

Laura Weaver - Weaving Through the Data

Mindy: [00:00:00] Welcome to Analyst 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 at a

Jason: time.

Thank you for joining me. I hope many aspects of your life are progressing. My name is Jason Elder and today our guest has 15 years of law enforcement analysis experience. Some time with Fort Worth PD and now with Arlington PD. She holds a Master in Criminology from the University of Texas in Arlington.

Here to talk a little bit about the upcoming IACA conference. Please welcome Laura Weaver. Laura, how we doing? I'm

Laura: great. How are you doing?

Jason: I am doing well. How is Texas these days? Very hot. I think everybody is hot, right? We are breaking world records this [00:01:00] July,

it's a just a little bit unbearable. It is. It does seem like this is our winner, but I guess Texas everyone. Do you have a winner in in Arlington?

Laura: Not really. I think maybe times in February we get ice and snow.

Jason: Yeah, so I tell people I'm from Tallahassee. I was like July and August. That's kind of our winter.

That's like, yeah, that's like, we're, we're staying inside and watching movies.

Laura: It's been, it's been like 108, 109 for days on end. It's crazy.

Jason: Is that the actual temperature? Is that like the heat index?

Laura: No, the heat index is higher. That's the actual

Jason: temperature. Oh man,

Laura: look. So I've been a vampire. I just stay

Jason: inside.

Yeah, no, that's exactly it. It's too nasty outside. So, all right. How did you discover the law enforcement analysis profession?

Laura: I actually discovered it, of course, like probably many people. I discovered it in college. I was originally, when I was getting my bachelor's, I was, I wanted to get a [00:02:00] degree in psychology and become a counselor, but I took a Criminal justice course as an elective and I loved it.

So I kind of, well, derailed a little bit and went towards a criminal justice degree.

Jason: I think that's really important. I think that's everybody normally belly aches when you go into college and you have to take these classes that are outside your major, but you do get to go on the discovery mode and, Venture out and get experience exposure to different topics.

Yep.

Laura: That's exactly what I think. I just, I grew up in like a, let's say lower middle class neighborhood. And I think a lot of it just made sense to me because I saw a lot of like my friends and kids. I went to school with getting into trouble and then started learning these theories and it all just kind of clicked and I was just, I really enjoyed it.

Learning

Jason: about it. All right, then. So did you, [00:03:00] how did you make it from, you got your criminal justice degree to then making it to Fort Worth? Well, that took

Laura: a while. I initially started working at Arlington Police Department in our police reports section. We would transcribe police reports. They would call them in over the phone and then we would transcribe them.

We took some Reports from citizens over the phone as well. That job offered me the opportunity. I learned a lot about law enforcement in that position. I left there actually, because I was working, doing shift work. And I actually left there

and went to be an admin assistant at an animal health company for about three years.

And then I saw the posting for the Fort Worth PD crime analyst position and. I read the job description and was like, Oh, I think I'd be really good at this. So I applied and it was actually the first interview where I really sold myself on something. I just really wanted it and I don't know, it just ended up [00:04:00] working out, thankfully.

Yeah.

Jason: Do you remember exactly what you said or anything particular that you really sold yourself

Laura: with? I'm pretty sure because I had been out of law enforcement for three years. I told them how much I missed it, how much I loved it, how I still was trying to, at the time, I was still trying to learn things about it and just, I don't know, I think I had realized how much I missed it.

Yeah. And I told them, you know, of course I will learn anything I have to learn. And I. And I. And I. And I. And I. And I. Whatever I gotta do.

Jason: Yeah, yeah, yeah, it does it does. It is interesting, especially when you're younger there and things that go through your mind, which you're willing to say to get the job.

Laura: Like whatever you want now. Yeah, yeah, yeah. You don't even have to pay me that much and now.

Jason: Yeah, I'll get you coffee every day. Yeah, whatever it takes.

Laura: Get me out of this world, the

Jason: world I want [00:05:00] to be in. Yeah, yeah. Now we're like, oh, no, it's four o'clock. It's five o'clock. I'm going to finish that at home.

. So, when you're coming into Fort Worth as an analyst, what, what are some of the things that you're targeting? What are some of the problems that you're trying to

Laura: solve? Oh, geez, back then. That was in, oh, 2008. Mm hmm. Let me think. Probably BMVs. I remember working on those a lot. I don't think we didn't have, social media was just beginning, honestly.

So I wasn't doing all, like, the social media searches that I do now. I was so different. I can't even remember, honestly. Yeah,

Jason: yeah. And I guess what about your learning curve with the job? Because I think I do hear a lot of analysts who had experience with records or admin or bookkeeping, whatever it might be.

I mean, that you learn a lot about police departments by holding [00:06:00] those jobs and it pays dividends as you become an analyst, but, I'm sure it wasn't maybe all smooth sailing as you're. Go, go into that. So some, maybe some of the bumps in the road.

Laura: Mine mostly were technology related. I had, you know, when I worked in police reports, you were really just using Word to transcribe.

So I knew Word a little bit, but I didn't know about the data a lot. So that probably, I didn't even, at the time, I didn't even know how to remote in on a computer. I had to learn how to do that. So I think just technology itself was the issue for me when I first started.

Jason: Yeah, and then how was the data? Oh, it was

Laura: messy.

Jason: Well, it still is. Yeah,

Laura: it still is, but it was very plain. Like there weren't, we weren't capturing as many categories back then as we do now. So it also wasn't as difficult. It's probably a good time to learn because it was before it got more involved.

Jason: Yeah. So you're there [00:07:00] about six years. And so looking back, what are some of the things that you think about during that time, maybe some of the things you accomplished as an analyst?

I feel

Laura: like Fort Worth was really just me learning how to be an analyst. I learned a lot more when I came to Arlington. They were a little bit more hands on. I think in Arlington we had an analyst who did a lot of the report building. for us, and so I didn't get to learn that aspect of it there so much.

