

Shelley Smith: Hello and welcome to another episode of the culture hour, my name is Shelley Smith, your host and proud owner of Premier Rapport where everything about workplace matters. I'm completely obsessed with workplace culture and I love to have guests on, especially when Elizabeth is tied up, to talk about everything that's going on in their workplace, their lives, and obviously around culture matters. And today, I'm actually really excited because ... well I'm always excited to have guests on, but Andy and I have never spoken directly. And we've talked indirectly through emails and through M60, so I'm really excited to get to know Andy and his background a little bit better. So I'm gonna let Andy actually introduce himself how he would prefer to be introduced. So give us a couple minutes of who you are, your background and why in the world you're on the show today.

Andy: Now thanks Shelley, first of all thank you for having me. I'm excited to be here and great to connect and talk about culture, which it's huge, it's everything. It doesn't just matter. So a little bit about me, I think [inaudible 00:01:13] the 'so what' for listeners is really two things. First and foremost is just being a servant leader and being someone who's passionate about helping people and teams kick [inaudible 00:01:24] between the ears. That's really the 'so what' for me. In terms of how I got to where I am now to find that passion and purpose. I'm an active duty army officer, I'm currently serving as the head of faculty for a University size academic department here at the US Army's Maneuver Center of Excellence. So we work with officers and emerging leaders that are both infantry and armor think tanks. We make armor [inaudible 00:01:51] that's who we're working with here, in populations. In my last assignment, I'll be retiring here in another 18 months.

Andy: How I got here is that, this journey really started back in northern California where I'm from, back in Oakdale. I went to West Point. My sister was in the army, so was my brother-in-law. They inspired my willingness to go join the army. I was a good football player, a good athlete in high school, and I was recruited to go and play army football. That's where I met Jason VanCamp, who you've had on before too. And that's really where I got into this exploration about the mental gain and how to improve your mental gain, through West Point's Center for Enhanced Performance.

Andy: And it started, I was trying to figure out how to break into the line-up. The thing that was holding me back as an athlete at that time, at the elite level, was my mental gain. I couldn't get out of my own way. So I set out for the Center for Enhanced Performance, and as it turns out, the then captain, Carlson is his name; great friend and mentor who I worked with, inculcated me with these skills that became a part of who I was as a leader in my life, and then later brought me on as the department head.

Andy: So long story short, I came back and taught ten years later after multiple deployments and getting married and having kids. So that's why I was working in the Army Center for Enhanced Performance, which is really the extension of West Point's department to export those mental skills training and conditioning out to the army. And that started just like sports psychology started, with elite athletes, started with elite soldiers and special forces units.

Andy: And that's how, after I left West Point, I spent five years working with two US army special forces units. I am not a green beret like Jason, but I did stay at a Holiday Inn last night. A lot of special forces units have skills sets and experience to help them with their missions, and that's what I am. I'm a [inaudible 00:03:59] officer by trade. I was a joint terminal attack controller and that was my skill set. But while I was there I started working with their human performance programs as well too, at the practitioner and program level.

Andy: So long story short, I've worked as a performance psychology practitioner both at the tactical level all the way to the programmatic portfolio level, and that just was really my passion.

Shelley Smith: And your passion definitely comes out.

Shelley Smith: Let's grab ahold of the mental side of that. I know that some of the conversations that we've had with some of the M60 clients is around that mental toughness, that ability to be resilient, that ability to sort of pull yourself out of what I call a funk, or a bad place, or a dark place, or a stuck place. What are some immediate tips, or maybe it's what are some immediate questions that you ask of your team, of your cohorts, the people that you talk to. What approach do you take, I guess that was a lot, to see where people are, and what are some of your recommendations?

Andy: It's really about performance ultimately, and I think that when you talk about performance, we deal with definitions, you and I do, right? So let's define that real quick. I define performance as the ability and willingness to execute tasks at the upper range of your potential consistently over time. Or being at your best when it matters the most, from moment to moment, right?

Andy: And everything we do everyday. We're performing right now. We perform as moms, dads, professionals, all that stuff too. The one thing I like to ask upfront to my clients is, 'cause they usually come to you because they have a pain point. They have a problem, a barrier, right? One of the things I like to break down people who don't, is to really quantify and qualify the mental component to that is to break it down to the mental and physical and say, "How much of this pain point is mental versus physical?" And of course they're coming to me because

it's cognitive and behavioral in nature, but let's use the word 'mental', how much of that is mental? Generally right around that 75, 80% of their performance demands are mental in nature compared to physical. That's how that breaks down. So that's how I like to inventory it, and to put things in perspective.

