Michele Snow - The Analyst with a Gun

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.

Jason: Thank you for joining me. I hope many aspects of your life are progressing. My name is Jason Elder, and today our guest has over 16 years of law enforcement analysis experience. She spent time with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, Florida Highway Patrol, and the University of Florida.

She is a regular conference present. DAC instructor and a certified analyst. Oh, and she's also working on a PhD. She's known to some as an analyst with a gun. Please welcome Michelle Snow. Michelle, how we doing?

Michele: Good. Thank you for having me on the program.

Jason: Yes, it's always nice to talk to a fellow Floridian.

Glad to be here. . , man, you have a [00:01:00] lot going on. I am excited to break this all down and talk about your contributions to the profession. But let's first talk about , how you got started. How did you discover the law enforcement analysis

Michele: profession? So, without aging myself back in 2005, I was actually select.

To be a gubernatorial fellow under Governor Jeb Bush. And he had this, this program that he modeled after the White House Fellows. And during that time that his brother was in office. And so I was selected one of 13 graduate students statewide, and I was assigned to the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles.

And at the time, I was working on my thesis, which ended up being adolescent brain development and teenage driving policy. And so I had a lot of time to work with the Florida Highway. Which is a subdivision from the Department of

Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, and during the 2005, 2006. Hurricane season being in Florida, that was one of the, the highest hurricane seasons that we've seen, hurricane [00:02:00] Katrina.

And so I spent a lot of time at the Emergency Operations Center and from there I learned about operations. I learned about response to natural disasters. I learned about the role that the Florida Highway Patrol plays in E O C operations, and it was actually recognized several times by the governor for.

Participating and being active with E O C operations at the time of the hurricanes. So little taste into law enforcement at that point. They had a B C I I, which is an investigative analysis unit, but they didn't really have a, Proactive patrol operational side. So I was learning about both the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles and the Florida Highway Patrol concurrently while I was in the gubernatorial fellowship program.

Jason: How did you then become an analyst with the Florida Department

Michele: of Law Enforcement? So once my fellow. Came to an end. It was a year long program and I completed my thesis and had some opportunities [00:03:00] to study crash data through a qualitative and quantitative data collection. During that year I had the opportunity to also get to know the Florida department, law enforcement commissioners and assistant commissioners, and there was an opening as a government analyst at, at the time, I thought it was more of.

Public policy or sort of legislative type position. And come to find out, it was an investigative analysis role within the Office of Executive Investigations, working on both internal affairs cases and executive investigation cases. So I was there for about seven, eight. But I did wanna return home to Jacksonville, so I had the opportunity to apply for position at the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office.

Jason: You are part of that fellowship, studying crash data, studying just friends and patterns and coming up with best policies. [00:04:00] And then you go into this position where it's. Investigation, and so just can take us through that transition as you just start working some investigations as an analyst,

Michele: and that does seem disparate, but prior to my studies at the University of North Florida and the fellowship program, I was actually in the military and I was an officer with the United States Navy.

I was both assigned as an engineering officer and a legal officer. So my last two years of service, I was assigned to N a S Jacksonville as the legal officer doing investigations, JAG man investigations were judge advocate general investigations on different everything from death to child abuse.

So I did have that training, that military training. On how to conduct military investigations that were not law enforcement or legal, but serving that, that nexus, and that's what allowed me [00:05:00] to transition between the graduate school environment and the academic environment to employment as an investigative analyst with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

Jason: As you mentioned, you wanted to go home, so you go work for. The, the Sheriff's office. So quickly compare and contrast to the F D L E position to what you were doing there at the Sheriff's office? So

Michele: the Sheriff's Office obviously covers multiple different analysis types of, of roles from in.

Intelligence and criminal investigative analysis to tactical problem solving, operational, strategic administrative. So I was fortunate to be able to work with and get hired by some people in the field that I consider mentors and people that I very much look up to. My immediate supervisor was karma Raw.

And then she reported to Jamie Raus, who then reported to Matt White. And so they gave me an [00:06:00] opportunity, they took a chance on me, if you will, . So I actually got hired in as a grant position, so I wasn't even a full-time employee with full-time benefits. And so I was able to work and prove myself as a grant analyst and took me about a year to then become a public safety analyst one.

And then, two years to become a public safety analyst too. And I was able to work as a zone analyst, so working patrol, I had zone 1, 5, 4, and six at one point. So that was all very tactical and and operational in nature. And then I was assigned to the robbery unit and the sex crimes unit as an investigative analyst.

And so I've had the opportunity to, Work, some major cases, homicide sex bat with robberies, business robbery cases robbery in progress, prostitution, escort advice. Really a whole gamut of investigative type analysis as well as. Some problem solving initiatives. We had the police executive [00:07:00] research forum work with us, and we had a project that was, I think, 90 day project.

It was a problem solving initiative, and it's been , published and documented what the outcomes and the findings were. But basically we took 90 hotspots within the city of Jacksonville, and 30 of 'em were sort of placebo hotspots. 30 of them were problem solving and. Were business as usual. So I was able to work as sort of a problem solving type analyst within those, I was assigned at several hotspots to work.