I knew a little bit, but I gained more experience when I went to Arlington because they were, to me, a little bit more advanced in the programs they were using. They were using, back then, Access where I think Fort Worth was using Crystal Reports. It was just, there were, the type of reports and the type of data that they captured was a little bit different.

Jason: Why the transition from Fort Worth to Arlington?

Laura: Simply, it was just a pay raise.

Jason: So, without really knowing that area, [00:08:00] what's the comparison? Are those police departments about the same or is one significantly bigger than the other?

Laura: Well, Fort Worth is a larger city and they have, I can't remember, I don't even know how many officers.

They probably have six, seven hundred, eight hundred more officers than we do. But we have the same number of analysts. We actually might have... Yeah, actually, we still have the same number of analysts. There's eight in Arlington and eight in Fort Worth, I believe. I might be wrong on that, but we have the same number.

Okay. So that's probably also part of it. Whenever I was able to do more myself in Arlington with my, you know, building reports and digging and stuff like that Fort Worth, you honestly, you have so many reports. You don't have a lot of time to be able to learn more in Crystal Reports.

Jason: Did it feel more clerical?

In Fort Worth?

Laura: Yes. Yes, I think so. But I think they've changed now, though. They've changed a lot. I don't want to talk bad about them. I actually love that man. I miss working

Jason: there. Well, I mean, I don't necessarily think that's talking bad. I really [00:09:00] do think that there's police departments, middle management that feel that that's.

An important task and that stuff that needs to be done. So they will task an analyst to do more of the data creation, more of the report writing. You could argue that it's not analysis, but I do feel that there's still. Police, a lot of police departments that are asking their analysts to do that task.

Laura: I think to the time that I transitioned, I feel like people still were not sure what to do with their analyst. So it was the time where you got so many little projects thrown on you. Sometimes you would be like, I don't want what?

Jason: You know, and it's back to your undergrad days, right? You're taking all these courses that might have nothing to do with your major and then something sticks.

And I think in a way you get like that with analysis is that you wear a lot of [00:10:00] hats and you get thrown a lot of different tasks and sometimes 1 or 2 things stick. Yes. So, and then I guess when you. You get to Arlington, then what are you focusing on, and how is it different from what you were doing with Fort

Laura: Worth?

It was pretty similar, except for just the data portion of it. They were way more, what they required, like, for the weekly and monthly meetings in the beginning when I started there. It was very involved sometimes, some of these reports that we would have to run would take an hour, two hours.

And we all had to learn how to run them and we kind of switched turns. But I think that was the main difference is they were more data heavy to me than Fort Worth

Jason: was. I gotcha. And then what, in terms of focus, what were some of the issues that you were, I guess, maybe, and still are dealing with?

Laura: They were pretty much the same. Honestly, I, I, when I left Fort Worth and went to Arlington, I literally just jumped a border of the city. I went from the east [00:11:00] side of Fort Worth, which borders the west side of Arlington. And that's where I went to. So it was a lot of the same. I remember a couple of times I'd be like, Oh, I worked with that.

I was working that suspect over in Fort Worth.

Jason: Criminals without borders. Right.

Laura: Stop and stay in your city. Don't come over.

Jason: Yeah. Yeah. In this role, I noticed your title is both crime and intelligence analyst. Yes. And that I don't, some of these titles in, in our, in this field cracked me out because I mean, that one's pretty straightforward and makes sense, but we, you do get some wild titles.

To some of these positions. So did, is that just something, just basically how they classified it, or do you think that you're truly doing crime analysis and intelligence?

Laura: I honestly do both. I think a lot of us do both. I, my detectives know that I love doing the quote unquote digging. So they [00:12:00] actually will give me a lot of work to do.

Cause you know. They'll, they know that I'll try my best, but I also do a lot of crime analysis. Like, I'm constantly coming up with, hey, we just had this pop up or, you know, this problem pop up here or there. So, yeah, I think it really does. I think most of us, most of the, most of the analysts in Arlington, we do both.

Yeah,

Jason: and I think that's, I think when you look at it, it usually is that way, unless you are, it may be where you're assigned. If if you're assigned to investigative unit, like when I was in Baltimore, we were assigned to the homicide unit. So clearly we were doing more intelligence intelligence than that.

And then when I went to Cincinnati, and I was, my office was close to I. T. I feel that I did more crime analysis. More or summarizing of the data that would make sense. Yeah. So, I [00:13:00] think it does depend on where you're stationed, which is a whole conversation in itself is like, where your station dictates what type of work you're going to get.

Yes. So all right. Well, this brings us to your analyst badge story. And so it just happened this year, . This deals with a some facial recognition work that you did. Yes.

Laura: So we had my, the district I was working in, we were working a vape shop detail.

We had been having a lot vape shop burglaries that we were trying to combat, and we. Or actually did, the detail was citywide. A report came in that one of the officers working the vape shop, vape shop detail was working. He, they had stopped a car. And I believe the car was near a vape shop. It had a paper plate on it.

And the, there were two guys in the car. They ended up pulling it over. I can't remember exactly why. I think it was just because it was in the [00:14:00] area and I don't know if it matched a description or I can't remember off the top of my head, but they ended up pulling the car over. The driver ended up IDing himself and I believe he had warrants and he was arrested.

They, in the car, they found I don't remember if it was a driver or the passenger, but they had like a black mask in their pocket. I think it was this passenger. The plate on the car also did not come back to the car. The passenger stated that he did not have any identification on him and they, the officer did a really good job.

She kind of... kept questioning him. She knew something wasn't right. But he gave a name and a date of birth. It didn't come back to anything, but he was about 18. So it also could have been possible that it wouldn't come back to anything because he might not have had a criminal history yet. He didn't have a cell phone on him or anything like that either.

So they ended up arresting him and took him to jail with the focus to fingerprint him. And they ran his prints. Just through the state of Texas and didn't come back to anything. So there's really, there was nothing they could hold him on. So they let him go the next day.[00:15:00] He got out and then I was reading the report and I'm like, something's not right with this.