Andy: And then you asked the second question which is, out of all the skills, experience, and knowledge that you have, what are you doing to develop that mental aspect of your gain? And they may have an idea, and they may not. That's important. But I think it's also important to discern terms like performance versus resilience, and I could break that down if you want to as well.

Shelley Smith: No, I agree. Let me come back to, so 75%, I certainly would agree if not higher, is on a, and I don't know what the final stat is, I'm sure you do, that it is on the mental side. So it's our own blockage, it's our own fear that put us into this.

Shelley Smith: Do you usually suggest a meditation, a journaling technique, is it doing reading and research? If somebody doesn't know why they're stuck, they just simply know they're stuck and it's they know it's inside of their head, they know it's [inaudible 00:07:24]. What are things that you say to kind of get that person to get to the root cause? Because it's one to say, "I know", it's another to go, "But I don't know why."

Andy: I think the first thing is to explain that relationship between how you think and how you behave. How you act and react, and then how that leads to how you perform, right?

Andy: That's a very simple conversation, but to get at the kit bag is what people want, and they want to know what the tools are, but really it's not about the tools, it's about the skills and the application of skills so from the sport psychology standpoint there's a pretty large menu of skills but really the tried and true ones related to self-efficacy and confidence building. So we're everything from self-talk to belief statements, thought-stopping techniques. Another one is attention control. That's a huge one because we have such a deficit for our sensory information and demand for that. Understanding how to be able to use my brain like a weapons system in terms of my attention, and how do I engage a target, either internally, externally. How do I shift that on demand? How do I use my sensory awareness to my ability to control that versus to allow my emotions to control me, especially in a high stress moment.

Andy: Which leads to another set of skills; stress and energy management. And that gets into talking about using diaphragmatic breathing. That's really your mindfulness piece and what you related to was meditation.

Andy: Goal-setting is one of my favorite sets of, in terms of a process, that includes one of my favorite skills. Another one finally is imagery, and that's how do I use all of my senses to create the most vivid, real images as possible to give good quality mental repetition before and after a performance event.

Andy: In a long way I just gave you a snapshot menu of the mental skills that are there. That I'm coming in with to get an inventory, as far as what my client as an individual or as a team, what they want to work on. I prioritize that based on the pain point.

Shelley Smith: Right. Well two of those I think are, are, well they're all applicable to everybody, but I think the viewers can grab into the attention control, I wrote some notes as you were talking. Attention control, and then the final step of being able to imagine it. So can you dive into both of those with a couple more examples, tips, or if you're working with somebody, just to get them started?

Andy: Absolutely. When I'm working with soldiers, and again some of the tap-it applications don't translate to all your audience, forgive me, but everything that I'm talking about has three core competencies, and that's: self awareness, self management or self regulation, and then influence. So when you look at that, and what we have to understand as far as attention, for example, and attention control, is what is my dominant attentional style? Especially under duress, because that's when we have a hard time controlling and managing our attention.

Shelley Smith: Right.

Andy: If you will, too. So understanding what attention is, and that's really bringing my sensory awareness to a target. And that target may be internal, external. So I think the piece here to is the understand under duress, when under pressure, what happens to my attention?

Andy: For me, I get easily distracted by a lot of external information. I can walk into a room, pick up a whole bunch of sensory targets, and it's hard for me to focus. Same thing with the external piece. To understand how attention works from, even down to a neural level and a behavioral level, is super important. And then understanding from there the management piece, which is how do I manage my individual attention based on my deficits and my strengths? My dominant attentional style, if you will too.

Andy: And then from there it really gets into the application of how can I get better engaging on sensory targets and then shifting to those attentional targets as directed, like a weapons system.

Shelley Smith: To break this down into the civilian world, what I heard you say was I use words, triggers. So knowing what's stressing me out, for individuals who maybe deal with their day of firefighting inside their organization. It could be around call-offs. It could be around any OC claim. It could be around some sort of a basic employee relations issue that begin to stress us out. It could be that all of a sudden you've got impromptu meetings or you've got so many meeting that you're not able to actually begin to strategize, let alone execute, and all of these things become mounting, mounting ...

Andy: Hey Shelley, I'm having a ...

Shelley Smith: Can you still ... I think you're frozen. I don't know if our viewers can see that you're frozen or not? Can you still hear me though? If so, we can keep going with the frozen screen.

Shelley Smith: Are you rebooting back up there, Andy?

Andy: Yeah, I'm there. We had a Max Headroom moment.

Shelley Smith: No worries. Flip your phone for me. There you go, alright.