So it's really a gamut of experiences working at the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office. Very high paced technology. using gis, learning a little bit of SQL and Oracle at the time, and really just learning the technical skills. Excel Crystal reports a long time ago, , and it really, you just really jumped in.

You really didn't. , there was not a lot of time , to take your time to learn. You really just had to jump in and, and start learning as as [00:08:00] much as you could. And j just living in the city of Jacksonville and working at the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office really changed my perspective of criminal justice and problem solving through non-criminal justice methodologies like community partnerships and, and seeking out other solutions.

Hmm.

Jason: So once you became. Public safety analyst one , that's no longer considered a grant position. Right. You were then correct. Within when then. Okay. I was sure. Hoping that all that time you weren't still a grant. No, sir. Position, that's , that's grant positions can be okay if if you're semi-retired and have benefits elsewhere, but that can be a little unnerving.

Grant positions you know, early in your.

Michele: Correct. It just gave me some time to prove myself, so that's what I did. Yeah.

Jason: During this time, did you find that you liked. Doing the problem solving over the tactical or [00:09:00] vice versa.

Michele: At the time, I really enjoyed working the investigative analysis, so putting together cases, everything from timelines to mapping to trying to help them solve cases, pattern series, and trends, but specifically with robberies.

At the time, the city was definitely experiencing a high number of armed robberies and carjacking. So I, I ended up liking the investigative piece a little bit more, and just even being behind the scenes and, and feeding information to

a detective live as he was doing the interview that was fulfilling or being able to be part of cases that went all the way to fruition, that went all the way to prosecution.

That was fulfilling as well. Yeah.

Jason: So, and remind me, Jacksonville, is that a

Michele: metro? It is. We have over, I think at this point, a million people that live here. So it's Northeast Florida, surrounded by Clay, Nassau, and St. John's counties. Okay. Bordering Georgia.

Jason: Do you feel that Jacksonville has, crime problems [00:10:00] unique to that area or it's given its size?

The same types of problems, , violent crime and

Michele: property crime. At the time of my employment, it was the highest murder. Mm-hmm. County. So to date, you know, we do have a shift of population. We're getting more and more folks moving to the city of Jacksonville.

The newly elected sheriff was just on yesterday, as a matter of fact, talking about a 13 year old homicide victim, and he was, he was surrounded by the district attorney and other community partners talking about the violent crime in Jacksonville. So it is, going up and they are recognizing it from the leadership perspective.

at the same time. I believe the sac, the special agent in charge, Mike Williams was also on the news yesterday talking about some, some investigative work that the F D L E local Regional Operations Center is doing in Jacksonville as well. So it, it's still gonna be an area where we wanna pay attention to.

[00:11:00] Mm-hmm. at the state level for sure. Mm-hmm. with violent crime and popul.

Jason: We had Jamie Rashaun. So I, I'm certainly know Jamie . But you know, Jamie loans you out during this time. And this brings us to one of your analyst badge stories.

And for those that may be new to the show, the analyst badge story is the crew defining case or project that analyst works. And so, Around this time that you start become the lead analyst on a federal extortion case?

Michele: Yes. Jamie allowed me to work with the F B I as their lead analyst, and at the time it was an information report that came into the Sex Crimes Unit, and I was reading every single information report every.

Sex battery, every child abuse case, every senior case, and this one just happens to come in. And I looked at it and sort of my gut instinct, just because I've been reading so many of these, said there's more to this particular information report. And so I, I followed up [00:12:00] bys. Speaking to one of the lead detectives in the Sex Crimes unit, and him and I both looked at this and, and we did a little bit more digging in.

He decided to go ahead and blast out an N C I C F C I C message and just to see if other states had been experiencing this particular case. It was kind of a quid pro quo sex for money or sex for whatever. So it became an extortion case. There were 13. That reported cases similar. Mm-hmm. and I was able to do some mapping and some timelines of this particular person's whereabouts and tra everything from traffic citations to residential locations and from there.

Worked with the FBI and with the US attorney's office, and it was the first time the us, the local US attorney said that he'd ever seen g I s apply to sex crimes or any other type of case. So that, that was a very pivotal moment as well. And long story short, the, the [00:13:00] suspect ended up pleading to 20 years, and he was, I think, 65 or 68 years old at the time.

So I, I definitely felt like I contributed to the, the case I contributed to public safety at large by contributing to the analysis of the 13 different states worth of cases. And so he ended up playing for 20 years. Wow.

Jason: So why was it important to use G I S to tell the story of what this person was doing? So,

Michele: Being able to map his locations everything from where he was cited for traffic stop to where he was working and where he was living. It was, it was using the routine activity.

And just sort of workplace work activity. We all sort of do things within a, a common space, and so I really wanted to showcase that he was in the area, he worked nearby. He had, there was some intent, there was [00:14:00] motivation,

and to be able to use technology to help solve cases. It was, it was somewhat of being a maverick because technically, and, and typically we would just rely on sort of, You know, our telephone or link analysis concepts or our timeline concepts in Visio or PowerPoint or even sort of rudimentary putting things on an Excel spreadsheet, but I really wanted to showcase movement.

And so just using different technical skills like spider mapping or just routes, could put that, that particular individual in the area of the crime. And so that's, that's why I ended up using gis.

Jason: So he's extorting them. Was the defense. Saying that this was just a mutual agreed upon act?