And I got his book in photo and we have like a Metroplex wide email chain that we're on. And. I sent it out and asked somebody to run the his mugshot through facial recognition through Clearview because we do not at this time have Clearview. So they ran Jessica Hunter from Mesquite PD actually ran it for me and I got the results back and it came back to a kid that was wanted out of Louisiana, I think it was Monroe, Louisiana.

He had tried to kill some police officers there and then I guess he fled after that came back to Arlington So I ran his mugshot found out then, you know now I

know who he is and then we're like, okay, where did he go? so then the kind of the hunt was on and We were just trying to find him he He was actually kind of hard to find.

He was doing a really good job at hiding himself. But we had actually, the next day after he got [00:16:00] released, police officers from my district were called for a guy breaking into cars at a hotel and they contacted him and it was, it was the same. Kid from Louisiana. He actually gave the same name the same day to birth.

So by then he was in our system and showed like he was, a person. And so he got away from us again. So he didn't only just get away from us a long time. He got away from us. I believe I don't remember how much long it was. He went back to Louisiana and he ended up getting arrested there eventually.

But actually got a medal of merit for Reported missing. The work that I did finding him last week at my job. And I think in the thing, the, the write up that they did for the award, they, they said that this enacted policy changes because they should have ran as Prince, I guess, nationwide.

Jason: Oh, okay.

All right. And when you said back to the facial recognition portion, and you said the Metroplex, like, what, what is that?

Laura: DFW Dallas, it's all the surrounding cities of Dallas [00:17:00] and Fort Worth. It's pretty big. I don't even know how many agencies are involved, but there's a lot of us.

Jason: Yeah, yeah. And so with this facial recognition, once you compared the photos, were you pretty sure that it was him?

Oh,

yes.

Laura: I don't know because there were a lot of news stories from when he was wanted out of Monroe. He had been on the news a few times for the stuff he had done. I think he'd been involved in another murder besides the attempted murder of the police officers. Somehow, I don't think he was the suspect.

But so there were quite a few. New stories with his mugshot attached

Jason: to it that is as you're telling this story i'm thinking how i would have behaved sitting in that passenger car knowing that i'm wanted i know and the fact that he gets taken in and he's sitting there and eventually gets released.

Laura: I'm [00:18:00] like, he is a lucky, I'm like, he is like the luckiest criminal.

Jason: , that's like Jason Bourne or something like that, like , espionage type stuff.

Laura: He got away the second time too. They took him. But they thought he was having they took him to like the mental health ward because I guess something was going on that they determined that he needed to go there.

So he was in their custody and then got released again and we still didn't know at that time who he was.

Jason: So that's, there's a couple of gaps there then , I feel that , when you deal with all these jurisdictions Deal with, , who wants what, and there's just so much data and so many wanted flyers and bulletins and everything else, but I mean, this was a happy, happy ending, but it certainly could have been a lot worse if he would have gone on to do something worse.

And then at the time that was, he was on y'all's radar and he didn't get

Laura: caught. It was, that was my, [00:19:00] my first initial thought was the officer that, you know, had been dealing with him. I mean, she was probably trying to figure out who he was for more than an hour, I think. I mean, it was a long time that she was really working.

And I thought of her. Her and the other officers on the scene of what if he would've had a gun? What if they're like, what if he would've tried to hurt them or even killed them? Like it just, it was scary. It was scary to think about how this could have, I don't know what the result could have been. Yeah.

Jason: And you know, from time to time, I'll hear folks talk about like officers sixth . And there is a scenario where you just. Something's the conversation is not going as smooth and easy as it should be. And it's, it is a little bit odd. If you would see it on, , all these body cams now, , somebody could watch that and they say, there's nothing there.

And yet the, the feeling is that just something is a little bit off and it's, [00:20:00] it's interesting when. When that, something like that gets picked up and, and sure enough, it is exactly something is, it's not right. In this case, he was wanted , for pretty serious crime

Laura: and it wasn't, it really was just a bunch of loopholes that he was able to get through.

And I don't think he had that purpose, but like the running of the fingerprints, I mean, they did, they went by the jail and the officers, they did everything that they were Protocol wise supposed to do. It was just he just he just kept kind of just get. I mean, he really got lucky.

Jason: Yeah, it's it is. It is interesting that all that happened and and but and still got out evaded three different times.

Now, you said that you read the report. Do you read all the reports or how does, how do you normally sift through the, the reports that you read?

Laura: I read most of [00:21:00] them for my district. Occasionally if I find a problem, I'll try to, you know, read other reports from other districts trying to find out if anything is related to the offenses of my district.

But yeah, I read, I mean, think of, I don't read like missing persons or anything like that. But if it's a crime you know, even the thefts, which. It's not my favorite, but I read them.

Jason: Yeah. , with police reports, , there's obviously more data entry and cops writing their own report, typing up their own reports.

I don't even know if they're doing like a speech to text type reports and whatnot, but are, do you feel like the narratives have gotten better over the years? Some

Laura: I think of sometimes there's still some some bad ones. Yeah. Yeah. But I don't know. Sometimes I feel like the officers don't understand how important the little details can be like, I don't know, say if it's a mo a detail, they might think, Oh, that's not that's not that big of a deal.

But if you [00:22:00] an analyst reading the reports, if we start seeing it, you know, you might read one report and it mentions something pretty specific and the other one might Mention something very similar, but it's like missing one

little component. So you have to kind of reach out and then you'll find out, hey, this component was involved, these two cases are related.

I dunno, I feel like sometimes the officers don't understand how necessary the little details are in their

Jason: reports. Yeah. I mean, especially when they're there, take the report and they're on a clock and expected to get to the next call type thing.

Laura: Yes, I think that also goes hand in hand with our bulletins as well.

Whenever you are putting together a bulletin to send out and you are including these little details. I think sometimes officers are like, I don't need to know that. But. Some, I mean, we have, you know, other audiences to like, we're sending it to other analysts.

Jason: Yeah. Although, you know, officers do like to hunt.

