

**Crisis Response Projects with Greg Miller**  
***The Shred Coach Podcast Transcript***

**TOM**

Greg Miller, welcome to The Shred Coach Podcast. So, tell me a little bit about your shredding business.

**GREG**

Ah, thank you, Tom. Thanks for having me. I really appreciate, it's great to see you here on my screen. Yeah, we are an independent shredder here in the Denver, Colorado market. We started our business back in February of 2019, but we didn't get our truck until July of '19. And that's when we first started taking on customers.

We service anywhere from 70 miles to the north, which is Fort Collins, Colorado, beautiful town up in Northern part of Colorado and 60 miles to the south, Colorado Springs. And then about 30 miles outside of Denver, east and west. And that's really our service territory. We do that all with one truck right now. We have a 2019 Shred-Tech. And we've been doing that, like I said, since July. And we're often running. We've got three full-time employees right now. We've got myself. My nephew, Spencer is my operations hand. Then we have a full-time driver, a shred operator, and then we have two part-time employees as well.

**TOM**

Wow. So, this is a really cool. One of the things I love about talking to different people in this industry is, it doesn't matter the size or shape, but a single truck, you're employing three full-time people, including yourself, but also two part-timers, which means you're helping the economy so good on you for that.

**GREG**

Yeah, thank you so much. We do that. And part of that is, is we do a lot of stuff, right? We do paper shredding. We do hard drive shredding. We do electronics recycling. We do product destruction. We do a lot of different things that have been packed onto this one truck that is oversold and we need to solve that.

**TOM**

Wow. Okay. So, it's purely a shred truck, but you're also doing hard drives. How, like- electronic destruction, are you actually doing destruction through your hard drive shredder on the truck?

**GREG**

Yeah. So, we do the hard drive destruction on the truck, and then we partner with our clients to then recycle the remaining components.

**TOM**

Got it.

**GREG**

So, the towers, the monitors, all that kind of stuff. We really solved that solution for them too, because, you often take the hard drive and then they're left with everything else. They're like, "Well, what do I do now? That doesn't help me." You know? So, we've solved that problem for them here in the Denver market.

**TOM**

Got it. So, do you have a, I guess, a plant or a small office-type warehouse that you're running out of?

**GREG**

We do. We office out of Arvada, Colorado. And what we have there is our, you know, administrative offices where we'll take drop in business as well. And then we have a warehouse where we'll bring that material back, we'll inventory it, and then we'll start to disassemble it into the components that make the most sense. And then we use an R2 recycler to recycle those remaining components for that customer.

**TOM**

Got it. Okay. So, while running a single shred truck, you said you're oversold on that sucker. And you're adding these ancillary services to really generate additional revenue at, without having to necessarily increase your costs at this point. Sounds like a truck is in your future, though.

**GREG**

Our trucker is going to be delivered late July, early August this year.

**TOM**

Nice. Nice.

**GREG**

Which is, six months too late, Tom, cause I was very conservative in my purchase. My nephew was bugging me for six months, "We need a truck, we need a truck." But my financial frugality got me, but now I've made that commitment.

**TOM**

Good, good. Well, that's great to hear. All right. Well, you know the whole focus of this show is a strategy, tactic or tool you've implemented, or a resource you've done that's had significant impact on your business. And as is always the case in the show, I don't know where you're going. So, tell me what's going on. Tell me what you've done or what you've implemented that way.

## GREG

You and me both. I don't know where I'm going either, Tom. So, here we go. You know, I was looking at- cause I've watched it, you know, I listened to Lucy and her solution and Nate and Cory and just all the others that have been on the podcast. And what great ideas they've had, right? And not that I'm trying to come up with something unique. I'm just going to- this is something that worked for us, right? And what it all starts with is... and I'm not an entrepreneur. I am not. I worked for fortune 500 my entire life. I worked for the big guys, right? I sat in an office and told managers what I think should be done. And then I just got out and became an entrepreneur. My father was not an entrepreneur. I listened to, you know, people who had fathers that pushed him into being entrepreneurs. And I love that. And so, this has been a battle for me. It really has, which is why I employed a coach early on to really help me out and ask me some questions. Namely you, to really drive me into focusing on what does this mean to you to have your own company?

