

Dr. Jessica Herbert - Idea to Impact

Mindy: [00:00:00] Welcome to Analysts Talk with Jason Elder. It's like coffee with an analyst, or it could be whiskey with an analyst reading a spreadsheet, linking crime events, identifying a series, and getting the latest scoop on association news and training. So please don't beat that analyst and join us as we define the law enforcement analysis profession.

One episode ahead time. Thank

Jason: you for joining me. I hope many aspects of your life are progressing. My name is Jason Elder and today our guest has 12 years of law enforcement analysis experience. She started with George Mason University and Fairfax County Sheriff's Office. She earned a doctorate at Arizona State University where .

She was a researcher and professor before working full-time as founder and c e O of IDEA Analytics. Please welcome Dr. Jessica Herbert.

Jessica, how are we doing?

Jessica: I'm doing wonderful, Jason. Thanks for having me.

Jason: Oh, it is great to hear your voice and it is great to catch up with you. It's b been a while since we first [00:01:00] met, and I am looking forward to seeing all what you've been up to since we last

Jessica: spoke.

Indeed. It seems like the, the years fly by and then you're not quite sure exactly how many of them. Yeah, that's

Jason: for sure. Ugh. All right. So how did you discover the law enforcement analysis profession? Well,

Jessica: I think I've always told folks that I have never officially worn the hat of an analyst. And that I have fallen into it much like a few other folks around the country of being good as a officer and detective, but also just being, , both analytically , information technology inclined.

So I fell into doing an analytical work as a means of being a detective and supporting my unit for those Request over time, and that's probably gonna age me in the professional a little bit when we went from highlighters on PDF sheets for cell phone analysis to excel.

And now [00:02:00] to social networking and other kind of you know different computing approaches to it. But it was just that critical thinking as well as the ability to sp see patterns across various data points. You know, to reach an end goal of. Of an investigation that kind of introduced me to the analytical world.

Jason: .

So you were a detective for about 10 years with Fairfax County Sheriff's Office there in Virginia. We're talking about the 2001, 2011 timeframe where we were dealing with PDFs. Thank you for that reminder. Yes. So but I, when you think back now, during that time , what comes to mind as.

Being a detective

Jessica: there. Yeah, it was an interesting time being in the Northern Virginia area, knowing that nine 11 really impacted the way that law enforcement approached you know, safety and security and its community. So that's one thing that was significantly changing. I think I tell people all the time that my experience as a law enforcement officer in that area is very [00:03:00] unique to include my counterparts sometimes just because everybody was in different parts of their career and different functions around the nine 11 timeframe.

I think the other aspect of it is, is that right? We were detectives before Facebook and a lot of this social network and social media stuff was available. So it was I always think about this digital transformation that this entire world is going through. And you know, we have generations that were analog only and then generations that were analog to digital.

And then we have generations that are digital only. I think our researchers in kind of age and generational research will tell you that's based on birthdate. And I think of it as where were people in their careers, because you know, those of us that were on the job in that decade In Fairfax, we we were definitely all born in different timeframes, but we experienced that digital transformation as part of our job.

In the real time there. So it didn't matter if you [00:04:00] were 40 or 20 on the job. You were going through this analog to digital transformation of how did

you investigate crime and how did you connect the dots? And how did you build your case knowing that the science and technology that supported probable cause was changing every day.

And every week.

Jason: Yeah. I still think there's gonna be a generation here later in the century that's just gonna have computer chips in their brain so that Get

Jessica: to that. Yeah. Yeah. Techni, technically it's possible. And there's people that have tested that out for a variety of reasons, but it, it does it's a very interesting aspect when we think about where technology is today, is that back in the fifties and sixties, without computers and radios, you did have to dictate your report for someone else to type it, right.

A clerk to type it. And then as everybody got computers, there's the expectation for law enforcement and other folks to actually write their own reports. And now that [00:05:00] we're dealing with you know, video and audio improvements like AI and other kind of speech to text recognitions that have gotten wildly accurate over the last.

Definitely the last decade, probably more so the last five years is that now we're returning back to this idea of dictating our reports and dictating our actions for official record. So there are these like full circle moments in this analog to digital space that I think a lot of folks are still uncovering as we move.

Jason: So you end up leaving Fairfax though in around 2011 and working with. Booz Allen Hamilton. And when I read that on your resume, I was like, oh, I have not heard the term booze Allen Hamilton in a really long time. I had, it's been since, I haven't lived in the DC area since 2008, so it's been quite a while since I heard Booz Allen mentioned.

Jessica: Yeah, it was probably the toughest decision I [00:06:00] ever made. And you know, for most of us, when we enter into public safety and public service, we feel as though we're signing up for a 30 year pension, right? Mm-hmm. Whatever it is that drives you to that public service or need to be connected to public service is that , you feel like you're gonna sign on to it for the rest of your life.

It's just part of your dna n and the decision to leave. To explore some of my own intellectual interest in analytics and cyberspace and just other kind of professional development stuff was so hard because I felt like it was a I don't

know if it was a point of failure or a point of breaking up that just felt really abnormal.

And it took me about a year or two before I realized it was one of the best decisions I ever made. Because in that hindsight as it is always 2020, I recognized that the experience that I had going into corporate and working on cyber investigations and other analytical aspects was one, just [00:07:00] music to my ears or perhaps to my fingertips on a keyboard.

But it was exactly what I was supposed to be doing, that at the time law enforcement hadn't advanced enough to allow me to do those things in the public service space. And so it was A kind of shocking tr career trajectory at first, but it really fell right back into that public service space as I continued to do you know, analytics to inform people and companies about criminals and where money was getting safe and off too, or you know, where cyber actors were interrupting op operations for regular.

You know, day-to-day services, whether that was for other corporations or even for a community level or local government level organizations. And so there was a level of public service that I found in that work that still appease my public service heart. But there was also so much more that I was able to do during that time when it came to certain technical skills and [00:08:00] otherwise, that I think just kind of added a great chapter to my professional career so far.