So, if you give them something very specific, that [00:23:00] will be all about it. , and then on another case, again, this year, , you testified at. At court. So let's talk a little bit about that.

Laura: I was really nervous.

I had never testified before. As long as I've been an analyst, I'd never been called. And I actually kind of knew it was coming because the DA's office kept calling. I testified for some cell data records that I had done on. And it was an ag assault case, or it's a road rage case, actually. Where a lady was pointing a gun at a driver going down one of the busiest streets in our city.

. So the district attorney's office was calling pretty often asking about the call records on several cases that I had done. And I honestly, some of these cases were two years old. So I kind of knew I kept telling like my coworkers that we're now doing them. I'm like, you gotta be really good with your records and keep, you know, good notes because they're coming back like two years later and [00:24:00] asking about these records I did because they don't understand.

What it is exactly and how we get all the information and they don't understand how the cell towers work or anything like that. So in this case, It was a lady who was driving down the road I think somebody had honked at her at a light and she got mad and was chasing this lady down Cooper Street, which is pretty

much the main North and South Street in our city. It's six lanes and it's just, it's really busy.

So she was chasing her. The detective that was working the case. It's got the Google records from it. And so I mapped it and was able to show her direction of travel, even when she turned around and went another direction, it really correlated. The report had mentioned she went down to the spot, turned around, and then she went left.

So I was able to like, just pretty much follow. And reiterate what the report was saying with the data records. So I got called to testify. The prosecutor didn't really [00:25:00] know a lot, but he was really good. He was really trying to learn, and he asked me to come testify. And I did. I was, I just, I had never done anything like this.

I don't even know if I've known an analyst. that has testified or I hadn't talked to anybody about it before, but luckily the defense attorney, he was older and he really did not understand. So I didn't get really heavily cross examined at all because I don't think he knew what to ask me to try to, I don't know, argue with what I was, the points that I was making.

Yeah. I don't,

Jason: in that regard, I think it's, it's interesting because I'm. It's just data. It's data. All you're going to say is, okay, we know that that phone was on the suspect. And this is what this phone company, or in this case, Google was sent us. And this is what the data is coming back at. Yes, follow it.

We can put it on a map. We can use the coordinates. They're only probably [00:26:00] recourse would be to challenge whether she had the phone on her.

Laura: Yes. And he didn't. I think the only thing he challenged was, did I see her in the car? I was like, no.

Jason: Yeah. I testified once because there was a GPS on the suspect's vehicle and then the suspect ended up getting murdered in the vehicle.

So I mapped out like basically the last two hours of the, g p s signals. And I thought I was, I didn't think I was gonna get challenged on that, but I had spec in my map that I created. I had speculated like what he was possibly doing, right? Yes. And because I said, I said there, well, there was a girlfriend's house here and it looks like that's probably where he sto stopped at.

And then, this is where he was killed in the car and then the car moved like, like slid down the hill basically. And, I walked that part [00:27:00] through in like a, in like a, a zoom in on the map as well. So I thought for sure that I would get.

Get cross examined on all of that, but I didn't sell, I mean, it comes, I guess when it comes to that, when it's just the data, I mean, all you're going to say is like, this is what the data is saying. Yes,

Laura: that's pretty much exactly what I did. I used a pointer and was like, at this time she was here, then a couple minutes later she was here, here, showed, it was, it was easy.

They were asking though, like, how does this data work? And, you know, I'm like, it's bouncing off the Wi Fi. It was just, but the defense attorney, he was like, did you see her? And he tried to, I was like, this is not.

Jason: There's no camera, so it's funny that you say point or two, because they gave me a point or two and they might as well just handed me a fire hose because I was like shaking so bad that I'm like, Nope, we're not using that.

Laura: So nervous. I called my husband afterwards. I was like, I don't even know if I was that nervous on my wedding day.

Jason: Yeah. Yeah. Galbraith.[00:28:00]

Adrienne: Have you ever received an email on a giant listserv and started to hit reply all instead of just reply? If so, you're not the only one. Just always pause and double check before you hit send.

Jennifer: This is Jennifer Loper. When you wear too much cologne, it stays in the elevator. Forever.

Jason: When you're talking yesterday in the prep call, we got to talking about certain patterns and trends that you're seeing there in Arlington. And you had mentioned that you got some like a trend here with people targeting jewelry. . So I found that interesting that you're seeing that and maybe listeners might have a similar situation.

Laura: So around the DFW Metroplex, we have had a lot [00:29:00] of what are called Romanian travelers. And I think that they're actually nationwide. I think they just hit different. Places and then they moved on to the next places or place.

Some of them that we have worked have come from Florida. . These Romanian travelers, they travel in pretty big groups. They all normally live together or live very close to each other. And we have a large community of them living here in Arlington.

They tend to commit. Some type of theft or fraud. I think some of the crimes are committing in the past, probably to me in the past year, I've seen, they've changed a little bit in the past. They would commit shopliftings where ladies would go in and they wear these big skirts and in the skirts, they have sewn big pockets and they're able to just stuff like even large items down their pockets.

And then they leave the store with all of the items. Kind of hidden in their skirt. They target like larger stores or grocery stores. They'll still baby formula [00:30:00] They'll still clothes, shoes Anything that pretty much that I guess that they can they ship the items off Often to like New York or California and then I don't know if they go anywhere else from there

Jason: And there's a market for this stuff.

Like you said baby formula That, I mean, obviously jewelry, I, I, I guess I understand there's, that's a, that could be an expensive item, but something as, I mean, I don't know, maybe the baby formula prices have skyrocketed since I'd last looked, but it doesn't, and then you're shipping them somewhere. It just, that's, it seems to me

the juice wouldn't be worth the squeeze on that.

Laura: No they also though, they will approach a female in a parking lot that has, and I think if I remember correctly, the victims are usually Asian or Indian, and they will tell them that they have this nice piece of jewelry and they want to put that on them, but then when they put it on them, they take their jewelry off and [00:31:00] steal it, and then they just drive off.