So, in looking at that and looking what your prior guests have done, what I would say has been our biggest... it's not a strategy because our strategy is be the best customer service provider. Everybody does that, right? That's not what made us successful. I don't have many software solutions right now. We're getting into that. My resources are really just 20 years of experience in the industry. But with big companies. The tactic we took was...

Purge is a very big part of our business. Right? We have 80% of our business is really traditional shredding. Company calls you, they need some bins, you get them, and then you just show up. That happens. You bill them, they pay you. It's not rocket science. It's very easy. What we saw early on was, we had the ability between my sales approach, my nephew's operational and detailedness, to turn large opportunities for one-time business into projects. So, they're not just, "Hey, we got 500 boxes in the basement of a building that just fell down. Can you help us? How much is that going to cost?" It was, "We can, but we have to be the project manager on that. So, I have to provide you with a scope of this project, a timeline, who are the teams that are going to be involved, who else do I need to bring in to do this right? Because my main goal is to take care of your data."

So, we have 20% of our business is what I call "large project in turmoil." Okay? It's someone that has wet paper. It's someone that is being kicked out of a building tomorrow and they're being sued and we have to provide some solutions for them. It's someone that has a lot of hard drives, but they're all in a data center and they don't even work here. So, everything has to go, not just the hard drive. So, what we did is we transitioned that into, "Alright. My project team is going to present a lot of different options for you. For two goals. Is your goal saving money or is your goal saving yourself the time and the hassle to take care of this purge or this project? Right? We can do both. I'm going to show you. Here, if we do everything for you, everything's going to be gone. You're not even going to have to touch it. It's going to be more expensive. Or do you just want the data gone? Well, then we'll do that too. That's going to be less expensive, but it's going to be involving you. You're going to have to get your employees to do part of it. They're going to have to palletize stuff. They're going to have to pull it off the shelves. They're going to have to do different things with it."

**GREG (cont.)**

So, it really has worked for us to approach large opportunities as a project management team versus just a, "Here's what it's going to cost to shred that because there's boxes that are leftover." Right? There's other things you just- we've really taken on that task of saying, "What's your main goal, to save money or to just have it gone?"

**TOM**

Right. So, you come from, and you don't have to say the companies you came from, but you came from the large multinational, shredding companies, national or multinational, and worked in management there. Did this concept of a specific project on those boxes or that stuff, those situations that are not pleasant for the client, did this come from back there or was this something that, since you started your own business, you saw a niche that emerged for you? What was the Genesis of this?

**GREG**

Yeah, it came from when I started my own company, because when I ran... and I was with Cintas for a while, I think you remember Cintas right? Then I moved on to another company and we couldn't do these things for our customers because of the other departments that would get involved. You'd have to bring in compliance. You'd have to bring in human resources, environmental safety, all those people. And all they wanted to do was say, "No." You know, whereas my customer was looking for me to help them. You know, "I need help, Greg. I need help." I just can't do it. I'm sorry. I- there are too many people tying me down. Yeah, me as Greg wants to help you, but me as Cintas just can't. It wasn't, you know, it wasn't a good match for what they needed, you know?

And what I learned at Cintas is, and they taught me, is I have an extreme commitment to a competitive urgency approach to anything that I do. If I get an indication that a company is in trouble, I want to help them. I'll do it today. I'll talk to you today. I'll come out and see it today. We'll present a solution tomorrow. Even if I have to work overnight, I just have that inside me that says we got to get going on this because there they need the help. And that doesn't come from me just being a good person. It comes from me also wanting to bill high dollar revenue.

**TOM**

Right.

**GREG**

You know? That's what we need to do as a company. So, that competitive urgency I learned within Cintas has really driven this so that I can be this project manager on these.

**TOM**

Okay. So, some of the questions that are popping to mind right away are, to be a project manager, you go into a situation and you observe what's happening. You used a term earlier, sort of crisis situation. What was the term you used? Large project crisis. How did you say that?