Shelley Smith: So I was saying for the audience, and I don't know if you heard this portion or not, is that the stress levels of a day-to-day operation. Many things that cause that, which what happens is, and I would like for you to speak on this a little bit is, when we get into those funks personally, especially if we are leaders and we have people following us and looking for us for guidance and to be the calming soul. What happens is we don't recognize our own triggers. Our triggers are now pushed upon everyone else that we are trying to be a servant leader for. And now we've completely disengaged, whether it's a small group on an ongoing basis, or we've multiplied the fire that's going on.

Shelley Smith: So what are some things that, 'cause sometimes we don't notice our trigger until it's gone on for a little bit and then all of a sudden we can't shake ourselves out of it. What are some tips or thoughts when you're in it and all of a sudden you realize, oops, I gotta pull myself back but maybe now a little bit of damage has been done. What are some thoughts around that?

Andy: I think you're touching on a couple different things there. The first step for me is awareness. I have to be aware of what my triggers are in terms of, not only am I, like you said, the sensory triggers in terms of, the stimuli that I'm either receiving, when I see someone, or I'm saying something, someone's saying something to me. And that may be physiological. That's the first thing that pops up. You get pre-performance jitters, right? Even I was doing it before I was

talking to you. I'm pacing around and my palms get sweaty, I get butterflies in my stomach. That's my brain's way of getting my body ready to do something that matters to me. Something that's important. So part of that is understanding what's going on and being aware of interpreting what you're up against, is what we talk about in the business, and then it's from there, is understanding is that helping me or hurting me? Or in other words, is how I react effective or ineffective on a normal basis? And then what can I do to intervene in that chain reaction to regulate myself.

Andy: So in this case it may be stepping away from the situation. If you're getting into conflict with somebody else, you are seeing their physiological cues or body language, and if you're locked into that and you're aware of that, and then you can disengage and you can do things like lowering your voice. But I will say the number one thing that you can always do is breathe. And I can't tell you how important it is to breathe, and to breathe properly. Specifically diaphragmatic breathing as a way of regulating your brain and your body. When you think of how very little we control in terms of our internal systems and processes, the one valve you have to regulate yourself is your breath. We can get into that a little bit too.

Andy: I think awareness and then being able to regulate yourself, and understanding what you can control and can't control as well too. That looks as a control is super important. When we understand that we can barely control ourselves, beyond self is this an influence thing, and I know you spend a lot of time with your clients talking about how do I influence the behavior of others? Well the best way you can influence others is by regulating yourself, staying cool, calm and collected, especially when everything around you is really crazy. What I call is VUCA; volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous.

Shelley Smith: I think that, okay.

Shelley Smith: Let's come back to how to help people visualize. I think that was the fifth step that I was counting. Talk to us a little bit about that technique. I love that technique myself. I do it in a variety of ways, from power poses to seeing the after of a talk, to seeing the after of a project, to seeing a team formulate. How can you give some folks some tips on how to do that in a good way?

Andy: Imagery is really, I think when you think about it, is mental rehearsal. And I think that oftentimes our dominant, it's using all of our senses to get good quality repetition and really improve those neural pathways to give us a good advantage in terms of our performance before we actually do something. And the research is really sound in this area. As far as if you were actually do something physically, or do something mentally. If you were able to

complement those. If you were limited by time to actually do something to get quality repetition.

Andy: Apparently Malcolm Gladwell says 10,000 hours for ten years. You think about it you get good quality mental repetition, you could almost double, triple, quadruple that, if you're doing it right. The key thing is, you think about mental preparation, or in the military we call it 'mental reconnaissance'. It's actually seeing a mission happen before you actually do it. Is that really to use as many senses as possible to make it as vivid and real to walk through the steps and what it looks like to have the perfect execution of your pitch, for example, your negotiation of your interaction of you doing homework with your kid. Can you imagine those perfect repetitions with every aspect of who you are?

Andy: So it's easy for people to play the image in their mind. If you think about creating the most incredible, vivid movie that Hollywood could ever produce and it's in your own head. It's interesting to talk to people about what lens they do. Is it through first person point-of-view, or is it looking through another lens?

Shelley Smith: What's the difference between the two of those when you do it?

Andy: The answer is it doesn't matter. As long as it's visited. Here's another thing that's really cool. So what you're doing is that you're actually engaging your prefrontal cortex and you're improving those neural connections and pathways. Neuroplasticity between your brain stem and the motor movement, and what's going on delivered through your prefrontal cortex. Now what's really interesting, when you start leveraging those other senses. Think about how powerful your smell is? Your smell is your most powerful sense that we have and we do not leverage the capability of the nose.

Andy: So you think about just the number of connections we have in the olfactory glands and how that's connected to memories, and vivid memories and good memories. Think about your mom's cooking or your grandma's cooking, right?