Or the person won't notice till later on that they switched their necklaces or their bracelet or whatever piece of jewelry it was. It's normally a necklace, I believe.

That's

Jason: smooth. They are like that's very smooth. That is smooth. I mean, I don't, I don't wear jewelry other than a wedding ring, but to me that you, that's a really takes skill to remove like a necklace or, or even an earring or something like that.

Even, or even a bracelet. So something that you can actually see and watch them do that.

Laura: It's mainly the necklaces. I remember hearing about, but yeah, they're very smooth. They also, we had one a Romanian couple this was probably in April, they went into a Ross Dress for Less store, and I think they were getting a bunch of like baby clothes.

That's another thing that they often will steal is baby clothes. They were buying baby clothes and they somehow did like a quick change scam. They [00:32:00] ended up getting back like, I can't remember how much their bill was, but they ended up getting back a lot of money and the, the, this couple was actually from Florida.

But they were pretty well known there and here. So that, that's another, I mean, they just do, they put, eat the scanners on the credit card machines to get, you know, and then they'd commit fraud with the credit card numbers that they gain off of those. They're into a lot of, You know, different theft type offenses.

Jason: Yeah. So, so how does, how do you go about identifying these folks? If if these types of people are in, in a listeners jurisdiction, what are some things to look

Laura: for? I think often they will have an ID from another state. And the names like you'll know, it's a, it's always a foreign. Name, you'll know pretty, like when you see them I always, I mean, I, I don't know.

I always just kind of know who they are, but if I don't know who they are, if I send it out to like other agencies, there's always somebody that knows who [00:33:00] these people are because they have been dealt with so many times. They often too, but with the, you know, they have the big skirts that they wear. The females almost always are wearing dresses.

They're usually pretty long. There's been a few times where they'll wear pants, but for the most part, they'll, I've seen them in dresses and they always drive minivans. They're normally older minivans. They always have paper plates or not always, but a lot of times they have paper plates. They always travel in pretty big groups.

There's usually not just one of them when they commit these crime crimes. There's usually, I don't know, I would say three or four different females sometimes will come in, especially when they do the shoplifting offenses.

Jason: Now, are they normally into a variety of different things, whether it's fraud or theft, when they come to town, are they doing all that stuff usually?

Or is it when they come to town, they're usually picking, like, they're either just doing theft or they're just doing fraud?

Laura: I think they do it [00:34:00] all, but I also think that there's different groups that do certain things, but they're all kind of grouped together. If that makes sense,

Jason: it's fascinating to me that they would be doing this to sell it, right? Some of this information like baby clothes, like I can imagine that there's a huge market for baby clothes. But as you mentioned, they were mostly doing that to do the, it was more of a credit card scam, I guess. Yeah, that, that is.

Fascinating that they would be stealing that and everything else, but it's just, you know, there's so much there and there's, it's so busy and everything else that it wasn't surprised me that you have these groups out there that know how to find the soft spots. In these retail stores and then exploit it, they

Laura: just, it, [00:35:00] it's so, I mean, they're always into something.

So there's like always something that you can be looking at with this group of people too. I think that's, I mean, they keep us pretty busy. Honestly.

Jason: Yeah, I mean, that's a, that's a TV show though, right there. Like you, talk to groups, like, okay, how. Yeah. How would you, , historically have stole from this store or whatnot?

That's interesting.

Laura: I think they also will leave, like say they have an apartment in Arlington. I think that they will leave for a few weeks and go say to like Oklahoma city and they'll commit a whole bunch of offenses there. And then they come back. Yeah. Yeah. They, they're really into a lot and it's just, it's very, it's not, you know, it's not little.

That's for

Jason: sure. Yeah. Well, that's what I was getting to as well though, because I mean, if obviously if you're talking about something like jewelry, you can get, you can meet the threshold of, of grand theft. And even the credit card fraud, I

mean, it doesn't take very much to get to a [00:36:00] high threshold there either, but some of this other stuff with shoplifting, I mean, if they're just in and out of the whole entire state, it's, it's, it's going to be , hard to track.

And even if they do catch them or whatever it is, are they going to bring, you know. You know, it's the word I'm looking for, bring it, bring, you know, bring them over from a different state. I don't

Laura: know. Even in Texas shoplifting, if you have two or more convictions, it's a felony. So a lot of these people, it's automatically a felony anyways, because they've already done, you know, committed so many offenses.

Yeah. They just do not care.

Jason: How many are they doing before they get caught? Right. It is to me, it's you, you run out of family members eventually. I would think that, or. Members of your team, unless you just combining forces once so many people on your team get arrested and thrown in jail for a period of time.

Laura: I think also I [00:37:00] read somewhere, I'm not sure where I read this that they often, they enter the United States and then they go to Washington state because Washington has really lax identification laws. So they're able to go get IDs there with different names. And then they'll, that's how they get different identities.

Jason: Okay. All right. So that's, again, that's.

Laura: And also they're very good at committing fraud. So they easily can make a document saying this person is so and so, and then they're able to go get another identification.

Jason: Yeah, no, it's, it's, it's a lot. It doesn't take very much to. Find the soft spots as mentioned, and especially if you're good at documentation and and that kind of forgery and whatnot.

Yes. Once you know the rules and and how to have what it would take to get an ID. Yeah. It doesn't surprise me that they could have several ideas. No,

Laura: it's a, [00:38:00] it's a lot of work working them, but a lot of the, there's a lot of detectives here now that are pretty well versed in who they are and what they do.

And you can usually find out who they are pretty quickly, but that's until they move to somewhere else. And they're new there.

Jason: Yeah, and I think that's, you just keep on going, right? It's just there's going to be a lot of opportunities, a lot of hunting areas for these. Types of people to just keep on kind of like nomads in a way that you can just go from town to town.

And because it's going to be brand new to law enforcement into businesses, businesses aren't might not pick it up right away. It's going to take them a long time to. To pick it up. Yes.

