

**Bank the Box with Gary Wright**  
*The Shred Coach Podcast* Transcript

**TOM**

Gary Wright, welcome to The Shred Coach Podcast. How are you today?

**GARY**

I'm doing well, Tom, thank you for having me on. How are you?

**TOM**

I'm great. It's really good to have you. So, let's set the context. Let's get some big picture details about your company, the company you're a part of, how it relates to shredding and just kind of gimme an overview of what Gary Wright does in the world.

**GARY**

Yeah. So, the company is Williams Data Management. I'm the Vice President of Operations in my 29th year. We're based in Los Angeles. We cover four major counties in Southern California, but we go out to six, which is part we do a San Diego run and we do a Ventura County run as well. So, we cover lot of ground for the shredding site as well as scanning and records management as well.

**TOM**

Got it. So, your shredding operation, because obviously you talked about the data management part of the company, which has been a long time in existence. I mean, you've been shredding for a lot of years too, but tell me more about your shredding operation now. How big, what kind of toolkit are you using, mobile, plant? Give me a rundown of the shredding business.

**GARY**

Yeah, so it's definitely mobile. So, we've been in doing shredding since about 1998. It was originally farmed out when, you know, mobile was kind of foreign to us still. We really jumped into the mobile game about 2013 when the conference was out here in Anaheim at Disneyland. So, we're running three mobile trucks now, and one hard drive truck that we repurposed one of our bobtails into a fully functioning office on wheels for hard drive shredding. So, it has its own generator. The driver, the guys can scan the serial number, it has WIFI. So, it's an established rolling office for hard drive stuff. And clients really have jumped on that. They like the additional kind of privacy security portion of having a vehicle like that. So, we're not shredding our hard drives on our shred trucks anymore. It's strictly used by that repurposed vehicle.

**TOM**

Oh, nice. And so, that's a completely integrated hard drive destruction vehicle that's... and then like when that pulls up and you do a job for a client, do you have basically the shredded

remnants of the hard drives left? Are you doing more? Are you pulling it out of equipment and separating it or are you just dealing with hard drives on that machine?

**GARY**

So, we'll do a little of both. So, if we have to do any pulling it from the tower, we're going to charge a labor fee, but we're basically shredding inside that vehicle, having the remnants secured into the units that are contained within the vehicle itself and then proper disposal on the back end.

**TOM**

Got it. Okay. So, three active shred trucks. Are they sort of CDL range? Are they a range of different types?

**GARY**

The CDLs are there's two CDLs, which are our Shred Fast vehicles. And we have one non CDL, which is our, the predator, which is an Ultra Shred that we picked up maybe two years ago for the, throughput that we needed and the particle size we needed for a couple government contracts in universities that we're doing here locally.

**TOM**

Nice. Nice. So, because I know you have a large record storage data management operation, is your shredding team basically cross trained to the other parts of the company or is it, are your shredding people your shredding people and your records people your records people?

**GARY**

So, internally they're, you know, in the outside world it would seem like we have two divisions and we kind of talk about that internally, but we have, cross trained them to do both for a couple reasons. One, when someone, you know, out that's unscheduled, they can jump on a route and do the route. That's A. B is if they have, we have clients that do multiple services with us. So, if a client had a file but they also had shredding for that day, we're not going to run two vehicles out there. We'll have the driver do both. And we have the handheld scanners that allows them to scan the, you know, the transaction as needed. So, we try to make it as efficient and economical as possible because it's, tough out here in the LA market with the logistics at times.

**TOM**

Yeah, I can only imagine. So, in Williams in general, what, like how many people, how many staff are you running at Williams right now?

**GARY**

Company wide, we have 27, so that that's all assets of the business. So, seven drivers out there running, and we have 10 vehicles. So, we always have spares available. We have little transit connects to do pop in, pop out kind stuff. So, yeah. And everybody can jump in at any time.

**TOM**

That's great. Really cool. Well, as you know, the focus of our podcast is a strategy, tactic, tool, something that you've found in your shred business to be highly effective, that creates some solid ROI. Describe me yours; what's working for you recently?