Michele: . No, it was a quick plea. Okay. Uh, He, he would follow these women around and learn their patterns back to the routine activity theory concept. So he would, he would learn their patterns, he would learn their children's patterns, [00:15:00] and he would basically threaten to kidnap or abduct their children if they would not call him.

And, you know, with. material or show illicit photographs or anything of that nature. So, you know, a lot of these women were gonna be single women with children, so.

Jason: Geez, that does, that's scary stuff there. Hmm. So you eventually leave the Sheriff's office and you start working with Florida Highway Patrol.

So how did you get from the sheriff's office to Florida

Michele: Highway Patrol? So I, I took a couple years off to with my daughter and, and I did notice a job opening and I applied and I was able to, I got hired for the position and it was local in Jacksonville and within about two. The local troop commander ends, ends up getting promoted to the colonel for the Florida Highway Patrol and he allowed me to maintain my, my office location in Jacksonville and allowed me to [00:16:00] remotely manage the team.

So I had analysts all over the state. I had analysts down in Miami, Tampa, Orlando, Jacksonville, and Tallahassee, and the Panhandle. So I had, I was able to remotely manage to. Field visits and, and getting to know their local command staff in the troops. And I was very fortunate to build that trust and that integrity piece with the colonel, and I think that contributed to him allowing me to stay in Jacksonville.

Jason: Wow. Are you driving from Jacksonville to

Michele: Tallahassee? I was, I was commuting once or twice a week for. Sort of state level meetings, either with the Department of Transportation or even locally within the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles. So it came full circle from the gubernatorial fellowship five, six years prior to.

And then I find myself back in that same building meeting with a lot of the , same players. And so y yes, I did have as the senior manage management analyst supervisor or business analyst supervisor, [00:17:00] Sort of flipped around. I did have responsibilities that included command staff level meetings in Tallahassee.

So I, I commuted.

Jason: I was hoping you didn't have to like commute to Miami . I did.

Michele: Oh, you did that too. And I did commute to Tampa and Orlando and. We held training for the team either in the southern part of the state or the northern part of the state. And I did field visits and training very much mentoring the team individually in some cases and group in other cases.

And, and yes, I, I commute all over the state of Florida, so I, I covered a lot of miles.

Jason: Oh man. What's that drive like from Jacksonville to

Michele: Miami? It's not terrible. It's about five and a half, six hours, so it's, it's not terrible. They, okay. I actually did end up getting a state car, so I was able to, not necessarily put the miles on my own personal vehicle.

I did see a lot of roadway and considering the Florida Highway Patrol works on the roadway, that was actually beneficial when studying crash data to understand the roadways and the, the turnpike and the [00:18:00] issues going through I four in Orlando. And so it was actually I, I field study, if you will.

Jason: And how did you like the transition from being an analyst to being an analyst supervisor?

Michele: So I actually was not hired to be the analyst supervisor. I got promoted. Mm-hmm. . Um, I was hired as just the business analyst and then I,

before I got the promotion, I got a 10% performance superior performance raise, which is unheard of for a non-sworn

And I had to go all the way to the executive director for approval. And then about a year later I get promoted or so by, Colonel so I didn't start off. So it was definitely a learning. Mm-hmm. moment to go from colleague to supervisor of the unit. It was definitely a learning moment. Yeah. I've

Jason: talked to a couple other analysts who have done the same thing, and there is something strangely odd in the analytical world.

Wouldn't you go from a coworker to [00:19:00] supervisor? For that transition within the same team and there's a lot of advantages to promoting within, but there is a change in dynamic between, you know, going from coworker to now, I am your supervisor.

Michele: Very true.

And at the time when I was hired, there were only a handful of us. Analysts. And so when I did get promoted, I was able to actually hire a good number of the team. So these were not necessarily all coworkers. . And then one of the coworkers got promoted to lead analyst. So , she also got a, a bump, but I was able to design the hiring process because this was all new.

This was all new to the Florida Highway Patrol. So I designed a sort of quantitative piece , to measure, and then of course, the interview questions. And we were able to travel basically. So if I, I needed to hire Tampa analyst i'd, I'd put the advertisement out locally and, and to all the different areas that I know of, whether that be through IAC or F C I A A [00:20:00] and to the local universities.

And we were able to hold interviews down in Tampa with templates that basically I designed to sort of showcase, you know, can, they can, do they understand what it it's like to be an analyst and also can they, to exhibit some of the technical skills. So I had some Excel gis, Tableau, and Sequel. Component to the interview.

Okay. So it wasn't all coworkers. It was, it was definitely a chance to build a

Jason: unit. Okay. And you, and you founded those tests, if you will, when you are testing their skills of GIS and Excel, that that was worthwhile as opposed to, you know, classically it's usually just a, you know, maybe a three panel.

It

Michele: was still a three panel interview, three to five really? Because I had to use the local troop commander because of the nature of being a remote unit. Mm-hmm. . So they were, they were going to be reporting to me directly, but working in whatever troop area that they were supporting. And, and this could [00:21:00] be, you know, six hours down south from me.

So I would have the troop commander in there, local troop commander. I would have my boss, who was a major at the time. Myself and maybe the lead analyst. It depends. So, The four of us would go in there and I had a 40 60 split. So I had a 40 oral interview and a 60% work interview, and the work piece would be split between some, some skillset.