Yeah, it

Jason: reminds me we had Charlie Giberti on, and he's with data Walk now, but he, he said he was concerned about the same thing that you were about the, the idea of leaving the public sector because it's leaving the service. Type entity. And he feels the same way you d , just because you are in the corporate world or you're with a vendor, doesn't mean that you don't have that sense or that feeling of service to who your, your clients are.

So it is a, yeah, it is a,

Jessica: that was, that was one of my that was one of the episodes I listened to not too long ago. I don't know where it fell in the whole thing, but definitely one of those points that I I too, I was like, oh yes, it's a, it's a real feeling for those of us that you know, And, and, and really a way for us to help the rest of the world and, and the rest of industry recognize that, right?

There's more than one way to do that public service. And [00:09:00] there isn't just one entity that's supposed to do it. And, and, and in that, right, we can all work together. So I think that's where some of the kind of collaboration and, and, and other pieces that I bring with me today kind of.

Fit in. So, yeah. Also

too,

Jason: you won two awards during this time with Booz Allen Performance Excellence Award and then Team Excellence Award. So you must have been doing something good there. What, what'd you get into?

Jessica: Yeah. Well, I think one of my, you know over the courses of my career, I think I've always looked back of what was some common themes.

And one, one common theme is that I like a good startup and I like building teams made of very unique people and skill sets that just make sense. And so similar to some of the things that I did in law enforcement, I brought that same kind of team mentality and approach to the corporate space.

And yeah, that's where I got, had the opportunity to work with some very smart people that knew way more than I did. They were truly. Computer [00:10:00] scientists and information technology specialists and data engineer specialists, like their degrees were in that topic. And I just, I knew I, I knew what their roles were and I knew what their skills were and I knew how they fit into the bigger picture.

And I built a 24 7 operation in the, in the corporate space to help monitor cyber networks for a variety of Fortune 500 companies. And that really allowed both other corporations and government entities at the federal or local level to wrap their head around, , what inter internet security looks like, what, , security of information across health and law enforcement and everything else looks like.

And yeah, I was just so blessed to be part of the. You know, part of the team and, and influenced the way that the team got built in order to deliver those things. And yeah, we did a lot of great, great things for sure.

Jason: All right. And it's two, or as you are working at Booz Allen, you become a [00:11:00] adjunct professor at George Mason University.

So . How'd you like being a adjunct professor? How did

Jessica: that treat you? Yeah, that's probably the second theme as I think about my career is that I'm a lifelong learner. And with that, I think a lifelong educator. I truly believe, and this is part of my public service heart, is that when people are given the right information and tools or just a variety of information and tools, it doesn't even have to be the right.

It's just the array of information and tools. It really allows them to make the best decision for them over time. And so I constantly trained, when I was in law enforcement, I was training people when I was in corporate the corporate environment whether that was onboarding to the team or specific concept or technical skill sets you know, throughout different projects.

And I think with that, I kind of. Constantly had this call of being able to influence the next generation, right? The people that would hopefully be taking my job at one point. And what, [00:12:00] what would I have wanted my university professor or my mentor to tell me that I. You know, that they didn't.

And so how do I pay it? How do I pay it backwards by getting paying it forward kind of things. So and so that's where George Mason was always great to me as part of my undergraduate and kept in contact with the program there and some other adjunct professors and, and coordinators.

And I said, Hey, I'm thinking about this, but I've only ever taught. You know, kind of two to two to four days at length. Mm-hmm. How do you do 16 weeks and how do you, how do you teach to people when they're just there because it's mandatory versus it's there because it's part of their job. That was the biggest thing for me is that, I, I didn't have a problem filling a classroom full of analysts or detectives or financial or cyber folks because they were there as a, an essential part of their job as an adult learner.

And when you teach in college you know, particularly in today's age where we have this saturation of people going to college and they may not [00:13:00] really know what they want. And so they're like, they're just here because this is, is what's expected of them. And they don't really know how that fits into their future cuz they're not sure about their future.

And And two, it was my, I'm like, how do I hold attention and engagement for 16 weeks of time and deal with all of those things? And so Steve Bamford, who at the time was a commander with Manassas City Police and a longtime adjunct, probably still, actually, he is still an adjunct with George Mason.

And he is a good friend of mine and he said, why don't you come and co-teach with me and you can test it out? And yeah. And I, I taught probably the hardest course ethics in policing. That's because it's mandatory and nobody wants to talk about ethics. Yeah. Or theology or other kinds of philosophies.

And so I was like, well, if I can do this And it was interesting because the first time I taught I wanted to, I wanted to do some of my interactive teaching and put people in, in, in-person work groups, right? This isn't the, let's [00:14:00] assign people to do a work you know, to do a project and then you gotta deal with the student complaints that somebody's not pulling their weight and they don't meet up, meet up, and everybody's got different schedules.

So it was about in classroom learning, in classroom engagement and, and so that you could, you didn't just have like a team of five people learning from each other. You had 50 people in the classroom learning from each other, and that's really powerful. And so one of the scenarios that one of the groups went through was related to nine 11 and mm-hmm I realized how old I was when most of the people sitting in the classroom were like it was something they read about in their history books versus you know, something that they watched in live action on television.

So so that definitely challenged, like this is in the professional development space, right? Teaching to other adults. I was teaching to my peers and, and you know, right, teaching back in higher education at the time I was teaching to the generation behind me and being able to fill that gap and make it relevant to their learning path was really important to me.

And, [00:15:00] and George Mason provided me the opportunity to do that. And I went from teaching that class to teaching intel analysis, Homeland Security, and other kind of law enforcement topics that bridge both concept and technical skills so that the workforce could get ready to, to serve in the public safety or public security space.

Jason: I guess why we're, I guess why we're on the topic, if what would your advice be to someone, maybe an analyst who is, was in your position where they're maybe only used to teaching one for a whole week and now is looking to become that professional role to where they are now teaching 16 weeks straight

Jessica: weeks?