**GARY**

So, we just recently started a program that I called, kind of developed out of putting our employees first. And the project, I'll call it, is Bank the Box. And it was derived out of our purge business. Prospects clients don't necessarily do a great job of providing counts for their one-time purges, stuff like that. And we were looking to minimize having to make additional trips out to these stops. So, we kind of talked with our team and kind of hit me one day that, you know, we pay drivers commission now as if they're a salesperson, but how can we maximize our efforts when we're at a stop so we don't have to go back? Because we don't know on these purges, if we're going to see them again.

So, for example, if we had a box purge of a hundred boxes and the driver went out and called in said they had 125 boxes, that driver will then put \$25 in his pocket at the end of the month. So, we pay it at the end of the month to them. Every box over that quantity, they're getting a dollar added to their stuff and it's motivated them. It's reduced our, efficient- well, it's reduced our capacity to have to go out again. So, it's three months in, drivers are loving it. I'm loving it because we don't have to go back to the stop that we've already been to, and it's just kind of game changing. Even our client service staff, I will add them out as well. They don't have to worry about rescheduling stuff. So, it's kind of been a encompassing effort amongst all and beneficial at least these first three months in.

**TOM**

Interesting. So, let me dig this apart a bit. So, your work order, so a client calls in and says I have a hundred boxes, your work order to the driver on your handheld will say you've got a hundred boxes to pick up at such and such a client. You get there, the driver does the review and goes, there's 125. Your driver at that point knows, my job is to collect these extra 25 boxes and I get the benefit from it, basically a buck of box, right?

**GARY**

Yes.

**TOM**

Yeah. What you're saying, and what I'm hearing is your drivers now go, "Okay, give me all the boxes. Like I'll take them, right?" Instead of going, "That's not on the work order" or whatever. Like just gimme an explanation of how your drivers are, like what you've seen in your drivers. You said they're very motivated, but what's happening in them? Like how are they reacting to this?

## **GARY**

One it's allowed for quick decision making. So, one of the things we've pushed here is having self-directed work groups and accountability. So, I allow the drivers to have some freedom, you know, that's, those words might not be synonymous freedom in drivers because they're out on their own little space out there. But at the end of the day, they are the face of the company and I have to have trust in them that they're going to make the best decision possible. So, they have free range to do those and notate on their scanner and their manifest for the day. The additional boxes that they did, pick up.

But on the flip side, they also know is, "These extra 30 boxes I'm going to pick up, is it going to impact one of my recurring stops or another stop down the road?" And that's where the accountability and the decision making comes in that I want them to be comfortable making. I don't want them, texting or calling me. I don't want them calling my ops guy or client services for a decision that could be easily made by them. Because they're standing in front of not only the client, but the boxes and understand the logistics of it.

## **TOM**

Yeah. So, when you first rolled this out, how, I mean, you've discussed it now and you're now three months into it, but how did you initially position it? Because drivers are a tough spot to have right now. And I can only imagine LA is a wicked market to try and find drivers in. But you're rolling out something which seems like you're going to get more work. And so how did you initially position this with them in order to get them to buy in? Because I mean, that's a big part of it selling it to your team.

## **GARY**

Yeah. And I really think it just comes from the constant communication we have. So, we have daily quarterback sessions, I call them. So, you know, quick five, 10-minute hits. This is what we're doing. So, it was an opportunity as I was thinking about it and rolled out the plan and got approval from my CEO that this is something to work. We just had a conversation about it and talked about it. And it's something that let's try it for a month. And the first month came through and everybody was okay, second month, everybody's getting a little better. And third month, it's kind of the norm. They even make little notes on their scanners or their manifests, you know, seven additional boxes, like make sure, make sure you see this.

So, I do that and I track it Excel, daily. And it's not a ton of administrative work. So again, I think everything just circles back to communications. I basically have two rules that I live by, which is good, bad, ugly, let's talk about it. So, you know, that's something I want to try. And the other one is no surprises. And so, I'm not basically going to drop something on them or try something without getting their input. So that's the ownership mentality that I want them to have, and we have that on a whiteboard in the driver area. It's just, think like an owner. So, I want them to get away from straight ahead focus and open up the vision a little bit and start thinking as if they're an owner operator, you know? And if there's more money to be made by them picking up those additional boxes, they're going to benefit from doing so.