**GREG**

Yeah. I don't remember, but, yeah, it is a company that's in crisis. Right? They have something going on that they can't solve that involves my industry.

**TOM**

Right. So, you come into this situation and the way you described it, it sounds like you're bringing teams of people in when you talked about it coming from the large company side, you couldn't bring in human resources and legal and all these environmental. But now do you, have you built a team of people to support these projects that are all like subcontractors or partners with you?

**GREG**

Yeah, yeah. Relationships with me, right? You know, a mold guy to come in and look at paper that's been wet; that happens quite a bit. Companies run into that. They then give me the determination. And I may at the end have to say no, but my answer to them, first of all, is yes, I can help you. And the way I can help you as I can get out and just look at it. Right? And nine times out of ten, we walk into those crisis situations and they already have shredding bins and a shredding vendor there, but they couldn't service that. Right? They couldn't. They do the routine service, but when presented with, "Can you help me with these 500 boxes that I got to get out?" They just couldn't do that because their first answer, I think probably was "No, we just do this." Well, our answer is yes, we can help you. And what we've seen is, at contract time, we then get that recurring business also because we were there in time of crisis.

**TOM**

Wow. And it sounds like it's also a place where you can charge premium dollar for the service delivered.

**GREG**

You are absolutely right. It doesn't come from a point of greed. It comes from a point of I'm servicing a need. You know, if I'm going to come in and I'm going to solve that solution for you, yeah, you're going to be paying a premium for it, but I guarantee you, you will walk away going, "That was the right move for my organization."

**TOM**

Right. So, can you give me like an example project in the last year or so that you've taken on, without disclosing names or anything like that, but just an example project so we can get a feel for what this entails?

**GREG**

Yeah. So, we were asked to shred 750 hard drives at a data center. And we put a bid in and it was, you know, a fair bid and their biggest sticking point was, "That's great, but it's in a data center, they're still in the servers and we gotta get out of that data center by the end of March, or

we're going to be paying another \$20,000 for renting that thing. Can you do everything?" Well, we haven't done that. You know, we have never taken a server room apart, but I said, "Yes, can I get in and look at it?" I went in and looked at it and what it is screws and shelves. And all we had to do was get our eyes on it, present them with, "Here's the timeframe. I got to bring in five of my people to get this done in a day. We'll palletize it. You guys can pick it up. It'll be clean, done, hard drive shredded onsite, all in one vendor. You don't have to bring in another vendor to do the servers and another vendor to take care of the racks that they're in." We took care of everything by just looking at it as a project and turning it over to Spencer and saying, "Spencer, set it all up. We're on that day. We're good to go."

**TOM**

You have to observe this. And I think, you know, historically this industry goes in and especially with larger numbers of boxes, let's say, or, you'd go in and look at it. But the distinction I'm hearing from you is you're going in and observing the project behind the request. Right? Which is there's shred the hard drives. But the project behind the request here is, this data center's full of stuff. We don't need it, apparently, we just need to get it out of here.

**GREG**

Exactly. Yeah. It is looking at the other opportunity that's there, and if I can wrap up the whole business, I know I'm getting the hard drives. But then I'm able to bill for the rest and they really are high margin stuff. If you're looking at driving your high margin, you know, or you're looking at increasing your margins, that's just a great way to do it is really look at yourself as a professional problem solver that has a project mindset that can help someone that's in crisis.

**TOM**

That's such a good line. A professional problem solver who has a solution to help people who are in crisis.

**GREG**

Yeah. And there's a lot of them, right? Especially right now with companies downsizing and trying to get out of rent and trying to then bring people back into their offices. And it's really a time of these companies struggling to understand what's next for them. And we've just been able to... you know, and we present solutions where they could take on a lot of this themselves and save some money. That with the labor market and the toughness of finding people to work, it's tough for them to have that. Turn it over to us, let us come in and we'll do it after hours, if you need, you know, whatever it is we go in and we listen to and we just then build a project for them.

**TOM**

Yeah, and it sounds like you're also providing what you just said is some options within this project. But a lot of times what people want is the problem to go away, the crisis to be resolved. They don't want to now reinvent their own internal process for figuring out how to engage with this. It's just like, write a cheque and make it go away.