Oh, yeah. Well, I mean, you'll learn something from it as will your students. So I, if, if there's other analysts out there that have an interest of teaching and

teaching in different formats, I think, my advice to them would be , really understand adult learning principles.

And because even when they're in college at, [00:16:00] at the undergraduate level, they're adults and they need to be accountable and, and self-serve their own education and and, and hold themselves accountable to that. And so if you practice those principles, whether you're teaching 16 weeks or a day or somewhere in between this is where , you will always find your classroom engaging and you will always , get very interesting feedback from people as they apply what you teach them to their actual jobs and their actual efforts.

And, and I think that's, That's the golden nuggets of, of being an educator is that you see how your words and your approaches help spark the creative thinking and the application of that work into all these other kind of parts of, of industry and the parts of of communities, and that's. To me, very valuable.

Good.

Jason: And then then you did some research, your research, scientist with the Department of Justice, bureau of Justice [00:17:00] assistant. What kind of work did you do for them? Yeah,

Jessica: So it was an interesting aspect of I always enjoyed the cyberspace and the technical space. But you know, at some point you know, the public service part of it wasn't as strong as it used to be.

And so there was a project within Booz Allen that was awarded through O J P and it was about, , bringing data science and research and kind of smart responses working with communities and with police departments. And they called and said, , would you be interested or.

Returning back to the DOJ space and you know, I think it was at a point of time where I needed to either double down in the kind of hard tech and cyber tech space, or I needed to return back to, , what I had otherwise spent, , the kind of first half of my career on, which was public safety.

And so got the opportunity or made the opportunity to say yes and I'll join and started working across the country with local governments and municipalities and police chiefs and their analysts and [00:18:00] detectives and just seeing the good work that everybody's trying to do across the country.

And , working with agencies that were interested in working smarter, not harder. And were really hungry to learn about new methods, new approaches, and maybe even some old methods and old approaches that they just got stuck on and couldn't figure out how to launch. And yeah, got to be part of some great teams and guide, guide some of those teams most of those teams to, to succession.

So yeah, so that was a a project that has evolved into other parts of O J P programs or, or even do OJ programs across multiple offices. And there's just a team of people with law enforcement experience and without law enforcement that just have management or other types of, computer science experience that are.

Interested in working on community-based projects and how to make those work across the, , 18,000 plus, , agencies and organizations across America. So [00:19:00] yeah, it's a great network of us out there.

Jason: Listening to you go through and different points of your career and then getting into knowing what you are doing now with idea analytics.

I can see all the different stepping stones here. Talking about being a team builder, talking about learning and teaching then traveling the country looking for improvements and keeping an eye on current technological trends, but at the same time, knowing the history of, things. So it's all these different points there that I can understand how you got to where you are with your, company.

So, yeah. Let's get into your company then, cuz you, founded. Idea analytics in 2012, so, , how did this come about? Yeah.

Jessica: You know I always tell people I'm on version 2.0 because I founded the company at as A way to continue to teach and stay connected with law enforcement, cuz that was when I was leaving law [00:20:00] enforcement.

And so it was first, the 1.0 version was this method and, and vehicle that I could continue to work with the public safety space and, and with different regional academies and helped share some of that knowledge. And I partnered with folks at the time that were also either on the job or just leaving the job that was, , interested in doing some of the same things.

We were able to, , can kind of keep our feet in the pool of public safety and stay connected and, and help improve the kind of knowledge, skills and abilities

of officers on the job that we're traversing from. Patrolled to investigations or this type of investigation to another type of investigation.

And, and so it was very valuable. But you know, when I first thought of the company and thought of the business structure idea actually stands for something. Each letter spells out our four phases, which is to identify, develop, educate, and assess. And so I knew then [00:21:00] that right, the ability to actually help agencies innovate and help local governments or other companies that we partnered with, innovate and use their data in a smart data informed decision-making process is that we really needed to do some structured work around identifying what are true goals and intentions or desired outcomes.

Developing those responses that made sense, both on evidence base as well as within the capacity of an agency. Educate everybody throughout the organization, top to bottom, left and right, and even a few stakeholders on the sides. But educating them on all of those concepts. And then constantly monitoring not only our progress, but assessing what worked and what didn't work to further inform the field and, whether we were informing the next, , program on juvenile.

You know pro-social activities or we were informing the next police agency [00:22:00] on how to install video cameras and do guardian surveillance you know, with privacy and security in mind. So it was a way for me to really envision you know, a, a great process, but also exactly what the future of, of public safety and local governments needed in order to do.

Data and tech and in a smart way

Jason: Yeah. Idea. That is clever. And I know how Yeah. Much , government, law enforcement, loves their little names and, and everything else. So I'm sure you're people are very jealous of that one. , is there any story behind how that came together? The idea,

Jessica: For those folks that know me or have worked with me, know that I I am a, a constant meditator.

I believe that meditation really helps center yourself and you know, helps you focus on exactly, , what your intentions are and kind of how to manifest some of those things. And so yeah, it was one of those, let's just kind of think and meditate and [00:23:00] journal and write and, , Identify.

I mean, there was some market analysis and competitive analysis that goes into that, like a good business planner. But there was also this where is that kind of heart and soul that needs to be, and the, and the passion the passion side of me that needed to work. And so you know, I probably had tons of sticky notes and scrap paper written with all kinds of things.

And then , one day, or probably, actually I think it happened in the middle of the night somewhere in a dream, it kind of came to me as a former law enforcement officer. I'm a horrible sleeper. And and so I wake up routinely throughout the night and yeah, and it just, like, I woke up and I said, that's it.

That's how it clicks. And in my head, I had what the logo looked like, I knew what the acronym stood for, and I knew it was gonna be a name that I could grow into. And here I'm at, here I am, 11 years later, still growing.

Jason: Fantastic. All right, well, speaking of growing, then you, as you're mentioned, you're at 2.0 now.

