

Erika Wiles – Venture Forth and Appreciate

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 be that analyst and join us as we define the law enforcement analysis profession one episode at a 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 19 years of law enforcement analysis experience. She is a certified analyst with the California State University at Sacramento. She holds a master's degree from John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

former treasurer of the IACA. She's a California girl that somehow made her way to Ohio. Please welcome Erica Wiles. Erica, how are we doing?

Erika: , doing great, Jason. Great to hear your voice.

Jason: Oh, it's good to catch up. It's been way too long. Staple at the IACA conferences for a while there and then You know family [00:01:00] happens and I understand, but I hadn't seen you in quite a long time.

So it was good to see you yesterday during the prep call and also catch up. Yeah. So how is the gloomy weather today in Ohio?

Erika: Gray and gloomy, but it's, it's 46. So really it's a heat wave.

Jason: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. But the winter that is, really, really warm. So we got a couple of things to go over with you certainly want to get your contributions to the analyst profession.

We're also going to talk a little bit about teaching and testifying and being a supervisor. And so let's start with how you discovered the law enforcement analysis profession.

Erika: Well, I am from San Diego, California, and I got my undergraduate degree out there in business administration with marketing emphasis and I went into retail and I sold chocolate and lingerie, actually [00:02:00] Probably improved people's dating lives for about a year and then actually my grandma talked about John Jay College of Criminal Justice and because she had a friend

that mentioned it and I had always been fascinated with law enforcement somebody being pulled over and I just.

wanted to figure out why. So I picked up and moved to New York City and I did the program in about a year and a half and at that program I had a policy analysis class and a professor that was fantastic and I realized that I love all things criminal justice and law enforcement and then I over analyzed.

all the time in life anyways. And this professor said, well, hey, there's a program you can get certified to be a crime and intelligence analyst back in the state of California. And he had known that I wanted to get back home and be closer to my family. So then I moved [00:03:00] back across the country and got certified and networked and made some connections and started my internship.

And this was. All back in like 2004 is when I got done with the program and then that was it. I was, I was sold and you know, I know, we know there is not a lot, a turnover as in this field and being in my early 20s and not attached, didn't own a home, no kids, and not married, I was willing to move anywhere just to break into this field because I was, I was, and I still am stoked about it.

Jason: Nice. So who was the professor at John

Erika: Jay? His name was Heath Grant. And yeah, there was just, there was inspiration there. We, we had to do a project. Which had us analyzing all kinds of different data points and topics and theories, and I just, it was, it [00:04:00] was great.

Jason: So, you got the certification in California, and then, what's next?

Well, when

Erika: you go through the program, it's not just coursework. You had to do at least 400 hours of an internship with the department. And I was It's lying back and forth to Sacramento for the weekend long classes. And then I got a volunteer, like unpaid internship with San Diego police. And that whole unit was, was so great.

I've met people in that unit that I'm still connected with. And that was really the springboard. Like I would have loved to have worked there, but they did not. have any positions at the time and so that was the point after my internship was over and I was officially certified that I put out applications and I, I did interviews actually in Texas and then locations in California and then I took my

first job [00:05:00] as an analyst with Ventura County Sheriff's Department and that's about an hour north of Los

Jason: Angeles.

Okay, so, so you ended up still finding a place in. In California. So now you're the first time you're walking in what's, what's that like as you think back?

Erika: Exciting. So exciting. I, I got the, the first, first interview went well. They said they'd call back for a second interview. The second interview went well.

I got offered the job. I mean, I was ready to just. And I did put my, my life in the backseat of my car and moved up there. So it was another beach town. It was just, it's, it's three hours north. If there's not traffic, but you have to drive through LA. So really that there's always traffic. It's always rush hour out there.

All right.

Jason: And this is supporting Comstat? No,

Erika: really. I was just an analyst For the different cities, because they had like unincorporated and then corporate incorporated areas. So it [00:06:00] was just pulling stats and numbers. And I had a civilian supervisor that I was kind of like job shadowing.

And I was, yeah, I was learning mapping and just a lot of data cleaning and learning the, all the different systems the, the jail and even the driver's license system in California, and all of that doesn't happen overnight, no matter what jurisdiction you're at. So, but sheriff's offices, and then now I work for a city, it's, it's completely different because you're working for.

Different municipalities versus just one chief of

Jason: police. Yeah, there's a there's a big difference. And then usually with those county sheriff's departments, the jurisdictions ginormous it

Erika: is. And there's a lot of land, especially for a coastal portion of California a lot of orchards.

And so, but it but it was It was great. It was great. Yeah.

Jason: So what problems were you analyzing?

Erika: Out in California? [00:07:00] You know, there wasn't, I wasn't really work, working on like specific crime series. It was just like what, what's up and what's down. More administrative analysis than, than a specific crime type.