I didn't want it to be heavily in one thing or heavily the other, so I sort of split it and, and assign points. To different skill sets. And it wasn't all like an all or nothing. It was, can you, can you think through some processes? I left the internet open for them to use and, and, and some of it was timed.

So sort trying to recreate real life scenario. How do they think, how do they think under pressure, a little time constraint, could they get me from point A to point B? What were the steps that they were thinking? And it really got me to see. How people think and, [00:22:00] and I thought that that was definitely a worthwhile venture.

All right.

Jason: So how many folks approximately have you, did you end up hiring with this

Michele: process? I think almost all, like five or six out of the five or six. Mm-hmm. , because we did have some turnover. . Not necessarily because of me, just because they were moving on to new jobs. So I think I ended up hiring the Jacksonville analyst, the Tampa analyst.

And we started out as a good, definitely a good rate of pay, but some of them went to private sector and you know, as a state agency that's hard to compete with money. So ended up hiring Orlando. Pensacola and then the lead analyst, so five of them.

Nick: Hi, my name's Nick Lootens. I'm a crime analyst and I'm here to tell you that nobody deserves to be a victim, but lock your doors and put your stuff where people can't see it.

Dawn: Thank you. Hi, this is Dawn Clausius. I just want you to know that when you hear or you think as an analyst, they don't know what they want us [00:23:00] to do, always remember you don't have to wait.

Michele: Show. Tell them and be value added.

Jason: You mentioned the promotion and what are some of the other things that, that you were able to accomplish during your time here with the highway patrol?

Michele: So somehow in the middle of, of all that, I ended up attending the law enforcement academy as well, and so I became an auxiliary trooper and I felt that that gave me an advantage to understanding the operational piece of law enforcement.

I would put on the uniform, I was issued a. A weapon. And you know, I had to go through all of the exact same training that a trooper would go through and firearms high, high liability. So that gave me a little bit of an edge just to understand what was happening. But there were a couple of things that definitely stood out.

I was really pivotal in the arrival live project and the arrival live project [00:24:00] uses DACs methodologies to look. And reduced traffic crashes. Serious bodi injury and, and fatal crashes. And so that was partnering and collaborating with the Department of Transportation, with the Florida Sheriff's Association, with the Florida Police Chief's Association, generating interest across the entire state.

So it was really spearheaded in 2017. And so the goal was to come up with some sort of generic hotspots by county, all 67 counties. And start breaking them down and then partnering with the local agencies to break down their fatal. And s b I crash data even more so. So it was almost like little microcosms and regions of hotspot analysis all throughout the state ended up ha doing several presentations.

One was to the Florida Sheriff's Association. There's about 300 people in there. And they gave me about three days notice for said presentation. And I remember it distinctly. I thought I was gonna be doing a presentation just

locally to our [00:25:00] local troop commander and his folks out in the Orlando area.

To my surprise, I was actually presenting at the Hilton Bonnet Creek. To over 300 law enforcement folks from all the entire Southern region. And really, I, two of the chiefs took 30 minutes and I took the, the remaining 30 minutes to describe the arrival live project and DACs in general and how we were going to establish a portal so the local agencies can.

Their work and their time spent in each of these areas. We had a certain number of areas identified and really used the methodology of 15 minutes within a hotspot to help reduce and, and address traffic crash and, and traffic safety. And so we designed a portal and the local police officers and police departments and the.

Offices would enter their own data within this portal that was being managed by the Florida Highway Patrol. And we would monitor the time spent [00:26:00] and the reduction of, of traffic crashes within these area hotspots. So this was a, a statewide initiative. Partnered with the Department of Transportation as well, and the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles.

So that was back in 2017, but even to this day, you, you do see marketing and branding of the arrival lives throughout the state, whether that be on a billboard or commercial, or even license plates of each of the F H P vehicles. And that's just a reminder. To arrive live to your destination, whether that be a texting scenario, speed not drinking and driving.

But that was a major, major part that the team played in developing hotspots using Bo g i s and Tableau to derive data and. and analyze data.

Jason: It's interesting during, I've seen presentations at conferences on DACs and some of the focus will be how DACs influences violent crime. Yes. And, and it [00:27:00] does seem like maybe the whole idea of crashes prevention is an afterthought.

but it seems here with what you were working on, it almost seems like it's the focus.

Michele: It was the focus as well as it was some marketing and selling to the sheriff's offices and the police departments because their focus is on the violent crime piece and mm-hmm. . So using, using thoughts that at the end of the day, bad guys travel and that if you're in certain areas, there's a correlation between.

Violent crime and that you can actually deter both by community engagement and by presence within those areas. So there was, it wasn't just sort of a top down project led by F H P and D H S M V, it was really a collaboration. and, and teaching these other agencies all over the state that DACs and, and addressing traffic crash safety, whether that be through the proactive piece of, of [00:28:00] enforcement or engagement or the reactive piece of the crash itself could indeed in effect crime rates.

Hmm. And

Jason: Is this is where you started using Tableau? Correct. Use Tableau. . So tableau, for those that may not know , is a dashboard tool. So how did, Tableau play into this? So,

Michele: luckily the agency actually spent , some money teaching the group Tableau One and Tableau two, desktop and.