**TOM**

Right. And so, you call this Bank the Box.

**GARY**

Bank the Box.

**TOM**

So, give me the reason you called it Bank the Box.

**GARY**

I think it was just throwing things around in my head. It just stuck, I guess, because it's, you know, it's bank as in dollars, you know, it's a dollar per box, you know, you could have called it a dollar per box and it would've been the same, but it didn't. I think Bank the Box excited me more from a wordsmith perspective than a dollar a box. So, that's kind of what I hung on and it's kind of... not kind of, it's hung on and it's taken a life of its own. And the guys are, I think enjoying doing that. And like I said, they get paid out the first week after the month that's ended and it's on their cheque.

**TOM**

That's beautiful. So, have you seen, and I realize this is very early and I really appreciate you sharing this, but have you seen any issues, obstacles, have you already realized there's places there, you know, your idea once you've implemented often has bumps in the road. So, have you seen any of those?

**GARY**

Yeah. So, not so much a bump, but I'll call it a pebble. So, when I originally rolled it, because we have these self-directed work groups and I'm about teamwork is, I had the money being pulled and divided amongst the driver team. So, after the first month, you know, where some people were getting just a few boxes and some of the other guys are getting a little more, you know, they brought it to my attention that I think we should get compensated for the work that we do. You know, we're about the team, but, you know, it was more of, let's re-look at this. So, we've adjusted the team concept payout and went direct individual. So, if I picked up a hundred extra boxes in the month, I get my hundred dollars. If the other guy picked 80, he gets his 80. It's not, we won't be splitting \$90 of that 180.

So, I think that's, it's been a good move. And again, that's where that constant communication comes. Yeah, I touch base with every single person every single day, you know, and this is where these things that are kind of hot on the stove, get it dressed and rectified quickly. I don't want things sitting around where a guy's unhappy because he has to split with five other guys and is not saying anything about it. So, because that constant communication is there, they bring it up, we fix it. Again, you know, goes back to my two rules, you know, no surprises and good, bad, ugly, let's talk about it.

## **TOM**

You have mentioned, and some of us might understand this and others may not, but you've mentioned a couple of times self-directed work groups or self-directed work teams. How do you define that in the context of your business? Like, what's that look like? What's a self-directed work team? And how do you, create that? Or what's that look like in day-to-day activity?

## **GARY**

Yeah. So, the creation of it came out of, we've done extensive personal development as a company. Doug Williams, our CEO, has invested in us as not only employees, but as people because these are skills that are not just useful in the workplace, they're useful in your home life, you know, anything else.

So, that's really where it was developed. We've had many people, whether it's Del Carnegie leaders, we've had sales training, we've had other personal development courses that have allowed us to understand what that is. Particularly, you know, in the driver group where, you know, drivers have the kind of the notion that you just jump in a truck and you drive. It's more of that's their skill as opposed to like, what else does this driver have to bring to the table? What motivates them? Stuff like that. So, that really where it's developed at.

But the idea of the self-directed work group is they basically hold each other accountable. They know what's required. They don't need a me or my ops guy to stand over them and get done. They can make decisions, you know, and own them. And, you know, making decisions is one thing, owning them is another. So, having those two lying together is really what we're looking at. And then the third one was appreciation. So, we, you know, I'm constantly finding the guys. Whether it's through email or in person just acknowledging their team: "Hey, thanks for the help there" or, "Appreciate you covering this for me because I needed to go to my kids' school activity", whatever the case may be. So, it's kind of a combination of those factors that go into that self-directed work group where they work independently for the betterment of the company team.