. What [00:24:00] was the points where it became the next

Jessica: level? Yeah. 2.0 came when it was , we, we've always partnered with various other companies as a you know, subcontractor or sub awardee. We continue to do that and it's very valuable for us to have those partnerships and continue to think about who else to partner with or those opportunities that are mutually beneficial for various entities to do.

, it was really when you know, 2.0 came about when we started to be the prime the prime contractor and the prime awardee for various contracts. And so that was. You know, the ability to have the infrastructure in the business as well as employees in the business to support that type of work and that type of competition in the market was really valuable.

And so that changed probably about five years ago, and that's where we continue to be now as a combination of both kind of prime awardees as well as subcontracts with, with either different companies or with police agencies. Directly,

Jason: but there [00:25:00] was a point in time here where you actually aren't doing anything else.

Like this is your full time. This is everything. Because there, as I was mentioning before, you were straddling for a while there. Yeah. You're

working, with Booz Allen, being an adjunct professor, and there's this point in time that you just say, you know what , , this is it.

I'm only doing

Jessica: this. Yeah, it took about three years after that well, sorry, no, about six years after the creation, so yeah, so about five years ago from today. So that's back in the kind of, let's see, 2018 2018. Yeah. So timeframe. So yeah, so you're absolutely right is that I think as we go throughout our careers, we try out things and maybe it's volunteerism.

Mm-hmm. Maybe it's a side hustle or a side job, or a part-time job or , different things. And, and at some point you have to say, okay, I can't continue to wear 18 hats. What if I just wear one? And what's the best fit? And what's the best, what's the best place? And [00:26:00] that's a lot of the things that we talked with our clients about is that, it really is about that best fit because if it's not a fit there's gonna be constant kind of up and down.

And so how do you kind of really focus and, and align. I think that comes from my meditation practice. And so, yeah, so that was in about 2018 is when You know, started to make 2017 was probably when I started to make some of those shifts to position ourselves as prime contractors. And kind of prime award and had enough past performance at that time to, , give the market a good run for it.

And by 20 18, 20 19, it started seeing our first awards and have continued since then. And so yeah, that was the kind of, , pivotal point of being able to kind of hold the whole ground and , handle some of the administrative back ends of that work in addition to what does it look like when we hit the ground?

What does it look like when we show up with our clients? And how does that work translate across the team, but also with different different agencies across the country.[00:27:00]

Hey y'all, it's Josie Blong from Salisbury Police Department. My public service announcement is that you are not as busy as you think you are. You just need better time management skills. Hi, this is Brianne Fenton. I'm a crime analyst at the South Bend Police Department. I am also the treasurer on the Indiana Chapter for the Midwest Gang Investigators Association.

And I just wanted to let everyone know that we do have our National Gang Conference coming up. It's on May 11th, May 8th to May 11th. It will be held in South Bend, Indiana at the DoubleTree Hotel. This can be for sworn in

civilian law enforcement personnel, anyone from crime analyst prosecutors. Sworn personnel as well as probation and parole, or anyone who works at jails and prisons.

We will have a variety of topics, so whether it's open source and social media, gangs 101 crime analysis, as well as gang analysis, how they kind of come together [00:28:00] as well as gang task forces. So there's definitely a wide variety. We also offer networking opportunities after each day of training, so it's definitely gonna be very impactful and definitely a lot of knowledge and information to learn.

You can get all this information@mgiaa.org, and again, that National Gang Conference is May 8th to May 11th in South Bend, Indiana. My name is Christine Talley. I am a firm believer that you can figure out whether or not someone is a decent human being at their core, if they're the person that puts their shopping cart back in the corral.

So please put your shopping cart back in the corral when that you're done. Show everybody that you care about them, you care about their property, and just be a good human.

Jason: Let's talk a little bit about your clients. I mean, I want to get a little better understanding of what the company does, and [00:29:00] especially when it's around police departments. So, and what work have you done? Typically, police departments hire you, you come in and just kind of give a general overview of some of the things that you were able to help police departments

Jessica: out.

Yeah, so our, our clients are typically local governments, police departments or nonprofits. And there's a reason why I include all three of those things. But they are you know, leaders that are looking for data informed ways to improve their community service. And so whether that's the city manager or mayor that's looking at starting a new economic development project or perhaps is going down the road of some type of project that involves , the police department or involves other entities like the school board and community services and things of that nature.

And they're looking for a partner to help them with that data and technology piece and really trying to operationalize it. So, so sometimes we get asked to join [00:30:00] cities and, and city initiatives from that local government structure. Sometimes it's the police chief that's championing it that work, right?

And so that might be a grant that the police have been awarded and it's run through the city or the county government or or it might be some other funding. And based on their own strategic plan and their initiatives and how that works. And just naturally the nonprofits. Fit into that piece because often the work that police departments are doing in their community requires some level of nonprofit support.

So whether that's schools and youth related or job placements or victim services and other types of substance abuse and alternative response or appropriate response models it's oftentimes a nonprofit entity that has connections with other types of industry, like public health and school board, and.

You know, social work that is, is complimenting that. So, so we can work with all three we can work with more than just that. It's just that it [00:31:00] typically you know, focuses around all three of those. And really it's at the invitation of the department. The department is looking for a strategic partner and someone like idea analytics who combines both conceptual aspects of what the evidence base on smart policing tells us.

But also how do you manage that organizational change with the technology and people changes that you're, you're going to do? So for us, we focus on three key elements, which is leadership, people, and technology. And that's part of our building analytical capacity program that most agencies work with us on.

And those three things focus on how do you align all three of those to compliment each other, but also get on the same page with each other. So we try to maximize the skills of everyone who sits in one or more of those three elements. And focus all of our efforts on both , professional development or coaching and other types of

collaborative learning or [00:32:00] interactive learning in addition to some of the technical skills that we bring in data engineering and data visualization and data science spaces. Good. And

Jason: then, so what's a good example of a department where maybe you really had a great impact on , the department's analytical unit?