We were able to learn how to connect Tableau directly to SQL and write some queries, and we use it as a multi-variate analysis tool. So it's, it definitely strengthens how you look at, at the data. You can study multiple. Multiple data elements at the same time. And then we offset the use of tableau with GI S.

So we used the, the mapping strengths be behind Esri to actually create the hotspots and the frequency maps and, and pull data on specific [00:29:00] roadway corridors. And then we would take that data. Export that out of GI s and import it into Tableau and do the multivariate analysis piece, whether it be time of day, day of week, or crash vari type location, whatever multiple variables we wanted to study to give them more depth and richness of the data itself.

So we did use the gi s was was somewhat of our first step because we wanted to do the location. First, and then we, we took it out of GI S and exported it out of gis imported back into Tableau. And we were able to very much create some, some richness and some depth and some understanding to guide multiple agencies of where they were gonna be and.

What they were gonna be looking for. And then from there we created a number of dashboards just internally for d u I traffic, other pieces of traffic enforcement speed staffing. I mean, it really sky's a limit on tableau. Sky's a limit. So it's really any, any data [00:30:00] set I, I end up putting Information about fleet and property to staffing pieces to the law enforcement piece, and, and it's, it's a very strong tool to use.

Yeah,

Jason: no. So, no, I use Tableau currently where I work and it is very quickly to go from sequel to dashboard and it's a lot of easy plug and play and, and whatnot. And so I, I do like. Power of it. And I think I mentioned to you when we were talking about this is, it does a lot of things well, but then eventually there's always something there that man it, it doesn't do and you kind of have to hack around it a little bit.

And I've almost had to do that it seems like on every project that I've had to use Tableau on. But it seems like here, you said you used it internally, so who were the, who were the users of the dashboard?

Michele: So everybody from the executive leadership team to command staff for the Florida Highway Patrol.

So [00:31:00] they're able to create dashboards that have certain access levels and they're able to go onto whether we put it on our SharePoint side or whatever, and they're able to go in there and look at their specific troop areas for. . Mm-hmm. . So, and then the analysts, of course. So, but you know, Tableau can be used in any, it could be used openly, you know, you can do sort of public type of dashboards and, and then you can lock it down and.

More of the data governance piece and have that just primarily for internal use. So we, we definitely used Tableau for almost everything. , commercial motor vehicle enforcement. At the Florida Highway Patrol, we were actually a central collection for multiple states spanning from Texas to the Carolinas, upwards to Virginia of commercial motor vehicle data as well.

And so for some of these initiative, We would analyze multiple states' worth of data and show where. Commercial motor vehicle crashes were occurring where they were working, what [00:32:00] interstates they were working. And so we put together dashboards for other states use as well as part of these initiatives.

Jason: Yeah. Now you're dealing with a lot of data, so did you have to regulate some of the data coming in and out of GIS and Tableau? So

Michele: when I was thinking about. The team at the Florida Highway Patrol and thinking about what, what missing person or missing element. I, I very strongly needed a data person. And so that relationship I had with the colonel, I ended up drawing some processes and, and some missing links and I said, look, I really need, I need a data person.

I need a data person that's going to be able to help. Do more extensive querying because, you know, as an analyst, we don't have every technical skillset. I would consider myself a, a sh, medium level sequel query. . Mm-hmm. , but not a dba. I'm not a dba. I'm not an IT type person, so , I ended up being able to hire somebody from the IT side [00:33:00] of the house into our unit, and so between him and other partners, we were able to develop some SQL statements and some of them, he had one that was over 60 pages long, so Wow.

There was no way anybody on our team was, could be able to, to write a sequel statement to that level and that depth. But yes, the process of QA and qc, the data is definitely important. The data integrity piece was important. Really understanding the data flow from the initial contact at the dispatch to all the way to the conclusion of the case was all sort of process ma processed out into process.

So that's kind of where I start. I really started looking into the F H P data, was really looking at the scheme of the data just to make sure that we were, we were pulling data accurately and that we were pulling it from the right source. That we were pulling it as operationally sound and as. As aligned with policies as we can be.[00:34:00]

And that was a process. That was definitely a process. Yeah,

Jason: so you're dealing with statewide data entry so that that can be difficult to get everybody on the same

Michele: page. And luckily the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles has an office of Performance manage. Where they have a team that has developed algorithms and they actually are in charge of statewide level data accuracy, completeness, and timeliness for all crash submissions from every law enforcement agency.

So to have Fhp Sur as part of the F L H S M B is a good thing, to be able to have that other team of, of experts in designing these algorithms. So any, any crash report that comes into DHS and v. We'll get assessed and if it's, if it doesn't meet whatever algorithms, it will get resubmitted to the reporting agency.

So that process is already in place. So it was a little less worse for us on the business analyst side of the house at F H P to worry about vetting the data because that was [00:35:00] actually already part of the process.

Jason: So what was the overall impact of this project?

Michele: So I think the, the awareness of the impact of, of traffic crash data is probably the most rewarding that, that we got at from our side of the house because crash analysis is somewhat overlooked by sheriff's offices and PDs because they do have. Bigger fish to fry. They have, you know, fentanyl cases that are skyrocketing.