Shelley Smith: That's exactly what I was thinking. The house, when you walk in and there's a turkey cooking in the oven and there's an apple pie and, you're right. It immediately clicks on you and takes you back. Got you.

Andy: For me in my [inaudible 00:19:46] days the smell of fresh cut grass on the football field or baseball field, or the smell of chalk, and the smell of resin and the bat and all those things. And there's a feel component too. When you pack all these senses in a really really vivid way, and I'm talking about in a way that increases image that is personal, powerful, meaningful, and then you work all those into your repetition, and it takes practice. It is incredibly powerful and it gives you an edge. But the reality is we only incorporate one, two, maybe three

of those five senses when we're doing [inaudible 00:20:22] rehearsal. But it takes some time, some practice to [inaudible 00:20:26] that.

Andy: And then the other key is when you want to do it. You do not want to use imagery when you're in the moment. 'Cause when you're in the moment you need to have a quieting of the brain. You need to let things happen. If you're incorporating all these senses, you have an active brain that leads to a tight body and that's not helpful. So the best there is, there's a before, or right before, a during, and after whenever we talk about our performance plan. So there's a time and place for imagery, and that's important too, I'd tell your audience.

Shelley Smith: I love that. And the other thing that I'm thinking of is, a couple of things, from a personal standpoint, I've gone to a few different health coaches, and one of the things is that when you're eating to get you to slow down, is actually engaging all of those. They have you go through and close your eyes beforehand. What do you imagine it's gonna taste like? And then when you are doing it, going through and pulling out all the spices to really be able to take it all in, so I was thinking of that.

Shelley Smith: And then the other thing I was thinking is that one of the methods that I made and that I teach, not only for the culture curator certification, but really change management inside the culture, and it's called empathy mapping. So I actually took it and it was north from the marketing mapping, and it's about bringing in all of the senses. You talk about your employees, you talk about the one you're trying to attract, it's what do they think, what do they feel, what do they see, what do they say? And going through those. But when you were talking about that, those were the two things that I was like, "Oh my gosh." Coming to mind it is so true and it's also about being in the moment or with the moment. The endorphins just get so spiked up when you can see it, and you're already rewarded before you've even actually taken the action.

Shelley Smith: And then the afterward is, "Wow this went right, this went right. And wow, the next time I can do this, this, or this." I love that.

Shelley Smith: Well we could keep going, but we're gonna stop because I promised the audience not to go an hour.

Andy: We gotta do it again.

Shelley Smith: I should have, I lost my ear things ... I should have named this something other than the Culture Hour because people always think it's an hour, but anyways. So Andy, final thoughts, if there's anything else that you would like to have our listeners know. And then what's the best way, if we want to know more about

you and about your work. What's the best way that we could get in contact with you?

Andy: Getting ahold of me, to answer your last question first is I'm active on LinkedIn. Please reach out to me there as well. I've gotta really funny Norwegian first name. It's Ingebrit, but you'll see I-A-L. And no those aren't any credentials, those are actually part of my name.

Shelley Smith: I didn't know that. I didn't know that.

Andy: I get asked that all the time.

Shelley Smith: I thought that was something about your initials.

Andy: Don't call me Ingebrit. My mom doesn't call me Ingebrit. You call me Andy, but reach out to me that way. You can also reach me at the Mission 6 Zero website, and my bio contact information is there. That's a company and tribe that I'm a part of as a side hustle. Culture matters, and I think that performance really is what makes cultures really effective. A really high performing culture, cultivating that deliberately, intentionally and is gonna make your teams better. Those are my final thoughts.

Shelley Smith: Absolutely. I love that and obviously completely agree. I know that the more self-awareness that we have, I'm a big proponent on, then you know when to sit yourself on the shelf and obviously to go to others for their motivational needs. So, I love that.

Shelley Smith: Thank you so much for your time today. We definitely appreciate you and hopefully you get some folks to tap into you and ask you a little bit more because you're a wealth of knowledge. If I ever wanted to go an hour I know I could with you and Dr. Sarah Pradlin. And I'd probably just sit there like this going, Uh huh, uh-huh. I don't what you're ...

Andy: Well Sarah, definitely. Sarah, definitely. I respect the heck out of her, yeah. Absolutely. Well you've got high quality people, thank you for letting me be a part of this.

Shelley Smith: Absolutely. So again my name is Shelley Smith from the Culture Hour. Proud owner of Premier Rapport where everything that I do, culture matters. And remember, if you're interested in having your company take a culture inquiry, you know where to find me. If you wanna become a certified culture curator, you know where to find me. And lastly, if you're interested in becoming a member of the Cultures Curators and Conversation, you can find all of that at

premierrapport.com. So until our next episode remember, culture matters because it all starts with people.