## **TOM**

And so how has that process or that... it's like a philosophy that you've embedded in the company. But how has that impacted retention, the actual-? To me, that sounds like, you know, for people who are out on the road all day long by themselves to be part of something that they feel like they're part of a team, not just this lone ranger out just collecting boxes or shredding stuff, but to be part of a team I can only imagine has an impact. So, what are you seeing from that?

## **GARY**

Yeah, so that's one of the things I get asked a lot about is retention. We just celebrated our hundredth year as a company in March. So, our driver tenure-ship is right around 14 years. Our company tenure-ship as a whole is right around 17 years. So, with that comes, you know, the opportunity to... That makes my job easier, but I also know that, you know, you got to stay on

them occasionally, because you don't want them falling into bad habits. But, having that self-directed work group and putting employees first and giving them the flexibility to know that they are first, it's allowed us to retain our people and because the job market is tough in LA, like it is in other places, we haven't had to go out and search for drivers. We've had the same driver staff for 13 years. Plus, we had one that just retired, 2020 was with us for 41 years. So, it's kind of-

**TOM**

A driver that was with you for 41 years?

**GARY**

41 years.

**TOM**

My goodness. So, I'm now connecting this self-directed work group, longevity of drivers. So, when you bring the Bank the Box concept to them, you've already established a massive level of trust with this group. I mean, they're long-time employees who are willing to good, bad or ugly talk to you about stuff because you've worked with them for years creating that habit. So, I can only imagine if you had a very rookie driver crew, you might have approached this differently. And so, I guess my question is, if you're giving advice to another company who doesn't have that longevity of driver but they're wanting to implement this Bank, the Box concept, what advice would you give them that might be different than what you did based on new drivers, rookie drivers, as opposed to veterans like you have.

**GARY**

Yeah, I think the first thing, and I'll mention and I'll give a little historical perspective to it, is put yourself in their shoes. So, if you're looking to Bank the Box, if you're on the op side, or even if you're an owner and you've never been out with these guys to see what they go through on a daily basis- they're not just drivers pulling up to a dock, somebody loads pallets and they're driving cross country. They're grinding and we're sitting in traffic, we're dealing with elevator issues, you're dealing with people at the end of the day that just want their stuff picked up. So, it's definitely put yourself in their shoes. The reason I say that, and the reason why I feel and I know that I have the rapport I do with the drivers and the staff in general is I started at the bottom. I put boxes on a shelf. I jumped in the van and picked up boxes. I've done all that stuff that they're going through. So, I understand 100% what they're coming through.

And that's one of the things probably seven years ago, we do not touch stairs. If there's no elevator, we pass on the job. You know, we did it for a while, I was like, you could charge \$2,000, three thou- you could charge a million dollars. And we wouldn't, we wouldn't touch it because the safety of the employees is worth more than the money we'd be getting because the other thing I'd tell them is like, "I need you today tomorrow, next week, next year, I don't need you for that one job that's going to put you at risk that you're not good for yourself and your family and for us as a company."

**TOM**

Hmm. Yeah. That is such an important perspective. And it's an important policy that you've created, which shows your team how much they're number one to you. It's... like, what I hear you saying and what I think is so profound about what you're saying is it's not just an engagement of a Bank the Box concept. The Bank the Box concept is layered on top of a philosophy about employees, a philosophy of teamwork, a philosophy that has been embedded in such a deep way in your organization that then allows for these things to come and be accepted and provide extreme value to them in the long run.

**GARY**

Absolutely and come back and we've tried stuff that doesn't work and we've tried stuff that does work. But again, it all comes back to all the things we've been talking about to continue to push it forward for us in the best way possible. You know, people are, this is where they make their livelihood and we want them to enjoy their time while they're here.

**TOM**

Yeah, that's really good. So, one of the things I want to do is, you know, in these conversations is give anyone who listens a very high ROI just for listening. And how I kind of find that is how have you found the ROI of the Bank the Box program? How has it been for you? I realize you're only three months in and it's layered on top of what we've already talked about: deep, profound trust in your drivers and them in you, team self-directed work groups and teams, training, all of that kind of stuff. But how has Bank the Box actually proven itself to you in three months?