They have violent crime data that's skyrocketing. So at the time when I was at the Florida Highway Patrol, just being able to have those conversations and to sort of change perspectives , and just enlighten the SOS and the PDs what the relevance is of traffic crash. and, and studying , and being able to redirect staffing to certain areas and the overlay between incident data and crash data and traffic citation data that's not always thought about.

Agency statewide don't always have a [00:36:00] robust team of. Either GIS users or Tableau users. So we, we made a lot of impact with the smaller agencies as well, because we ended up doing some of their work for them be, they didn't have the resources, so there was a lot of partnering and I think that was the, the biggest impact that that particular.

project had, I don't know how it's morphed since I left fhp. Mm-hmm. , so I'm not sure at, at this point if, if the project is still ongoing. But during the time, I mean we were having statewide meetings with multiple agencies, the Florida Sheriff's Association and the Police Use Association. And I think to that end, that was where.

that becomes a success.

Jason: Hmm. Did you see a reduction in the number of

Michele: crashes? We were at the time when we were measuring, but long term longitudinally, I, I'm not sure because I wasn't there after, you know, a year or so.

Jason: For somebody that's looking to implement DACs, what advice would you have

for

Michele: them?

Well, we do train on start somewhere. So you can always [00:37:00] start, just start somewhere. The sort of three data sets that we look at is the traffic crash data, the traffic citation data, and the incident data, and. Putting those data sets on on a map. You can partner with your local university or your local county folks, GIS department to help you establish that.

So currently I actually have a, a contract with the Texas Department of Transportation and we are helping agencies. how to implement DACs. And they're from all different levels. They're, some of them are starting with very elementary rudimentary type infrastructure, and some of them already have a robust infrastructure.

So you really have to analyze where you're at in the, in the sort of spectrum of data analysis and, and the feedback process and start looking at your data. And really when you start mapping your data and. Studying your data, you can see where some of the weaknesses are and need for qa, qc. So I was working with an agency in Texas and, and Latin longs were getting dropped off.

We really [00:38:00] pushed through the traffic unit, Hey, we need to validate these, these addresses. We can't study DACs and, and start trying to map traffic crash data without the Latin long. So really, if you start somewhere, you'll, you'll figure out where you are in the spectrum and then you will be able to start a addressing and assessing where you need to go.

Jason: I do wanna get onto the University of Florida, but before we do, we have to touch on your second analyst badge story, it's an event that occurred why you were. Coming back from Tallahassee to Jacksonville

Michele: so typically those days would start at 5:00 AM with me leaving from Jacksonville back to J to Tallahassee. And so I would work a complete day. And so I was getting on I 10 off of I believe it was May. in Tallahassee at about 5 15, 5 30, and I just got on the interstate and I witnessed a single commercial motor vehicle rollover and service instinctually.

It was going [00:39:00] westbound and I was traveling eastbound. I slide into the median and I'm in full business heels and everything, and I slide into the median. I run across I 10. I start to perform C P R on the ejected passenger. He was bleeding. He was in shock. He was definitely out of it. He was alive. He was alive, so it was more like controlling the bleeding.

And I called 9 1 1 to describe the scene and luckily I knew the dispatch codes and I, I knew how, what information they were gonna need because at that point

I had already been on the ex auxiliary unit for a couple years at that point. So I was very familiar with radio. Traffic dispatch codes, what was important.

And so I sort of spit it out, what the scene, describing the scene, and I'm there for, it felt like an eternity, , to be honest, doing c p R , well really triage. He was still breathing, so it wasn't quite Breathing at that at that point. And so the first trooper comes to the scene, it felt like an eternity.

And he was a commercial motor vehicle [00:40:00] trooper. And so he was not concerned necessarily with me and the victim flying on the ground . He was concerned with the hazardous material that was potentially oozing out of the truck. I could just hear like sort of a gas sound. And so he was definitely concerned with that.

We're talking rush hour traffic through Tallahassee at this point. And so eventually I call my. Immediate supervisor, because I knew that at the time he had his cat up and, and I said, Hey, can you check to see if anybody's coming to the scene? It feels like I'm, I'm here for a long time. And he goes, are you at the scene at I 10?

And I said, yes. I'm, I'm the only one here. I have the CV trooper. And long story, long story short, the Calvary ended up coming. Couple of troopers came. Took over for me. I went and talked to the driver who was pinned. He, he was not getting out. I, the only thing I can think of was just to continue to talk to him for a few minutes.

Another trooper came and then I ended up working. doing the traffic control on I 10 and shutting down a lane. So and then eventually more troopers came, the fire, fire and [00:41:00] rescue came, and then I was sort of pushed off the scene and I tr got back into my vehicle and started driving back to Jacksonville.

I had to pull over, to be honest, about 10 minutes down the road because the adrenaline, . Dump of that scene was just, there are no words, and it just gave me so much of an appreciation for what law enforcement does every single day that they put their selves in harm's way, whether that be troopers, police officers, or sheriffs sheriff deputies.

and, and that was a traffic scene, let alone other types of law enforcement. And for the e m s folks gave me so much more of an appreciation for what they do every single day. And so a couple months later I end up getting recognized for that. And I, I didn't, that was not for, that was just an instinctual response and ended up getting Trooper of the year for rendering life savings.