Oh,

Jessica: I would like, oh man, there's probably so many of 'em. I might be biased, right? Mm-hmm. Because I actually, I really enjoy the work that we do and and I think our clients do too. So so I'm gonna highlight probably two of my

more recent access successes. A little unfair to the others because I, I can brag about all of my agencies at different points, I think.

Jason: Well, if you don't wanna name names, that's fine with me. I just wanted to give the listeners an understanding of when I idea analytics comes to town, what are some of the, some of the things that you, do to help improve the

Jessica: unit?

Yeah. So let, and let me, let me do it this way. Yeah. So sometimes we come to town when there's just the ideas of a plan. [00:33:00] And what I mean by that is that sometimes we're asked to come into town to help an agency figure out how are they supposed to do analysis and how are they supposed to improve their technology.

And sometimes those agencies don't have an analyst, and that's where they're like, I think I need one, because everyone else seems to have one, but we're not really sure what they're supposed to do. Or how do we hire, or how do we know that they're good? There's a lot of things that an analyst does that a police department staff who's on the hiring board they're, they're used to looking at candidates saying, yeah, I think that person would be a good cop.

And now they're having to look at a candidate saying, yeah, that person's gonna be a good analyst, but yet they themselves don't really have an understanding of what. What does analysis look like for policing and what should where does that person sit in the organization? Where are they on the flow chart?

, what kind of span of control and autonomy should they have in their role in res, in responsibilities? Who should oversee them? What should [00:34:00] that look like? Who should they answer to? You know, when the rest of policing is this very hierarchical structure that has this go through the academy, do x number of years on patrol.

Get considered for investigation almost linear and vertical path. Crime analyst is either there or not there. For many agencies, unless you are a multianalyte agency and where there might be some movement and or hierarchy of different levels. But for many small, medium sized departments one or two analysts might be all that you have.

And so that really challenges a police department in managing its people. And understanding how do you keep somebody for 20 years when there's no movement? Because again, you're signing up for the police department, for

local government. You're on the same retirement or you know, whatever civilian service, civil service, retirement there is.

And so how do you keep that person engaged? Especially when they don't value and their job is not the same values [00:35:00] of policing. They're not the ones that are getting court time or transferred to investigative units or various other things. And so for those types of agencies to come, come to us.

Then this is where there's a lot of that developing an education that happens among the command staff as well as among hr you know, getting human resources to understand how to advertise, what to advertise for, what skill sets you know, that there, that are gonna be the match. And so there's a lot of people development there as well as leadership development there.

And that that happens. , over the course of a year or more sometimes just to kind of get through that process to hire. And in hiring the analysts, obviously they need to have tools. So that's where that technology piece of our leadership, people in technology kind of comes in.

And so that's where we work with agencies to kind of help build that capacity to hire an analyst and hire a smart analyst or smartly hire analyst. I guess it could go either [00:36:00] way. Is that you want somebody who's a good fit for where you are now, but you know, is also gonna grow with your organization as you become more data informed and more data inclined as well.

So you know, somebody who's, who's gonna be willing to be challenged in their own professional development to bring things to the department, but also you know, grow with the department as the department adds on various other kind of technology or, or priorities There. And I, I think the second thing is that we have a ton of agencies that come to us that already have analysts, and that can be really intimidating for folks, is that here's this organization that's coming in and are they gonna try to do our job or do our job differently or better, or, Show our bosses.

Yeah. Like, yeah. Show our bosses where we aren't doing our job or things of that nature. And you know, that, that's you know, there's probably a whole lot of feelings for everyone on our team as well as on the, the client's team that, that feels that way. Right. And, and we [00:37:00] find the same things there is that sometimes their leadership don't, don't know what they're asking for.

And the analyst, I think, Jason, you and I have talked about this before, the analysts are like, oh, I don't get feedback. I I produce things, but I never know

where it goes. Or I don't know, or p you know, I don't know where this is, or, I'm not invited to meetings. And all these other things that are, are really just kind of like kind of bad behaviors of a police department.

And, and having an analyst, but not leveraging that analyst. And that's where we come in and, and we're like advocating for the analyst. Like you have someone like this is the kind of step towards and now is, is that person meeting your analytical expectations?

But more importantly, does leadership even have analytical expectations? And how are those things being communicated? And that feedback loop or those workflows being developed that benefits both the, leadership or the end users, like the officers and detectives, but also the analyst from being, able [00:38:00] to prioritize and organize their work in a way.

So you know, that's where we we enjoy working with our agency's analyst. , we see it as an opportunity of like, we are, we are like a tool in their tool belt, right? We're the. We're the folks that they can call to say, Hey, how do I do this? Or, who else knows this? And can you take a look at this before I go present it to my command staff and we're that mentor slash you know, professional development tool and, and, and the tool belt that allows them to be the best that they can be and, and even better, right?

To learn new technical skills or even learn new concepts. And so you know that, yeah, that's where we work with the analyst one-on-one or small teams, depending on how many analysts are in a group and help just kind of formalize a lot of things within the agency or even in a regional approach.

That based on the clients that we've worked with and the feedback we've gotten from our sessions and our, our ways in which we deliver both in-person and virtual professional [00:39:00] development, we've received a lot of great feedback that says that it works and it helps get them farther and it helps get them through some difficult.

Difficult and frustrating types of analysis that's really supportive and, and the outcomes are very beneficial to the department. No

Jason: good. So I think what I wanna kind of steer towards now is, cause I, I believe you have an interesting perspective cuz because the amount of traveling you've done talking with different police departments and working with different police departments and you are in that situation where you can take the temperature of all these different law enforcement analysis units in the country.

So I just wanna start asking different questions from there. Get your perspective. See if what you're seeing talk about solutions. You mentioned hiring and the, the aspect of hiring new analyst and typically what, what most people tell me, it's a, it's a a panel [00:40:00] interview type thing. And I mean, what do you feel when you're advising these departments and you're trying to look for candidates, , what are some things that maybe people.

