

LOCKLEED NEWS



John Mitchell, owner of Cedar Solutions and Fence

| From Ranger to ... What?!!!

John Mitchell is in an exclusive club, one that has few members. Those who join are passionate about their work, dedicated to their customers and loyal to their employees. The club is Veteran Entrepreneurs and John told us why he believes owning a business is the best job for him. Creating that environment – the best of both worlds – in a veteran-owned and family-oriented business.

“I realized that in today's world – we'll call it some of the old school mentalities of work, respect going both ways and a family environment – I will always feel way more at ease with a group where I feel like I belong.

I just decided, why not build something that: 1) You know is quite easy, and 2) You have immediate feedback on the job. You show up, you conquer, and you leave – I think veterans appreciate that.”

How it Started

“I knew as a kid that I wanted to go into the military and enlisted in 2008, after spending about a year after high school as a sales rep. I loved the job but had no real direction – I needed to go somewhere and get out of the funk. The Army offered that opportunity, and I would do it again.”

John believes the political uproar in the post 911 era shaped his views and felt that if he was going to support the War on Terrorism, he needed to fight in it. Special Ops appealed to him, so he went through RASP and joined the 75th Ranger Regiment. He got to Ranger Battalion in 2009 and did his first deployment to Iraq a couple months later. In 2010, he had an extended deployment to Afghanistan and deployed again to Afghanistan in 2011 for about



four months. As a result of a parachute malfunction, he had knee surgeries and the wear and tear from carrying a load of equipment meant he continued in service as a Corporal in the Ready Room.

That's where he learned about management and operations and realized that he liked tasks like building and maintaining websites. John rounded out his time in the service with a year in the Minnesota National Guard. Around that time, he started his first company – 376 Tactical Advantage – a firearms training company for law enforcement



organizations. He also provided executive protection training and conducted security and threat assessments for government and private organizations. He created videos, podcasts, social media posts and other digital assets, gaining skills and developing capabilities while building his career.

Let's Build This!

In 2021, John started working for a fencing company and found his passion, "I really like building things!" In addition to running the crew, he set up the website, Google and other social media assets, suppliers and networking connections. When the chance to buy the company fell through, he decided to start his own company to continue building a business and further his goal of customer service excellence.

"Now my goal is to wrap these things into one big old revenue sandwich. The key is that you build up each revenue stream, experience success with them, become more confident and you realize they compound, and you can do more."

Break it Down

John thinks of goals like a military shooting range. There is a range that has targets from 25 meters to 300 meters – you deal with the close-range targets first. At the same time, you're aware of the long-range targets and start to develop a strategy to deal with those too. John applies this to his business goals: "I take care of the close-range targets like getting the EIN, opening a bank account, and setting up a website. Those are your 25s. Then you hit your 50s, get business cards and start networking." Starting a business, you have a



dream of what the company is going to do in the first few months and the first year or two.

Soon, you hit your 100-meter target and suddenly, you're at that 300-meter target and you're prepared because you kept going after the next target. If you miss one (aim small, miss small), just keep going and every time you hit one, adding another target farther out. What are your 325, your 350, your 400 and your 500-meter targets?

"I have a revenue goal for my company this year, and we have to hit the close targets and work toward the longer ones. People can fail because they forget to put one foot in front of the other and keep moving forward. I continue to do the right thing – give it maximal effort even when I'm getting minimal results – eventually the wins build up." The flow creates momentum so you can keep going.



John said, "I learned that mentality in the military – you are put into situations, and you have to figure it out and succeed – especially as part of a special operations unit. I have to understand, implement and utilize it, and sharpen that tool." Reflecting on his time in the Army, John believes, "I wouldn't be who I am today, and I wouldn't have learned the things that I learned if I didn't do it."

Just Go For It!

Do you ever think, "Man, this could be done so much better!" Veterans have been there and done that, and one of the things we learn about is that physical aspect. It's 10:00 at night and everyone else is in bed. In the next hour you can get a lot done and make a big difference; you already have that inclination to stick it out.

"I say to veterans – push yourself because you know that you're capable of doing it. Do your research, it's no secret what you can do to have a successful business. Veterans are tenacious by nature, so use it to set up a company for people who want to be part of your team. Take care of your folks, build an economy based on hard work and bring back traditions that make a great business foundation."

We can change the world.

Cedar Solutions & Fence (cedarmn.com)