**GREG**

Absolutely. You know, the records director does not know how to get a hold of the dock manager on what the hours are we can get out of the dock, right? And how to get an after hours pass on the elevator. Well, I go out and do that for them. I go to the building and do that for them so that they can do what their main job is.

And it's about, like I said, about 80% of our business is traditional, what we're all doing. Right? We deliver bins, we shred, we do smaller purges too. But 20% of our businesses is this really high margin problem solving. And at the end of the day, Tom, I'll tell you, it makes us feel good because we're helping someone there. You see the panic in someone's eyes who maybe didn't plan right, and you say yes, and solve it. That's a good feeling.

**TOM**

Oh, yes. So, a lot of times there's these really cool things that show up and so 20% of your business, and, you know, it sounds like Pareto's law right now, 20% of your revenue comes 80% of your... whatever, there's some models around that whole Pareto Principle. But what's interesting to me is this is likely fairly high margin business. But inevitably in all of these kinds of things, they're not just perfect runs. They're not just perfect things. What are some of the obstacles you've come across as you've processed some of these large crisis projects and how have you processed them for yourself?

**GREG**

Yeah. You know, availability of extra trucks, right? Cause we've got to move some of this stuff with a box truck. We don't have one. So, during COVID a lot of people, you know, were renting box trucks for whatever reasons, it was hard to come by. Well, you just have to keep digging in. And the reason you have to do that is because you made someone a promise. And with my competitive urgency, last thing I can do is go back to two of them and tell them, "Whoops. Sorry, I didn't plan for that." So, those are stresses, you know, when you present to a company at a high dollar bill that you're going to solve a problem, you have to be able to do it. So, the critical thinking that I learned in college, the problem-solving ability that I learned in college really comes in useful because you just have to keep checking things up. Fluid doesn't have a truck. Okay. Enterprise doesn't have a truck. What about my best friend from high school? Does he have a truck? I have to figure that stuff out.

**TOM**

Yeah.

**GREG**

You know? So, you just have to keep going down the line if you're making promises because I can't and I'm committed to not having anything below a five-star review.

**TOM**

Mm, wow. That competitive urgency instinct with the decision to get a optimal result from a client review pushes you to a certain type of thinking action that inevitably drives how you make decisions, how you, you know, seek out your friend's truck if that's... it just forces you into that.

**GREG**

Yeah, it does. And it can be stressful, but it's also a fun part of the business. Because I don't- you know, we have a mission statement. We have a view of who we want to be, but that's different than when I first started with you back in 2019. We can be more of a company than I thought we could be. As time progresses, we're really reinventing ourselves every six months because we're seeing where is the need and can we do that need good? If we can't, we're not going to do it. Well, that's not our bailiwick. But if we can do it and the customer's happy, yes. We'll look at doing these things.

**TOM**

So, if you had to make a recommendation to another shredding company, related to what you've done, you know, you've talked about here, how and what might you recommend to them related to these large project situations? What would you encourage them to think about, do, consider as they implement this?

**GREG**

It all starts with, yes. You have to tell them, "Yes, we can help you, but I've got to get eyes on it. I have to know what your decision-making strategy is. Is it saving money or is it you have to get this done?" And then just go with them on that and talk about it. What is your goal? And really that's it. You just have to say yes.

And in the end, like I said, there's been a few that we've had to say, "Oh, it's not what you presented maybe, Mr. Customer. We cannot do that." But if I were to the first thing, when someone says we got some wet paper that might be moldy. If I said, no, I wouldn't have billed them \$7,000. Because we went in and we did the research. Right? We saw what pipe it leaked from. It was just a water pipe. It wasn't a Blackwater pipe, right? There was no mold. I brought my friend in, who was a mold remediation expert. There wasn't mold. So, we were able to take that on. We felt comfortable doing that and we did it at a premium, but it was cause I said, yes.

**TOM**

Yes.

**GREG**

If it was Cintas back in the day, I probably would have had to say no right off the bat.