You feel panels are putting too much value in, and maybe on the other side there's stuff that they're not asking or they're not looking into candidates, but they really should be. Ooh,

Jessica: loaded question. Loaded question, Jason. But a good one, but a good one. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, you're right. I mean, we are, we've worked in 34 states in over 80 plus cities in a variety of capacities and, and we don't always get to work on.

On all of the topics with every client. It really just depends on the client, what they want, as well as kind of where they are, you know? For some people who have perhaps already hired , we don't, we don't go back. We're like, great, this is what you've got. Let's work with what you've got and just keep moving forward, kind of thing.

Mm-hmm. So yeah, we so that's the people component of our, our leadership people in tech. And there's probably a little bit of leadership. [00:41:00] You know, if I, if I already showed you a visual of these three things, they're Venn diagram kind of all overlapping and the leadership really sets the tone of the expectations of the people.

You know, so I mean, obviously leadership gets to say what's in the budget? How many folks can we hire? You know, what does this hiring look like? And hopefully the leadership is also making a decision of what is, what does the potential hiring look like five years from now or 10 years from now?

You know, is this analyst that we're hiring today gonna have additional analysts at some other point, right? So are we hiring one for now and another one later, or, you know what? And all of that kind of goes into how do you approach the actual hiring process because you're, if you're hiring somebody today who's going to be a partner to someone that's existing in your department, you have a fit question.

And if you're hiring somebody today who's also gonna be joined by someone else in the future, you also have a growth part of the part of the question. And so

while the HR process is really about the [00:42:00] initial part is, is kind of how do we identify candidates and screen resumes? I think this is where we always advise our clients that you need to write more to catch a broader net, because today's world is not about hiring a criminal justice.

Bachelor or master's degree or even a PhD. Today's world is really somebody who understands research methods in data science and computer science. And you know, you have to think about what kind of skills are teachable within the organization and which ones are not. And so getting folks who have. Other types of degrees and experience that really does require four years of education, right?

Like urban planning and housing economics and I would even say arc G i s requires four plus years of education for all of our maps out there. You know, these are, are really specific skillsets very technical and, and complex skillsets[00:43:00] both conceptually and technically. And you know, so if that person comes into your department having those, you can teach them the rest, right?

And you can teach them what you're good at, which is criminal justice or policing and, and crime identifying, right? That's teachable inside the department. Oftentimes the computer science and other kind of technical skills are not teachable within a department because there's no one to learn from and.

You know, I think that's really important for an organization to say what are, what do we want and what are we willing to do you know, to kind of get that person that we want. So just like we hire officers thinking, oh, this person is trustworthy and they're honest and they're physically fit, and then we're gonna put them through an academy to train them.

Well, there's no academy for crime analyst. Right. They don't mm-hmm. Yeah. They don't, they don't go through. Yeah. Like, they don't go through six weeks, 12 weeks, six months of training to, to, to then learn those things. So really it's about getting the leadership to [00:44:00] understand where, where do they have internal capacity to train and, and on what topics, because that gives them a little bit more of their boundaries of the type of analyst or type of job rec they should be recruiting for.

And, and with that, it also helps plan for what is, what is the first six months on the job look like? You know, if you get somebody who's never had the job before and doesn't have a reference point from a, an area law enforcement

agency, then what does that six month crime analysis academy look like for that candidate?

And, and what does that include? You know, over, over the schedule. And I think that's the biggest thing when we talk about hiring with agencies is that. What does that onboarding experience look like? Because it is not the same for your civilians as it is for your sworn law enforcement. And that's probably the biggest fallacy for a lot of agencies is that they hire an analyst and then they just expect you to hit F five tomorrow and tell 'em all their crime stats.

And we [00:45:00] all know that that's not how it happens, right? And yeah. And so I think even with that, we also recognize like you hire an analyst tomorrow if you don't have the technology for them to use, right? If I hired somebody who only knew Python and all I gave them was Excel, what do you think their success would be?

Mm-hmm. Or vice versa, right? If I hired somebody who had only Excel experience and no coding experience, but yet the number one tool I want them to use is ARC Insights, which is all Python. What does that look like? And so, Can you still hire that person? Sure. But then the leadership knows they're making that commitment to invest in that skillset learning, right?

That bootcamp to make that analyst the best person for them. And you know, these are the trade-offs during the hiring process.

Jason: So you also talked about retention. And it's an exaggeration. It seems like once a month I see somebody on LinkedIn that I'm connected to going from the public , sector to the private sector.

And it does [00:46:00] seem like it is more difficult for the police departments to keep experienced analysts long term. So what is your advice for departments on trying to keep their experienced

Jessica: analyst? Yeah. This is where we have a match of like what motivates the worker, right? What, and I mean nationally we have this big conversation about what motivates workers in general across industries, but particularly in the analytical fields or data science and computer science and information technology fields.

The number one thing, well, Aside from finances, because money drives a lot of things for people. So I'll just, we'll just accept that as the baseline and the fact. Mm-hmm. Other than those monetary aspects, I think the number one thing that

drives people that are in, in these types of analytical realms, so whether you're the data analyst or the data engineer, or the computer science information technology staff enroll.[00:47:00]

In order for your brain to get a workout, you have to feed it complex problem solving. And when it solves that problem that you fed it, it might get excited. Brag about it for a little bit, and it might be satiated for a little while, but then you have to feed it the next complex problem. And when you don't feed that brain those complex problems and allow that person to build, break and rebuild each kind of tackling a new skillset set or a new problem solving aspect, it it, it starts to be apathetic.

Right. You know, you, I mean, your brain, the muscle will just kind of wither away, right? If I, if I'm training for Iron Man and then I stop and I don't do anything, I'm gonna lose my muscle mass. Mm-hmm. And that is probably, it's the hardest thing for police departments to recognize is that the civilian who's sitting in the office Monday through Friday, Or you know, [00:48:00] some variation of a Monday through Friday job and is not getting feedback and is not part of meetings and is not part of these projects, is that their most important muscle becomes apathetic.