Nice. And I, I really didn't think through that. I just, I just.

Jason: Yeah. All

Michele: in office attire. In office attire, yes. After working a full day and [00:42:00] commuting three hours prior to the full day. Yeah.

Jason: So you mentioned that it felt like an eternity. Do you know how much time actually lapsed between when you get out of the car?

And when you act, get back into your

Michele: car. You know, I don't, I, I, I think that was written on the write-up, but I don't actually have that committed to memory. It, it probably was only like 10 minutes and it, it felt like eons. And really one of the performance metrics that the Florida Highway Patrol has is a, a response time.

So I, I knew that they were coming and especially with a commercial MO motor vehicle rollover and. Volume of traffic, the time of day. I knew they were coming. It just, when you're in that scene at the time, it just, it feels like an eternity, but it probably was only a few minutes. Yeah. And there

Jason: was only two people involved in the crash.

Michele: It was a single vehicle. . And so it was a, it was a rollover. I think the, there was a slight curvature in [00:43:00] the roadway, and so he was going too quickly and there was a passenger who got ejected. He was not wearing a seatbelt. The driver was wearing a seatbelt, but be because of the force and the rollover of the vehicle, he could not get out.

He ended up succumbing to his, his injuries and he was also impaired. So that was not a good scene for anybody. But the, the good thing was there was no secondary crashes and nobody else got hurt. bad that, that the driver did not end up making.

Jason: Yeah, but the, the one that was ejected, survived.

Michele: Survived, and that's the one that I was working on. Yes. Wow.

Jason: Wow. That is impressive because, I mean, you know, not many analysts, as you mentioned, get. Themselves in that situation and not many people even

get a chance to perform c p r on, on somebody. But in this case, man, you, it seems like you handled just about every aspect of it between doing the C P R [00:44:00] Talking to the, the driver in even directing traffic.

Michele: It's, it's definitely a different perspective to ride either right front seat or to have that trooper background or that law enforcement background and concurrently work as an analyst or the leader of the analyst group. It's definitely a different perspective and I would on the weekend, spend time riding right front seat riding shotgun with the troopers through Jacksonville, stopping people with narcotics.

and registered gang folks. And really, I mean, it was, it was definitely a different perspective. I don't necessarily , that's not for everybody. Right. , that's definitely an individual decision. . Yeah. So

Jason: you mentioned that you had to stop 10 miles down the road or So I do for the adrenaline dump.

But even after that, was there a period in time that you, that it really dawned on you what you just. No,

Michele: no, I, I know, I, I remember having a couple of phone calls probably to my mom and to my dad explaining the situation, and I felt my teeth [00:45:00] chattering as still part of the, sort of an anatomical response to such a scene.

But no, by the time I got back to Jacksonville, I didn't, you know, I had, I, life goes on, so I, I had no. Child responsibilities and, , and work the next day. Wow. I didn't think about it.

Jason: Oh geez. That is impressive. And quite a analyst badge story, . . , well then let's Move on then.

Could you eventually come to work where you are working now, which is the University of Florida? So what are you doing for the university?

Michele: So there is a program called Sign four Analytics, and at the time I was actually at, at the time of my employment with Florida Highway Patrol, I was at Navi Musing the sign four analytics program.

And so at the time, there were multiple data sources for crash data through the state of Florida. There was Aprils slash LexusNexus, there was Cigna four

analytics, there was Department of Transportation, and then there was our own internal RMS system. And so oftentimes, While I was at F H P, there would be questions either [00:46:00] generated by legislature or the executive director or congress people or any, any of these people asking for data.

And I would oftentimes write sort of white papers to the data discrepancies of all four of these data sources and really started to understand the data schema between all four. Eventually, the University of Florida student four analytics became , the one. Clearinghouse, if you will. So we, we have over 10 years, I think we're at 11 years, 10 to 11 years of crash data throughout the state.

And we also have traffic citation data that we get from the Florida ports and comptrollers folks. We get both of those ones nightly and ones daily. And so I'm managing the program manager for the project. We have multiple project. That are funded by the Traffic Traffic Records Coordinating Committee who's subsequently funded by NHTSA for different projects from geo-locating crash data to revising basically, d o t is going to be using our [00:47:00] system.

They're currently using a cobalt based system to analyze their own data. And so we're putting that all into S four analytics and having the latest and greatest engineering roadway data and as well. That the traffic crash data eventually will be building a citation dashboard. And so we have over 5,000 users statewide from engineering folks to government officials, all different levels from local to federal, to consultants, contractors, and to researchers.

And so it's a chance to be able to design the user. I. To design the dashboard for citations to work with the stakeholders from an analyst perspective to other analysts essentially. So it's definitely, it's definitely sort of a cross between IT and software development and eventually the user interface piece for our 5,000 user statewide.

Jason: What is your goal personally with this project?

Michele: The, [00:48:00] the Singapore analytics is actually a component of the GeoP Plan Center, and so through the University of Florida. And so , there's different data sets that we can start incorporating into the. , the platform itself that's either public safety or public health related.

