kind of became a businessman accidentally through your experience in the military. I was reading how well, first, you know, the idea of going out when you're deployed, you guys had to be like the best physical shape you needed to be in, to complete your missions and to execute your missions, just in general. But to complete them, of course, you had to be in top physical condition. And when you're out there being deployed, you have very limited abilities with any equipment. There's no way you have equipment that you can bring with you and the story goes that you happen to accidentally have packed your jiu jitsu belt. And while you were out deployed, you began to use that. Was it sort of like a resistance sort of belt training? Like what exactly did you do with your Jiu-Jitsu belt? That sparked this 100 million dollar industry right now?

Randy Hetrick 00:07:52

It was a very unlikely, inauspicious beginning. Yeah. I was scooping up, a flight suit, which is what we wore when we were planning, right? You know, we just thought that was kind of a uniform for if you were deployed somewhere and you had to spend some time planning a mission etcetera, you always wear a flight suit. So I scooped mine up as I was packing my bags in a frenzy, getting ready to go out the door and I had been training, you know.

Randy Hetrick 00:08:20

I was very much into Jiu-Jitsu at the time. It was early stages of, you know, the UFC and all of the Mixed Martial Arts Movement was really in it and its earliest stages back in kind of a mid to late 90s and I accidentally grabbed my Jiu-Jitsu belt and stuffed it in the bag and I ended up overseas sitting around waiting which is something that the military has a particular affinity for doing. And to your point, we had to stay in shape and I just came up with this idea..

Randy Hetrick 00:08:51

I don't remember why it hit me, but it was a, you know, I'd been a wrestler in high school. So climbing ropes, there's a lot of rope climbing and body weight in the SEAL teams. And so I probably had that proclivity toward body weight training. And then what I really was trying to train for was to get up the side of a freighter on a caving ladder with a bunch of weight on my back. And today, there's a term for this- functional training means training movements, you know, in the training room that reinforce or mimic the movements that you need to perform in sport or in life.

Randy Hetrick 00:09:25

And I just kind of had this idea. Well, there's nothing to do pull-ups on in this Warehouse. What if I were to throw this belt over the top of a door with a knot in it? Lean back hanging onto originally just the belt, right? And then pull myself up as if to touch the top of the door and then and then fall back again, right? The gravity, pulling my body back toward or me lifting that weight against gravity, that was honestly the beginning of it.

Randy Hetrick 00:09:54

And it just, you know, I have this weird. I don't know what to call it. I guess it's a gift. I don't have many talents but that this seems to be one of them, which is to kind of MacGyver stuff together. And I just started macgyvering, right? And ended up with this weird harness that worked really, really, well for a whole range of strength training. You know, and I thought it was kind of clever, because the guys originally mocked me.

Randy Hetrick 00:10:20

Because that's what happens in a Commando unit. Right? You're constantly heckling each other and but then very quickly we're like, wait a minute. Let me get on that thing. Let me try it. And it just it started as a hobby and it kind of came into full bloom when I was at Stanford Business School after I was promoting out of the field. I had a baby on the way and I just decided, alright, well, you know, ironically, the world was pretty peaceful right before 9/11. And so I just made the decision or I will, I guess if I'm ever going to get out, and transition to my next chapter in life. This is the moment.

Randy Hetrick 00:10:54

And so I got accepted to Stanford. And while I was there thinking about business, I was training on my strap. And it was pretty funny because I was training out of the athlete training center and the coaches started asking me about it. And every one of them that asked me about it, and I would go into my story and then they did end up saying, wait. Could you make some for me for my team? And their teams were all different- male, female, big, small, fast, strong, Slow, you know. And I started thinking, well, I am a business school, thinking about business. Maybe I had to take a look at this and that was kind of the beginning of what would become this business called TRX.

Corey Andrew Powell 00:11:30

And when you talk about your road as an entrepreneur, you do talk about the importance of proof of concept when you are advising young business owners, you know how to then go out in the world and maybe execute their idea and bring it to I guess to public consumption if you will, but the idea of proof of concept means you have to put in a lot of work, right? Like nothing's, there's no shortcut. And that's another big lesson to be learned here for young people getting out of college. I think they are watching Shark Tank and they think they are just going to go and

create some new version of the fork or something without really thinking, putting in the work. And so talk a bit about the proof-of-concept, how you had to actually, then go sell this idea.

Randy Hetrick 00:12:16

Yeah. It's so interesting. When you think about launching a new venture Because you can do a lot. There is a question though, one ought to ask oneself which is should I do this. And the answer to that can really only come from, I think number one, your perceived problem for which you have a real solution and I think a lot of businesses make the mistake of becoming solutions in search of a problem. Right? And life is hard, if you are a solution in search of a problem.

Randy Hetrick 00:12:50

Life is a lot easier if you're a solution to a real and commonly perceived problem. So that's one of the places that I would always recommend entrepreneurs start is, what is the problem that I'm solving? And if you have a hard time articulating that and go back to the drawing board because the ready fire aim approach with entrepreneurship is fraught with peril. The ready, aim fire approach is much more likely to get you where you want to be.