And that is why they seek other positions, is because they're not, they're no longer challenged with where they are. And some of that is because, The leadership doesn't know how to challenge them or where they should be plugging them in so that it keeps them entertained and challenged. And sometimes it's because there isn't anything going on in the police department to be challenged, right?

Descriptive statistics. Are not analysis, they're not problem solving, they're just summarizing. And that's where an analyst then looks for other opportunities to do other interesting work and to be heard at the table when they perform that interesting work. Hmm.

Jason: All right. Well, how about the analysts themselves?

You know, again, you've. Observed many units across the [00:49:00] country. What is your advice for , an analysts how can they help themselves by improving their situation?

Jessica: Oh, that's probably endless. There's probably, they the way that they help themselves probably is also dependent on their leadership sometimes, but mm-hmm.

You know, I think and, and most of the analysts that I've met across this country have this in some way, shape or form, whether it's actually formally shared with their leadership or it's just their kind of own personal structure is that they do set their own their own goals, right? Like, you have to say, what am I gonna achieve this year?

What would be, what would success look like for me if this is the job that I'm gonna have for 20 years and somewhere in those 20 years, right? I'm gonna check in and check out of that job. I. You know, mentally, right? Mm-hmm. Because other things are gonna happen. I'm gonna get I'm gonna get degrees, I'm gonna change houses, I'm gonna move, I'm gonna get married, I'm gonna get divorced.

Like, all of the things of life happened during that time. Mm-hmm. But I think each year, every couple years, you have to ask yourself , what is it that I wanna learn? [00:50:00] What is it that I wanna set a goal to reach? And what does that look like? And it's not just about racking up the quantity of certifications, right.

But it's the what do I wanna get more comfortable with? What do I wanna extend myself a little bit about or you know, think a little bit differently about, and for each analyst, I think that's it looks differently at different times. And it, and some of it, it does depend on their leadership or where they're placed in their organization or where they have the opportunity to move in the organization.

The longer we work with some of our clients, the more we, we try to influence some of those bones, right? Of, Hey, at some point your analyst should be helping you with grants. And your analysts should be producing those research and evaluation reports for grants or taking on a project every quarter or half year.

Because those are the ways that again, you get to feed the muscle. And hopefully give them an interesting thing to kind of hang their hat on in the long term. And I think all of the [00:51:00] analysts, many of them that have been on your podcast, have kind of talked about that case or that effort or that, you know report or, or things of that nature that has come about, whether it's because they inserted themselves or their leadership inserted them, or they just kind of like had these aha moments of that time.

So I think that's where even if your, your bosses aren't asking for. What's your goals? You know, what's your progress? How did you achieve? I think as a

professional, you, you have to create those boundaries for yourself and hold yourself accountable to those.

Jason: Yeah. I guess one of the things I've noticed in observing the profession is training itself, either at a conference or whether it's a week long training at a department.

It, it just seems so basic. It seems it's too lecture, right. It's, it's, The teacher instructing with a PowerPoint presentation and the, the students just sitting there [00:52:00] observing and it's just observation, tragedy. It's just, well, it's, yeah, it's just observation, tragedy. It's just awareness. You come back, what can you you might be lucky to implement something, but it goes hand in hand with the idea that I told you that when we were doing the prep call is like, there's just not enough math in Yeah, in analysis.

And so it's we're not teaching any like real techniques. It's just awareness. It's just if there are techniques, it's basically just an Excel, because everybody has Excel and that's what you usually see at analytical conferences is Excel classes. But that's basically the only one that's actually kind of a how-to, and may maybe mapping, I should say that there, R G I S does do some, some mapping that way, but, It just seems to me that it is just, just lecture, not really hands on, not really learning a good technique that you can bring back to the office.

Jessica: [00:53:00] Yeah. There's so many ways that I could tackle this question, so I'm, I'm gonna try this one since I, that's why I didn't ask a

Jason: question.

Jessica: Yeah. Or maybe so many ways I could respond to that aspect. So yeah. Since I mentioned it earlier, right? I had mentioned, I mentioned adult learning techniques, and I think people hear those things and they say, oh yeah, I'm an adult learning.

Yeah, sure. I got it. I, I know exactly what you're talking about. And I, and, and, and oftentimes I'm like, no, you don't. And it's not meant to offend them, it's just that no, like there's actual principles about learning that I think people. Oversee just kind of inherently have some oversight.

Right on. And so, so maybe this is the best way to kind of tackle this comment or, or topic here is that right when, when we're kids, we're learning things because it's part of a structure of our development. So we know that we're gonna

go to kindergarten and we're gonna go to grade school and you know, after school we're gonna be in whatever daycare and things of that nature.

And there's [00:54:00] rules and all of these things. And, and hopefully all of those experiences during that development kind of helps normalize things for the future of society. That's the intention of those formative development years. When we're adults, we wanna learn the things that we're doing that are most applicable to us, right?

Because we've got all of that rules and basics down, supposedly, right? And so I don't I always tell people, right, when, when something is wrong with my garbage disposal, I do not wanna become a plumber. I just wanna get to that YouTube video that tells me how to take my garbage disposable apart so I can fix it, right?

Yeah. Mm-hmm. And if I can't do it in a way with some basic tools and some basic instructions on a video that I can back up and redo as I'm under the sink trying to figure it out. Like that 15 minute video, hell, it's probably a, an eight minute video or or less is gonna save me hundreds of dollars.

So I have this immediate interest to all [00:55:00] of a sudden learn something about the underside of my sink because it's gonna save me money, it's gonna fix my problem. And it's something that hopefully is relatively easy, right? Because if the professional can explain it to me in eight minutes, it means, should, should probably only take me an hour to do.

And so but I'm not interested in learning about different pipes or different joints or coding you know, building code. I just wanna know how to take my, you know thing apart. , and, and I think that's today's expectation and, and I would say even yesterday's expectation should have been the same thing for adult learners, is that when you teach a class, you have to make it relevant to the job right now.