And so that's definitely interesting to me to add different data pieces to the project. And we can, we have a very strict data governance piece. We have cloud source through the university. That seems to be the trend. With I recently

attended the ICP in Texas and that seems to be a, a trend of partnering with the, with.

Universities for as sort of a third party, but not quite private sector. And so there's interest that had, that's sort of come my way from multiple state agencies with different data sets, if that's not to get into specifics, but as long as it has a public health and public safety nexus, we can start incorporating that into the Geo Plan center.

Jason: Hmm. All right. Fascinating stuff. So I hope [00:49:00] all that works out. . So, looking back throughout your whole career, one of the things you mentioned to me prior to this interview, is that most of the advice that you got throughout your career was you have to pick between being.

A police officer and being an analyst, and that was something that you fought against. So would you just kind of talk about that as just from your perspective, why you thought that way? So

Michele: I would you know, people would do . That was definitely a, a point of sort of I don't wanna say contingency, but people did ask, well, why don't you pick, do you wanna, do you.

Be in law enforcement and go up the chain of command or do you wanna just be an analyst? And I'm really, I couldn't, I found value in both and, and I was sort of dubbed by, by my old boss, Jamie, as a in between and, and there's nothing wrong with that because actually come to find out that that segue and that that marriage between law enforcement and data analysis has served me well over the.[00:50:00]

Over 15 years, 16 years, to be able to understand the operational piece and then to be able to understand the data piece and how they come together. And the qa qc part and the data integrity part. And, and I really, I just, I found value in both and I thought to myself, if I can understand what they're doing and, and life of a cop and, and what their role is and, and that sort of on, on scene, quick thinking, and I have to complete this report and I have, you know, all of these different stressors occurring at the same time, if I can understand.

and understand how, what information they're putting into the report and then how to filter the report out. Perhaps that would make me a better analyst and that that's to be determined. But , but what I do know, it, it's, it's helped me out and it's definitely gained a lot of trust and relationships.

Throughout multiple agencies and multiple people within state government. All right.

Jason: And then your PhD, what's your topic?

Michele: It's gonna be in [00:51:00] urban planning, it's through where I work the school of Design construction and planning with the urban planning piece of it.

And it's really looking more upstream of the problems once a problem becomes a law enforcement response. That's, that's a little late in the game. So I'm looking at, I'm at the moment I'm studying some routine activity theory concepts, so it's not all, I'm still working on the dissertation piece, but it's gonna have some tie to traffic crash DACs and.

So it's not all solidified yet, so I just started it last year. So balancing work and then teaching DACs and my PhD. I'm, I'm still just trying to balance it all at this point. .

Jason: All right. And then what advice do you have for our listeners?

Michele: I think the biggest piece of advice is. To remember that your integrity as an analyst goes back to your quality of work and stressing sort of qa, qc, your own work product.

And you know, as a new analyst you don't always know, you know, what formula to use in [00:52:00] Excel or how to create a chart or what chart's gonna be the the best to tell whatever story you're trying to tell, or you know how to. Hotspots and, and what frequency, what you should use In gis, you don't always know these things and you don't always know if your data collection or your analysis is, is as sound as it can be.

But if you q a QC and you continue to learn and you ask questions and don't be afraid to try. . I think that all goes back to character and integrity and relationship building. And once you have that piece of it then you have the trust with the command staff. And once you lose trust that whether that be work product that isn't sound or some other piece of it, then that's really hard to get back once you're an analyst.

So just remembering that integrity is really directly correlated with the quality of work that you. .

Jason: Well, let's move on to personal interest then. Okay. So you and your daughter are quite the explorers of this world, [00:53:00] and do you have a favorite vacation or trip that you

Michele: have? We like to learn about American history and so whether that be in Philly, I just recently, over the summer, took her to see the Liberty Bell when she was 10, and so we were fortunate enough to get some behind the scenes tours by the Park Rangers and we really dug into the founding Fathers and Independence Hall.

And so that was followed up by a recent trip to New York, and we got to go to the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island and really learn about the immigration to the United States. So being a second generation American myself, that was important for me to show her that. But just really American history.

So whatever we can do, , she wanted to go and see Hamilton's house and she wanted to see Columbia University. So we just literally got back a couple days ago from a trip to New York City. Wow.

Jason: Man, you make me feel bad. I'm just taking my kids to Universal. So ,

Michele: that's still fun. . That's still fun. I was amazed at [00:54:00] the 10 year old that wanted to see Hamilton's house and Columbia University.

So I'm just, I'm following her lead. Yeah.

Jason: That's impressive. So do you have a bucket list

Michele: destination? We just fulfilled it, so. Okay. I guess we'll need to come up with some new things, .

Jason: Very good. All right. Well, our last segment to the show is Words to the World, and this is where you can promote any idea that you wish.

Michelle, what are your words to the

Michele: world? My words are gonna be relevancy matters and to never stop learning. And so sometimes we can become complacent and comfortable in the space that we're working. Maybe we, we think that we. Learned enough or whatever. There's always something to learn and there's always new technologies, new methods of thinking and so my words are gonna be relevancy matters and never stop learning.

Jason: Well, very good Wiley of every guest with you've given me just enough to talk bad about you later. Perfect . But I do appreciate you being on this show, Michelle. Thank [00:55:00] you so much and you be safe time.

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.

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