**TOM**

Yeah. Yeah. So, you said this is 20% of your business. And I love this idea, but one of the things we talk about is, you know, what's the value and I want all of these shows to be worth \$10,000.



**TOM (cont.)**

So, you just said to me that project with those potentially moldy, wet papers was a \$7,000 project. So, just being able to say yes to these crisis situations already netted you, in one project, \$7,000. So, there's money to be made in thinking this way, in thinking crisis situation, turning it into a project, delivering options, and then fulfilling with this quest for a five-star review.

**GREG**

Absolutely. That is one of the smaller crisis projects that we've completed this year at the \$7,000. So, we have turned, these crisis projects into a really good chunk of money for the company. And I, you know, I hate to break it down into money, but that's what it is. It drives our revenue.

**TOM**

Yeah, well, and that's how we measure a critical part of business success is through the financial metrics of our companies. So, it's a critical piece. So, that's really good. Really, really good. I love how you've approached this, how you've thought about it. And I believe if you're listening to this right now, you've gotten a \$10,000 value out of hearing how you, Greg, talked about this and using this in your business. So, thank you.

**GREG**

Absolutely. Thank you so much. I look back to the questions you had me answer of rather straight of you're going to die in six months. What do you do? You're going to die in 24 hours. How do you approach life? Those questions you asked me in our sessions early, you know, years ago really is now start to take on more meat and more meaning to me because now I'm three years into running this business and now those answers are different.

**TOM**

Yeah.

**GREG**

So, you know, it just, I thank you for, you know, involving me in the podcast and also, you know, kind of help me to ask the questions of what is life to you? What does it mean to you?

**TOM**

Yeah. And for me, those questions that I often ask people as they get into business, or as they're struggling with something, the job of your business is to serve your life. That's ultimately the goal. And without asking those questions, a lot of times we flounder because then a different strategy becomes the focus of our orientation, as opposed to what serves my life.

**GREG**

No truer statement you told me is, is this company... You don't work for this company. This company has to work for you, Greg, and you have to determine what that means. And now I'm three years in. I'm getting a better idea and this project mindset, this very satisfying, "Greg, you

guys helped us so much. We never would have gotten out of this situation without you." That really serves me. And that comes from the company. So...

**TOM**

Yeah, really good. So, two interesting things I learned about you as we end the show. And I just, I never knew this about you, but I went digging. I went digging before we interviewed and, you years ago worked for a company called Accounting Principles and you were there a significant amount of time. So, what was that about?

**GREG**

Yeah, I was... I started out as a head hunter, a recruiter. In the good times people were paying us high dollars to go out and find them good employees. And to be honest with you, I was in the accounting and finance world, I don't even know what depreciation means, Tom. I can barely add. But what I could do was get on the phone and talk to people about what the company I was representing needed. And it was good. It was fun. I would just cold call all day into different manufacturing companies. If they needed manufacturing accounting, or if they needed gap accounting, I would call into companies and get into departments there and just network my way through to find somebody maybe who wasn't as happy at their job as they could be and introduce them to a new company and hopefully find them a job.

**TOM**

So, how did that experience... how *has* that experience infected what you do now?

**GREG**

It taught me to at the end of that phone call, ask the question of, "Well, who else can I talk to?" If they told me "No, now I'm happy. I'm making a great salary and I love my work." "Well, do you know anybody in your department that isn't or anybody else I can talk to?" It just gives me that next call to make, and I do that with our customers now. Right? If they tell me no, they don't want my recurring service, that's fine. That's excellent. Do you know anybody that could? You know, who do you work with? Who's another bookkeeper or, you know, what about another dealer's car dealership? Do you know anybody that's struggling with their current vendor? So, it's just always asking, you know, taught me to try to get another phone call out of that call.

**TOM**

Fabulous. Well, Greg, it's been an absolute pleasure. Thank you for sharing your perspective, your wisdom, all of the cool insights learned over this last three years, three or more years now of building your business and I think this will be of great help to other people. So, I really appreciate you doing this with us.

**GREG**

Great. Thank you, Tom. Thank you, guys, so much for having me. I appreciate it.