. Well, let's get into our advice section now. And one of the things I like to ask my guests is return on investment.

So this is something that an analyst can study today because maybe in 5 years, it'll be important.

Laura: That to me is Anything [00:39:00] technology related, but mostly I think now more than ever, knowing the different languages like SQL or Python or are anything like that are important for us to start learning so that we can automate a lot of our processes and save time with the work that we're doing, but also provide Like in our agency, we're really big on giving command staff access to the data so that they can know their numbers without having to come to us.

They can pretty much look it up at any time. But I believe learning the programming languages is really important for the field of crime analysis right now.

Jason: Yeah, I'm a SQL guy, so I can echo that. I do find it interesting that not a lot. A lot of analysts seem to be using that either any kind of coding.

And it makes me wonder what they're truly getting out of their RMS or CAD. Because if you're just relying on the reports or the [00:40:00] GUI interface for these programs, there's a lot of data behind the curtain. Yes. That you're only going to be able to recover. If you're coding and so it seems like you are leaving a lot on the table.

If you're not exploring that data through query

Laura: language. I actually wish that they would have some sort of class on this and the and I haven't looked at the schedule this year to know if they will, but. I think that, I don't know. I don't, I don't think it's not going to go away. Technology has evolved.

I, even in the past couple of years, it has evolved so much in our field or the field of law enforcement. I just, I think it's really important.

Jason: Yeah. Agreed. So how about an unpopular opinion? This is a question I'm asking recently where might have a hot take on a position in law enforcement analysis that goes against the grain.

Laura: I don't know if this so much goes against the grain, but I think we tend not [00:41:00] to speak up. And that is the analyst sometimes knows more about. To the detective, like if you're working with a detective, I think that the analyst oftentimes knows more about crimes and trans than sometimes they're given credit for.

I think sometimes I've heard, overheard people say, it's not really been directed towards me, but you know, the civilian aspect of it, I think they think that we don't know sometimes what we're talking about for the simple fact that we're civilians, when actually we read all of these reports and you really get to know what is going on in whatever area you're working on, even if it's just a crime type that you investigate, like a robbery analyst or a homicide analyst.

Yeah. You know what's different and what's not, and what could be related to something else, and I think, sometimes you get written off. I remember years ago, I was working on a case, and there were some residential burglaries. I kept going to the detective saying, hey, I think these other cases are related.

I think these are [00:42:00] related. He would say, no, no, they're not. It's a different car. It's a different, I can't remember what it was, but I knew it was a different car. And I would say, no, but it's the same M. O. that's happening at the same times. It didn't happen before. for like, I think this is related and I was pretty adamant and finally I had to say, look, I.

I am never this confident about something. And so I really think that you should pay attention to what I'm saying. And it ended up turning out whenever he, they finally caught the suspect, he interviewed the suspect and just happened to ask about these other ones. And he found out that it actually was him.

He admitted to them. So I feel like that aspect of. The civilian not knowing sometimes or the analyst not, you know, they just think sometimes that we don't know, but we do. We're pretty smart people.

Jason: Well, it does take a little bit of tenacity, right? Because you're gonna get no's. Yes. You're gonna, you're gonna get people there that are gonna tell you no.

And it's really up to you as an analyst to stick with it. [00:43:00] And to sell them on the idea and I kudos to you for sticking with it because I think that when you said that in the beginning, my thought was, well, there's some analysts that, you know, wouldn't say crap if they had a mouthful and that gets me just shaking my head because.

You know, you have a lot of information to share and yet you either don't think it's your place or don't want to make waves or you just, you want to stay in that box or whatever the reason is shyness introverted list goes on and on, but it does drive me crazy that , you're not jumping in and getting, you know, being involved and being active and tenacious.

Laura: Yes, and that also, the, that is also my advice. I don't know if you want me to go into that now, but it kind of falls along the same. So my advice [00:44:00] also is that don't be afraid to ruffle feathers. Don't be afraid to stand up for yourself. I think the longer you're in this field, of course, the more likely you're going to be, but even in the beginning, You don't want to ruffle feathers.

Don't ruin your career. Don't do anything like that. I have actually made that mistake I was speaking up when I shouldn't have about things But I just think it's really important because of the personality types that we are working with You have to be able to stand up for yourself and speak up and you're not always gonna be wrong people will try to make you feel like you are sometimes but I don't, I don't, I think analysts I think we know a lot more than we're given credit for sometimes.

Yeah.

Jason: All right. Good deal. So let's talk a little bit about the IACA conference. It's coming up in August and not too far from you. I'm told that I have to say it's grapevine. I can't say that it's Dallas or Fort Worth or whatever it is. Somehow, like it is against the law for me [00:45:00] to say it's in any other place other than grapevine.

. How many have you gone

Laura: to? You know, I have been to Three or four. I can't remember. I know it's a Scottsdale like in 2009. I think it was. Where else have I been? And then I went to Chicago last year, which was really good conference.

I really enjoyed myself. I learned a lot. I loved all the mapping sessions that they had.

And then I'm going this year, of course, because it's not far and my boss is, my boss is really good. She's signed for all of us and pretty much told them that we're not going to be there that week that we're all going. So, Good, it's going to be great,

Jason: good, yeah and I just looked at the schedule real quick.

It does look like they have a sequel. They have good using GIS and SQL Server to streamline workflows by Shelby Robertson. So

I will be in that class

, I would hope that if it's local, most, most [00:46:00] people would, would go to the conference. I remember the year that it was in Louisville.

I was really surprised. I shouldn't be surprised, but I was really surprised how few people from like Cincinnati went because it's not that far away. But, you know, but maybe Louisville is not a destination or that you go there all the time. So you don't necessarily want to put in for a conference.

That's only an hour and a half down the road. But I was a little surprised that. So, you know, sometimes the locals don't show up to these

Laura: conferences and it's like, it's so much cheaper actually. I just remembered they had a conference in Arlington and I went to that 1 to when I worked for Fort worth. I don't remember.