Randy Hetrick 00:13:19

And so, I think that that leads to your point about proof-of-concept. You already have something, right? I had this goofy strap that worked to solve a problem. I started with a problem. I didn't start with the idea that I'm sitting there in that warehouse going jeez, I want to one day, become a business guy. I was thinking about a counter-terror operation. And so, you know, and so I have this problem that I was trying to solve, which is how the heck do I stay in shape, when I got no gear? And this became a solution to that problem and then I got into the business of creating a proof-of-concept, figuring out what that even is, and it differs depending on the type of business. But yeah, that's sort of the approach that I always recommend to young entrepreneurs that no matter where they are in their process, that they step back and go, okay. Let's start it with the problem and work forward through to a solution and then prove the concept that it is, in fact, a solution. And, you know, and then we're kind of cooking with gas.

Corey Andrew Powell 00:14:18

That's also tied to something you've said when you advise new business owners, you say to grow the business, find a hack in that area or in that, I guess field that you're trying to create your business. And that's something I read that you told Forbes Magazine and that's also the same thing. It's almost like you know, finding something, maybe to improve upon. But not to necessarily try to reinvent the wheel because there's so many things in our lives every day, I think we all think of, but they're very fleeting and passing. Thinking oh if this were only that - this would be so much easier and if you were to stop for a second and go well wait. I think I just thought of the next thing and bring it to fruition, right? We might have the next big product but we don't do that. I think we sort of let a lot of good ideas go very often.

Randy Hetrick 00:15:06

Yeah. I think I would want to double click on the term hack because people use hack as a shortcut. I'm not sure that's what I mean by hack. If I said that to Forbes what I meant was find a unique perspective that's different and differentiated on something. Because like they're improving on the state of the art is always I think a productive effort, right? Because you've got something that is already there. And if you have a genuine Improvement to it, then you're likely to build on the success and familiarity with whatever that good or service is and be.

Randy Hetrick 00:15:50

And be able to get a little bit of a shortcut in that respect, right? You're starting with something that's known. You're making it definitely better there for people who already consume it are going to be interested to look at your innovation upon it, right? Whereas starting from scratch, which is what I did with the suspension trainer, there are benefits and there are drawbacks. The benefit obviously, is you don't have any competitors. The drawback is that you're the fool that has to be out there, with the machete, cutting the path through the jungle.

Randy Hetrick 00:16:20

And get ripped and torn as you go with some other dude waiting to run up behind you and Shadow you, you know, as you go along and benefit from your efforts and that's the innovator's dilemma. Right? There's always a fast follower, who's ready to run up your back with that improvement on your concept that can make you irrelevant. So, you know, there's pros and cons to each approach, whether you want to do something that's fundamentally new or want to do something that's an improvement on an existing good or service, they're different and they both have their merits in their challenges.

Corey Andrew Powell 00:16:54

So I think many of the things you say as an entrepreneur - leader. They also can apply to real life lessons in many ways, right? Things that can get us through our everyday life. And one that stuck out to me that you mentioned in business, that I thought oh my gosh. That's a great concept for Life. Managing risks is different from blind risk, right? Taking blind risk. That was a big one for me when I read that because to me, it just sounds like, you know, be fearless, but be sensible. So tell me what you mean by that?

Randy Hetrick 00:17:21

Well, first of all, I have to commend you and thank you for doing a little bit of research because you're remembering things that I can't even remember. And I appreciate you Corey for having done your homework here, because that's what makes you a great interviewer. Right? Cause you did your homework, and you've got some interesting things to ask and yeah, that's one that honestly, it's sort of been a mantra of mine through life. I am really extremely risk-averse.

Randy Hetrick 00:17:50

When it comes to Blind risk, and by that, I mean things that you really don't have much ability to control, you know, risk that you can't influence at a significant level by your action. So, for instance, when I go to Vegas, I only go to Vegas to lay the Sun by the pool. Go see some shows and go out, you know, to dinner. You will never see me at any of the tables. That sounds strange for a dude who's lived his life in a variety of death defying ventures, right metaphorically in entrepreneurship, you're always on the brink of death. And then literally in the SEAL teams, but that's because those risks in military affairs and in entrepreneurial affairs are significantly within your control to manage. And for that kind of risk, I have an enormous appetite. So it's a really interesting and kind of bizarre contrast.

Randy Hetrick 00:18:46

Because I do not like anything that is just a leap of faith. I guess I don't have enough faith. I just want things that, I want to be involved in things that I have some amount of background and, therefore, some learnings, and some skills that can be applied in that environment and affect the outcome, right? That's where I want to be. And that's where I, when I invest as an angel, I invest in businesses, where, you know, I think I can add value.

Randy Hetrick 00:19:20

And certainly things that I take on, as my next project, It's always in areas that I think I have some amount of skill and perspective that can affect the outcome.