Like the way that I saw San Diego police work and having an analyst like dedicated to a crime type, this was much different. But and they they teach all of us that you have the tactical, the specific crime series and strategic, is it, is crime up, is it down? And that a portion of your job is probably going to be administrative and it's maybe the less like glamorous or fun, but I've actually, I've actually always enjoyed.

That because there's there is there is a need and I want for that. So that's what I did. Mostly out there.

Jason: So as you look back at your time here at Ventura, what sticks out to you?

Erika: Oh, that is a great question. Definitely the supervisor that I had who had such a profound [00:08:00] and great effect on me. She was the only civilian supervisor I've, I've had actually and to date. And that was huge because really almost 20 years ago, we did not, I don't, to my knowledge, we did not have a lot of civilian crime analyst supervisors.

It's mostly like been a sworn position, which is fine, but there's a lot of turnover in that. But I was only up in terror for four years, but I never had turnover with her. And so that was Stacey Snow. And she was just. Amazing. She walked the line of like a professional relationship and then a personal or relatable relationship so well because it's really tough to strike that balance and we were at different life stages and but she was still, she was just such a mentor and like I said, even though we were at different stages of life, like relatable on every level, like at work, it, [00:09:00] How to work and respond to requests that came from supervisors and how to multitask and what's the best way to prioritize and she did all of it with style and grace and I was never did I feel micromanaged so really that was the biggest takeaway.

And then what a gift for me right now because I became a supervisor a couple years ago and. She, I think, I think I think about her every single day. And so, so that was what I take away from Ventura. But even now, like I get this chance, this gift to give back to the field, like what Stacey gave to me. And I, I take that seriously.

I just, I love it. There's such a parallel with what she gave to me. And then hopefully what I'm able to give and giving the analysts that I work with and alongside each day. So yeah, that's my best

Jason: takeaway. [00:10:00] When I think about that, I think about when I moved out of law enforcement and my supervisor started to talk about work life balance to me in a one on one meeting.

The beginning stages of leave in law enforcement and how the my current work treats their employees. It was just it was just a huge shift for me. And so number 1, you wouldn't have 1 on 1 meetings normally. To talk about your progress and number two, they wouldn't be talking about work life balance to you.

It's just wasn't, it just wasn't there. Now, not that that no one does that in law enforcement. It's just the jobs that I had. I just can't imagine that that happening. And I still think that's from what I've heard from either analysts. It is still a little bit rigid, even though certain places are getting better.

Erika: Right. And I feel that [00:11:00] in my three departments I've been at in California, Florida, and then now here in Ohio, I, I really have had good supervisors that have been supportive through and through when it came to that. things in, in my personal life like when I was starting a family or having like two young kids.

So that is, that is so important. I don't know if I should ever take a step back and have something different, but that's also something else that I try to apply when being a supervisor is that like work will always be there, but sometimes things do come up in life and. Just another way of multitasking and prioritizing being supportive

Jason: Okay, so you were there just shy of three years and then you make your way to Gainesville. So, so, yeah. So what went into the decision to pack up and go clear across the country to Gator country?

Erika: I did.

[00:12:00] Well, Jason, I met someone and fell in love and that was it and moved, moved across the country for, for that very reason. I also went to Gainesville Police Department and worked with two of our, I say our like me and you and probably everyone listening right now to of our, greatest good people and great analysts.

And I was with Erica Jackson and Carolyn Cassidy and working alongside them. I was only there for a year, but wow, did we have fun. And it was totally different out there because there was like three zones of the city and then we each had one. So, so like you are working your area and you're working all crime types and there was ComStat and meetings.

And we actually worked four tens out there and it was, it was moving. It was go, go, go. And I just, they were two wonderful people. That was such a gift to work [00:13:00] alongside them.

Jason: Yeah. I have Carolyn on the show. She was actually one of my first that I had on the show. So. But Erika, I can't convince to be on the show.

I've tried, so I don't know if you can help me give her a little, little push,

Erika: maybe we can get her. Listen, if you get her, it'll be one of your most inspirational podcasts. Well. I will say that she's got a heart of

Jason: gold. Yeah, and that, it'll be the easiest interview for me because I can just ask one question and she will entertain and tell stories and keep people's attention for easily an hour.

Right.

Erika: Okay, we'll work

Jason: on that. Yeah, yeah. So so then with Gainesville, though, I mean, this is a total different area for you, at least in California, you, you grew up in, in the state, so you had a little bit of idea. It's still a beach town, but Gainesville, it's, it's in the center of Florida, so it's not necessarily a beach town.

It's a college [00:14:00] town and, but I'm sure that , the problems over there are a little bit different from what you were experiencing in Ventura County.

Erika: Yeah, it was, it was completely different. Those two jobs are just they were night and day, no comparison really. But Gainesville PD, in addition to Jacksonville Sheriff's office, like those departments, they had such a great rep reputation in the field.

And I knew that I could learn and grow so much as an analyst and really know like you know, absolute life plans, you know what I mean? Like I could have gone there and stayed there, but I knew no matter what it would have been very

worth it. So, and Jim Mallard, who was there beforehand and how he set that department up for success in so many ways with with his tech savvy self.