And if we're still teaching Excel, Then there's some level of, of people out there, either the people on the job or the instructors that think that, that it's, it's relevant to the job. And, and I would say from my experience and, and from my national [00:56:00] view is that there's so much more that's relevant to the job that isn't being taught and, and it's not being delivered in that adult learning way, right?

Because we don't wanna be lectured at, we wanna be shown a concept and then we wanna do, and we wanna be shown another concept, and then we wanna do, and we wanna be shown another concept and then we wanna do that. And then

when we go and do that with our own data and our own processes, or three months from now after that training program, we wanna be able to go back to that learning.

Right, because my garbage disposal's gonna break again at some point, right? Either out of me or something else that somebody else put down there, right? And so I'm gonna want, I wanna be able to go back to that to remind myself how to do it when I hit that wall again, when I hit that problem again, or a way to reach back.

And I think that's the challenge right now when we think about training, is that we think of it in a two linear of like, I'm just gonna go to this class. I'm gonna learn this thing, and then I'm gonna ne I'm not gonna go back to that [00:57:00] class ever again, and I'm not gonna be able to access that content ever again.

And, and, and then write everything that I knew in that one week I'm gonna remember for the rest of my life. And, and that's just false, right? I have no idea what geometry was like in 10th grade anymore. I have no idea. Right. I, like, I have no concept of it. Couldn't teach it tomorrow if you asked me to, right?

Because I, I don't use geometry on a daily basis, or at least not in the way that you would teach in a grade school. Right? And so that's one of the biggest, I think, challenges right now of like when people are seeking training. And it's definitely been the biggest challenge for us because we, we take different approaches to this and it has really challenged both our clients and us because the way that we train our clients, we're not here to repeat.

If you wanna learn Excel, there's Microsoft Excel classes at your community college or your city that teach that. If you wanna know how Excel works for the data that you're doing on your motor vehicle theft report, [00:58:00] that's what we're here for. Right. And that's, that requires those one-on-one virtual sessions that are recorded, the content that's delivered to you virtually, that you will always have access to and be able to go back to, and you can drive your learning path.

And those are the things that adult learners need today. And they needed yesterday, in fact, they needed a few years ago as well, and they'll need for the future is that I wanna be able to go back to that YouTube video exactly where it shows me where to take apart my garbage disposal. And if, if today's trainers in the analytical space and in the data space don't provide that opportunity, then we're not meeting the needs of the market and the needs of the training that's needed in the market.

And I think when you look across the tech space, the tech space does this very well with a lot of, you know show you a concept, do the , do the code, see the code work. If the code doesn't work, you get feedback or you're in a chat room, right? Like all of those things. And that's adult learning today and that's.

You know, perhaps how the [00:59:00] adult learning has always been, but we've just, it's, it's hard work as an instructor to do it that way. And it's not as simple as just delivering a four day training class and then walking away and having no responsibility to that learner at any point in time. And I think that's where the, the field can, can, can ask for something differently these days because something different is needed.

Probably why I

Jason: enjoy writing sequel. Right. That's just as you mentioned, the, the feedback in there. And sometimes when you're doing analytical work, you don't get that feedback, at least not right away, right? Yeah, yeah, yeah. All

Jessica: right. That's where you know exactly when it works or when it doesn't.

Jason: Oh, man. Certainly there's a lot of topics. I, I certain could talk to you probably for hours and hours and hours. So, but for those that are listening, there's certainly, if they have questions or want to reach out to you, how can they contact you?

Jessica: Yeah. Our website is analytics by idea.com. That's a great way to kind of see what we're up to [01:00:00] see what we're doing.

We also have our virtual l e a net community called learning, learning engagement, and advance for everybody's projects, whether you're in an individual space or in our network altogether, you can find the link to join that community on our website. You can also find us on LinkedIn. Or I guess, do you want me to give email?

Sure, yeah. Email. First name Jessica Analytics by idea.com.

Jason: Excellent. All right. Let's finish up with personal interest then. And you are a reader, so what are you

Jessica: reading these days? Oh, man, I just came back from vacation not too long ago, so I was able to much like my other kind of interests, I'm across the board.

Mm-hmm. But I'm I like to really check out of work and otherwise when I try to read, so mm-hmm. I am reading a book on witches. So I read in the sci-fi space. Definitely. Yeah, there's probably a theme there of [01:01:00] things that are. Right in the kind of sci-fi, witches dragon fantasy Yeah.

Fantasy space. Mm-hmm. Is that mm-hmm. Because there's culture. Mm-hmm. And there's like interactions of culture. There's languages and there's different lands. And so it really feeds my kind of community and kind of people building brain a little bit. And so for fun, I'm reading that. And for profession, I'm rereading one of my favorites from Brene Brown called Daring Greatly. Oh.

Which is, yeah. Yeah. It's a way to kind of think about vulnerable leadership and the courage to see how vulnerability transforms the way you lead and the way you interact with people in your life. So it's one of my favorites, one of our early books. I love BDA Brown all through all together, but yeah, I'm, I'm taking taking another run on it, like the fourth run at it as I just kind of brush up on some leadership aspects that I always try to stay focused on.

Jason: Hmm. That's a, that's a good title. That's a really an engaging title.

[01:02:00] So, all right, Jessica. Well, our last segment to the show is Words to the World, and this is where I give the guests the last word. You can promote any idea that you wish. What are your words

Jessica: to the world?

. My words to the world is your data should be helping change the thoughts and behaviors of the decision makers, and if it is not, then you have not finished your analysis yet.

Nice.

Jason: Very good. While I leave every guest with, you've given me just enough to talk bad about you later, but I do appreciate you being on the show, Jessica. Thank you so much and you be safe. Thank

Jessica: you. Same to you.

Mindy: Thank you for making it to the end of another episode of Analysts Talk with Jason Elder. You can show your support by sharing this in other episodes found on our website@www.lpodcasts.com.

If you have a topic you would like us to cover or have a suggestion for our next guest, please send us an email@elliotpodcasts@gmail.com. Till next time, analysts, keep talking.[01:03:00]