Was that was a long time ago.

Jason: Let's see here. That might be 2010. Maybe 2010. I think I think so because I think that's the year that I got got the ICA certification. Oh, it was it was in there. I want to say it was 2010. It was definitely in Arlington. I want to

say it was 2010. So. But , other than [00:47:00] SQL, what are you hoping to see at this conference?

Laura: I just, let me think. I think mostly what I have been getting out of it is the mapping classes because we're switching to ArcPro. We have already started to migrate over. So that last year, that's mainly what I attended because we had just started using pro. I want to say it was last year, maybe the year before but I'm still learning it.

We're still using, we're using both. We're using ArcPro and ArcMap. So those classes to me, honestly, are going to be my focus.

And I haven't looked at the schedule. I know Naomi from rock wall. She's a rock wall analyst. She's teaching a course. So I'm looking forward to going to her class and seeing what she's teaching on or no Emmy. That's her name. Sorry. I said it wrong. It's no Emmy. How do you spell it? N. O. E. M. I.

Jason: So the name of her session is under construction, paving the way for a [00:48:00] crime analyst unit. That's right. I do find that some of these, I'm looking over the schedule here now for the and I, I like that. There seems to be a lot of very. Hands on tangible things to learn.

Like, they have some access stuff. They have some Excel stuff. They have some ArcGIS. They have, you know, that idea of forming a unit or changing a unit, which is really something that you could take home. I, I feel that sometimes with these conference sessions, there's, it's too much of. Lecture base too much awareness.

. Just so you're aware of the sit in this class listen for 45 minutes and then leave. And there's not, it's not, it can be hard to. Bring something like, what did you learn at this conference? And you're like, well, I was made aware of X, Y, and Z, but I'm not sure what I'm going to do with that.

Yes. [00:49:00] So, but it seems like here I do, I, I'm, it's good to see in this initial schedule that there are some very much take homes that you can, you can learn.

Laura: I think also what would be needed speaking of that, like the, the hands on training is now because it's becoming so much more widespread with the CDR records, how to testify in court, because I had no idea.

So. What I was doing, honestly, I mean, I figured it out, but I think that might be also helpful. Another class,

Jason: , it's funny from one year to the other. I think like the one year. All the survey data said that they recommended having some kind of court, like, session on that, some, how to testify.

And then, I think, the next year they put it in and nobody showed up.

Laura: Oh, that's, So, but it's a whole different, it could be a whole,

Jason: It's in a different city, you know, you go to these conferences and [00:50:00] 60% of the attendees are first timers. So you're not getting a lot of repeat customers.

And so that the, the people from last year, filling out the, the surveys aren't the same people that are attending this year's conference, right? I don't

Laura: understand that though, because. I come back so refreshed and so energized to learn and do more and come back with ideas like I, I don't know. I think it's so helpful for me for the whole year.

Honestly, that I go to it and keep learning. Yeah,

Jason: I, I think it oppo opportunities to network, but there's also other conferences out there. As well, and you even have certain police departments where you're rotating through. So, you get to go, you get to go this year and 4 years from now to a conference. So, whatever 1 that you pick.

So, you don't get to go every year. You go, you're on this rotation of once every, maybe 3 or 4 years. That's

Laura: true. [00:51:00] I didn't really I forgot about I wasn't thinking.

Jason: Yeah, I mean, but when there's a will, there's a way . That's why they have opportunities to either volunteer for the association or to teach or whatnot to, to, to lighten the load of expenses for these.

But I do feel that, you know, there's, there's, there is a lot. But it is, it can be, it can be tough to choose, right? Because if I'm going to I A C A and then I decide to do. Hi, Leah. Well, that's 2 weeks right there. And then if I want us wants to

go somewhere else, whether it's gang related or, or, you know, specific training for.

For a software or whatnot it's I mean, that's that's 3 or 4 weeks that you're out in the entire year. So that's true. It is. It can be a lot. And I think it, I, and I think it can and I know the, these folks that are putting together these conferences or, you know, [00:52:00] they got their ear to the ground. They're listening.

They're trying to create the best possible. Schedule that's, that's out there and you're trying to do what they've heard and all this other stuff that it's like some of this time you don't know, how well attended it's going to be until they get there, right? Because I don't, I, some people aren't signing up to the last minute.

And so, you're trying, I guess, my, my thing, I would, I would should ask Brittany that. Brittany Winslow, who's chair of the conference committee for ICA, if they're actually surveying the registered people, I don't know if they do that now. I

Laura: actually, I just thought of that too. Once I said that I wish that they would have the testifying in court class, but then I was thinking there's so many agencies and they're big and they're small and they're just like some have technology, some don't.

I think coming up with all these classes would be really difficult to try to target a certain audience. So I'm in my own little world thinking this is needed, but maybe it's not [00:53:00] really needed everywhere else. Well,

Jason: I mean, I mean, but I think that's why ArcGIS is so popular with this conference. Yes.

ArcGIS, most people aren't, most departments aren't paying for their ArcGIS. It's part of their city, you know, city planning or, or whatnot. And I think that's why, it's so popular here with police departments is it's a program that they have access to. Same thing with like Excel and Access. Right.

It's most people have that on their machines, but you get to something more specific like I to or sell Hawk or any one of these ones, then not everybody's going to have that that software. That's true. So it does. It gets a little bit more difficult to, to test and to get the right audience for

Laura: that.

It does.

Jason: . Another thing too that I thought about with the conferences and, and you can speak on this a little bit because you [00:54:00] do some teaching for universities and in crime analysis is, is why they're. Aren't more universities that come to the conference as a vendor, right?

Cause I, especially the ones that have a crime and intelligence master's degree, because we mentioned that 60% of the attendees are first time attendees. I'm guessing, well, they always have them stand up. I can just survey them. When I look over them, they're, they're within like three or four years. Of being in the profession, they're newbies and even to the profession, most likely, and so that's, that's something where I would think that a lot of people, , once they're in their 1st or 2nd year of a career that they then look to do get a master's degree.