**GARY**

So, one of the things that jumps out the gate is obviously the fuel cost for us. So, even though we might be in a certain area or certain building. So, we've seen by the guys putting the extra effort, yeah, it's adding a few minutes on their time, but the fuel cost has been one of the ways that we've reduced our expenses when we're looking at the purge business itself. So, there's been that. The ability to have the guys- we partnered up guys where they've met together. So, it's reduced the amount of effort that it's taken to get these jobs done. But in three months the main thing is really fuel cost.

There's a little bit of OT. It's LA you know, it's kind of hard to get away from that. But the cost of the OT, if you look at it in comparison to having the guy, a truck go out, a body go out a second time to do that additional stuff. So, if we're looking at it from that perspective, that's another way that the ROI would show itself up.

**TOM**

Yeah. And my guess is also there's that piece of it, which is drivers allowed to not just get their pay for the day but see opportunities to actually increase even, you know, at a buck of box, it's still a number every month that could have implications to their overall take home pay.



**GARY**

Correct. And the one other positive note that's come out of that is they'll do the, you know, they'll do the Bank the Box portion, but because they see they have the additional stuff and we will commission our drivers as if they were a salesperson for us, they are educating the clients. You know, "You might want to consider putting a bin or a console in here", stuff like that. So, now it's, you know, it's trying to get it from a one time to a recurring business where they're establishing rapport with the client that they've just got done servicing.

**TOM**

If a driver moves a purge customer, a one-time purge customer into recurring, what kind of commission range do you give someone like that?

**GARY**

They would get 20% of whatever the signed deal is. So, they would- and they get that upfront. So, we pay our commission up front. So, they would see that the week after the unit was installed.

**TOM**

Wow.

**GARY**

Some people might be saying that's crazy. But you know, when you're commissioning, you know, you're getting \$8 a month, whatever the number is, it doesn't move the needle, but if you're getting \$108 after the unit's been installed, it wakes people up. So, you know, we've taken that as a initiative with the company. And again, our CEO, Doug Williams wants to make sure that everybody is pushing along, selling and moving this thing forward. So, it's been good for them.

**TOM**

Really nice, really nice. Well, Gary, I really appreciate you sharing this. This is a, I think it's worth the price of admission today. And I feel like it's extraordinarily beneficial to anyone, I think specifically, who is trying to figure out more ways to give value to drivers. And I think it's delightful. So, thank you for sharing that.

One of the things I like to do as we end the show is just kind of, I learned something about you as I go digging and figure you out a little bit. And rumor has it that you're a Yankees fan.

**GARY**

That would be a complete lie. So... I'll put it to you this way. So, everybody's like, "Ah". So, I go to the all-star game every year. So, that's been my family trip. My kids are grown now, but they'll still go. So, I go to the all-star game every year. So, I'm a baseball fan first, but I'm a Dodger fan. So, Yankees would not, show up necessarily on my radar only for the fact that it's baseball and if they're the only game that's on... Like on a Sunday morning at 10 I'll watch. I've

driven all over the place to catch a minor league game, but I, yeah, Yankees, Yankees wouldn't show up on my list.

**TOM**

Right. And of course, that was a joke. And almost every picture I've ever seen of you, you're wearing a Dodgers, you're wearing Dodgers gear of some kind, and I'm surprised you're not wearing it today.

**GARY**

Yeah, I did hold off today, you know. But, you know, the next one we do, I'll definitely come in some Dodger garb, for sure. So, I got, you know, I got my bobble heads up here, you know, I don't have my hat on today, but you know, I'll definitely make it a point of reference for sure.

**TOM**

Yeah, you're hardcore baseball.

**GARY**

No doubt.

**TOM**

But it's really cool to have spent some time with you today to hear what you're doing and I just want to, you know, wish you and Doug and the team there a hundred happy birthday years. That's an amazing accomplishment. And, you too, you've been in the game a long, long time from the ground up, which is really cool. And I really appreciate you sharing what you're doing at Williams and at ShredMyFiles and really appreciate your input today.

**GARY**

No problem, Tom, thank you for the time and thank you for having me on.