Corey Andrew Powell 00:19:31

The idea of never stop learning with the mentality of a warrior is something that I believe or within that context, you said. Now in your case, you could take that very literally because you are like Mr. Physical climbing up stuff with a belt. So, I mean like you actually are a warrior. But in the metaphoric sense that applies to, I think, everyday life. That applies to the young person who we are talking about now, who's about to get out of college, and he's wondering about what's next.

And this idea that college is your endgame before you get a job, but what I take from what you're saying is, no everyday you wake up should be another opportunity to continue to grow. Continue to blossom and bloom. I believe that's sort of what I get from that. But tell me what you mean by never stop learning with the mentality of a warrior.

Randy Hetrick 00:20:20

Yeah, well, I think the idea of never stopping learning is critical because it means that you're paying attention in life. Right? And I have made gosh, I mean, innumerable, mistakes on every level. I try not to make the same ones multiple times. Although I'm even guilty of that. But all of those mistakes, they're the things that you really remember, right? If you're paying attention because they sting. And they require personal accountability. And you know, that's never fun. It's

always fun when the outcomes are positive but it's never fun when the outcomes negative and yet you have to do it.

Randy Hetrick 00:21:04

So when I talk about sort of always being willing to learn, that's really what I mean. You should be taking new challenges to stretch yourself all the time so that I really believe that by the time that I'm even more of a geezer than I am now, by the time, you know, in my late 60s, or something, I want to be at the maximum utility that I've ever been at in my entire career.

Randy Hetrick 00:21:29

Well I can't be that physically. That's a losing battle. I can never be as good as I was in my late 20s. When I sort of, you know, most guys hit their peak between late 20s and 30s. So, how can I still be the best version of me ever? I could have paid attention the whole time and learned and kept putting myself in positions where I wasn't comfortable. Where I maybe didn't have the skill set that I wished I had.

Because if you do that, then the brain keeps evolving and keeps. It's a muscle, right? It keeps getting trained and you become, instead of being this old kind of washed up entrepreneur that time passed by, you're like Yoda. Because you've been paying attention man, and at that point, you know, all those years of experience come together.

Randy Hetrick 00:22:20

To make you as if not omnipotent, as smart as you're ever going to be. So that's what I mean by continuing to learn. And then, the warrior mentality is an interesting thing. I thought a lot about how to apply that in business and in life, and I think it really comes down to kind of two things. If I had to distill everything that I learned, as a SEAL into kind of two commands. It would be prepared. So you can be in charge.

Randy Hetrick 00:22:49

And I was just having this conversation recently with one of my teammates from Outfit, which is my new startup, and I was explaining to her that look, you have to be prepared in order to be in charge and I'm sure this would be familiar Corey to you And everybody else that the times in life, when you are generally the most nervous are when you realize that you are insufficiently prepared. When you're prepared right, you're prepared for this interview, I can tell and it shines through because you're in charge of this interview, right?

Randy Hetrick 00:23:23

And that is critical. And I think that for the young folks that are listening right now, honest-to-goodness. If I could give one piece of advice, it would be that. Be prepared. Do that hard work to really know your stuff so that when you step onto the podium, wherever that is,

could be in front of your team, could be in front of your boss, could be on an actual stage, could be with a client, it could be in front of an investor.

When you step on that Podium, you're confident, which means you can be in charge. You can command that audience and have them going Wow. This cat is good. Right? I want this cat on my team. I want to invest in this cat. I want to buy this person's products, you know, whatever it is, but it really comes down to that. It's hard to do. It's one of those concepts that you know as they say is simple but not easy. Be prepared to be in charge, to me is is a life's truism if you want to be a successful business leader.

Corey Andrew Powell 00:24:28

I will say, thank you for that compliment as well, sir, because, you know, normally we have our guests booked for the show, maybe a few weeks in advance. And when we had the opportunity to speak to you, I said, oh well great. I only have like one day this week. And if he could give me that day, I would love to book him as a guest and so Randy, and I can talk about his life and what he's accomplished.

And that gave me, when you did confirm, that gave me like less than 24 hours. Whereas normally I have two weeks. And so you are so accurate. When you say for me, the worst thing would have been to be unprepared to sit here and not have given you the respect of putting in the work. So we can have a real substantial conversation. Our point is to help people and to give them information and knowledge. And so I agree with you. Part of why I was prepared was because I wanted it to be a quality product that we're going to put forward with this conversation.

Randy Hetrick 00:25:21

Isn't that funny that sometimes, when the time frame is compressed, you also do good work because you gotta dive in and dig in and it's all sort of injected freshly in your brain. If you had a couple weeks, you know, you do a little bit here and there by the time you get to the interview, you might have forgotten maybe about some of the stuff. So, you know, there's always a way to make lemonade out of lemons if you're looking.

Corey Andrew Powell 00:25:49

Thank you for listening to motivational Mondays presented by The National Society of Leadership and Success, available Wherever you listen to your favorite podcast. I'm Corey Andrew Powell and I'll see you again here next week.