So I would think there would be a lot of people in the audience that a university could target and get their [00:55:00] program's name out

Laura: there. I agree. I also feel like, like mine is an undergrad certificate that you can get the schools that I teach for. I think that's needed too, because it will just help you further when you're, I mean, there's so many, sometimes so many people applying for the crime analyst positions and I think any of the schools would benefit from coming to these conferences and trying to get people signed up for their courses or their certificates.

Master's program would be excellent. I wish that I could have gotten my, my master's is just in criminal justice, but I wish I could have tailored it more towards the crime analysis aspect. I've had mine for a while, so I don't even know if I remember seeing that there were any masters for crime analysis.

Jason: Yeah, yeah, I just saw that yours is from 2011. I guess with that, do you feel now that it's been 10 plus years? that you got your master's. [00:56:00] How do you feel about it? Do you think it was worthwhile? Do you think it was a good return on your investment to get a master's?

Laura: I go both ways with it. It was definitely not needed.

I honestly got my master's because my brother had his and I wanted to be the same.

I don't, it, it, it, it wasn't needed, but it has helped me a lot. Especially with teaching. I would not be able to teach if I didn't have it, and I really enjoy

teaching more than I thought I would honestly. But yeah, so I, I kind of go both ways with it. It's, it definitely wasn't needed, but I'm glad that I have it.

I'm, I'm glad that it's offered me opportunities that I wouldn't have had

Jason: otherwise. Well, no, that's good. That's good. All right. Well, let's move on to personal interest then. And we're going to get into more competition talk because you're, you and your husband like to play Call of Duty together.

Laura: Yeah, we play pretty much every day. I don't, I just, I love it. I just, I started [00:57:00] playing. I didn't start till late. I mean, I played, you know, well, honestly, when I was a kid there, I'm going to age myself. There was Atari. And I remember playing a Nintendo, but I didn't really play as an adult until five or six years ago.

I started playing out of boredom pretty much. I think I, I was, it was before I was married and a guy I was dating played and I kind of was like, well, let me see if this might be something that I like to, you know, take my mind off of just watching TV or something while I'm sitting at home. I started playing and then I met my husband and we actually met because I.

Played call of duty. We met online and he saw my profile and I had on there that I played call of duty. He was like, Oh, a gamer chick. And so pretty much every day we play I boss him around a lot, but she doesn't like, and I try not to do.

Jason: Yeah. I mean, I'm, I'm guessing there's a lot of trash talking going on.

Oh,

Laura: there is with other people. I have like this thing called proximity chat in the game. And so there's a lot of people that talk crap to each [00:58:00] other. Sometimes, you know, I just roll my eyes at it, but

Jason: yeah, I like you. I. Started with the Atari and played video games, most of my childhood and into young adult, but it did get to the point there that I turned into old man elder.

And I'm like, this is way too much for me. Like, this is way too complicated. And, and those shooting games are one of them because I, I don't have the hand eye coordination to use the little joystick and to aim the gun to do headshots, like real quick. Like, I don't have that coordination at all. Yeah. And like, to me,

so I'm playing my son likes to play some of those games and he, you know, he's 1314 years old and he'll laugh at me because he'll just crush me every time and I just, I don't have that capability.

So he's just crushing me each and every time and loves it.

Laura: I remember when I first started playing, I didn't know what all the game modes [00:59:00] were and I had just gotten the confidence to start playing like the live games with other players and I went into, I think it was like a competition type mode. I didn't know what it was at the time.

I went in there and I played and I was horrible and some guy was like, don't ever play this mode again. I was like, I'll do what I want. I was, I had no idea what I was doing. .

Jason: Yeah. Yeah. It, it got, it does get brutal there. And I, man went their game. They yelled at me, . Yeah. No, it's, it's funny. No, this is, I tell this story

my wife's boss When we were lived in Cincinnati, I mean, this is a, a guy that's head of research of, of the department well-known. Universities pay him to travel all over the world to come speak about his research. Okay. So just picture that person in your head? Yes. Well,

he decided with his teenage boy that he wanted to come up with an activity for them to do [01:00:00] together. And I think it was either, I, it might've been Call of Duty, it might've been the Xbox One, I can't remember. But it was a first person shooting game and he, his name was White Raptor and, he was horrible.

Right? And so the one, the one time they were play him. It's late at night and he was just about finishing up and he got I guess there was a, there's a way that somebody can message you and even give you a voicemail. Yeah, and so he got a voicemail from what was like an 8 year old and then the 8 year old goes.

White Raptor, you suck balls. And I'm like, here's this guy that is like world renowned in his field and, you know, play this video game. And it's just a total different world. Like

Laura: the kid has no idea.

Jason: He doesn't care. He [01:01:00] doesn't care either.

Laura: Right? I have guys all the time. Tell me, shut up. My name's Wolf's girl.

That's my, my screen name. My husband is Wolf. They always say, shut up, Wolf's girl. Go make a sandwich. Oh my gosh. Y'all need, y'all need a little lesson about how to treat a wolf.

Jason: No, I'm sure it's brutal. Brutal.

Laura: Just because I'm a girl, I can't even. They have no idea. I'm like, I could be your mother.

Jason: You shut your mouth.

Yeah. There's definitely that, that whole element of confidence when you're not seeing, you're in the same room with the person, right? All right. Excellent. Excellent. So, all right, well, Hey our last segment of the show is where it's the world, and this is where. I give the guests the last word, Laura, you can promote any idea that you wish.

What are your words to the world?

Laura: I guess God is love. That's my, that's my word to the [01:02:00] world.

Jason: Very good. Well, I leave every guest with you've given me just enough to talk bad about you later. I know. But I do appreciate you being on the show, Laura. Thank you so much. And you be safe.

Thank 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

and other episodes found on our website at www.leapodcasts.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 at leapodcasts@gmail.com.

www.leapodcasts.com. Till next time, analysts, keep talking.