Jason: So was Jim there when you were there or you had missed Jim?

Erika: No, I had, he left, so that had the opening and then, and then insert me. Oh, okay. You replace. Thank you, Jim. [00:15:00] Yeah. Thank you. Thank you for that.

Jason: So I always think that it would be really fun sometime to put together maybe a link chart or something like how, who replaced who at which department and how we're connected cause I, I replaced Mary Bruncelli at the Washington Baltimore Haida for the, my first position.

So this is this comes up every once in a while like how that's how that all all played in together and and how you're so Mary and I never worked together, but we know the same people because we I I replaced her at at height up so.

Erika: Of course you were able to high five her.

Jason: Yeah, so there's the connection there. . So, so then you make your way to Akron, Ohio. Yes. And so probably the only way that anybody knows anything outside of Akron about Akron is that that's where LeBron James is from.

This is true. Yes,

Erika: yes, he, he is he is from here and I think I think there's a couple [00:16:00] other people, I don't know, maybe like Devo and like the lead singer of the pretenders. I've heard and then the black keys.

Jason: Actually the hall of that NFL hall of fame is in Akron too, isn't it? No,

Erika: it's just south.

It's just south of us in Canton. Yeah, the Pro Football Hall of Fame. And that's actually a great place to visit if anybody's in the area. All right.

Jason: So not all doom and gloom in, in Akron, Ohio, then there's certainly some sites to see then. So then, so you're an analyst there in Akron, and this is another.

Pretty big leap because now it's in, you're leaving the, you had two sunny states and now you're in the, the full seasons of Ohio so what's the, crime, what's the issues that you're working on there in

Erika: Akron? Well, I feel like one crime is that I can't keep out of state plates on my car to let everyone else know here that [00:17:00] every winter is like my first winter and whatever.

It's been like 14 now, but so crime in Akron, right now, compared to last year and the year before, it's just, it's just slightly down, although I think we all know the last couple of years have just been different, especially with COVID of 2020 and how things have been happening, but we averaged.

Anywhere from 20 to 40 and in some years, the recent years, it's been slightly over, but murders a year and things have stayed steady, but calls are down and crime is, is down. Our, our shootings are steady. They're just, I guess, not successful with. The murder, not as much this year as last year. I guess I'll say that,

Jason: but do you have any oddball trends that you're seeing just in your region that maybe aren't in other regions?

Well,

Erika: this year we or the last two years, catalytic converters, they were selling for a [00:18:00] really great price. And then The shops, the chop shops around here and scrapping places that purchase them. You can, you can only sell one a day. So let's say I was doing that. I could sell one a day. I could just go to all five places and sell one a day.

And make a lot of money. So that was a crime trend that we started tracking on the daily starting last year for, but I think that was also happening across the country in addition to trends across the country, really 2016 for us up here, the summer of 2016, we went from having like 30 overdoses and a few overdose deaths.

A month to 300 in one month and over 30 deaths. And so the influx of opioids, heroin on our region since 2016 has been a thing. And really in the last couple of months, it's, it's gone down. But then this last week we the [00:19:00] media has coined it like a bad batch is in town, but Unfortunately, that is going up with this year's holiday season, so one thing I can say looking at crime in this area of

the country that a snow is a perk for is seasonality helps because like less people are out.

So maybe less crime during the colder months, but. You can, you can really track someone well with footprints in the snow. That's not a thing in California or

Jason: Florida. , making the sand, footprints in the sand is a little bit different than making footprints in the snow. Right.

All right, so let's get to your analyst badge story then. And for those that may be new to their show, the analyst badge story is the career defining case or project that an analyst works. And so for you It's working a homicide investigation where you get to testify.

Erika: Yes. So in, in my current role now, I am not case [00:20:00] specific and I do a lot more like administrative reports for the chief, for the mayor and mapping and, but not case specific, but in, in looking. into and creating these reports and being the end user of some great reports. We have one that takes countywide GPS data and then we also map all of our crimes and we look at the from time on a case.

And we do a plus or minus of 15 minutes and if a GPS bracelet is within like a 500 foot radius of a crime, we will get an automatically generated report with that map with that ID number and then we can dig deeper to see. If that bracelet stayed in the area during the crime, if they left right after.

So and also a couple of years ago, we got a new records management system where we are now housing our data with neighboring jurisdictions. So this homicide was actually for one of our neighboring [00:21:00] jurisdictions, but there was a GPS bracelet and ping in the area. of a murder just across the border and I should say also like all suspects and victims were actually from Akron but the incident happened just across the border and the moment that the murder happened that bracelet left the area at a very high rate of speed and so that was the beginning of the fun and then tracking to where that bracelet went and drilling down into what's happened at that location One location they stopped on the way, the final location that the bracelet was still at the following morning.

And then we called that jurisdiction and let them know about that bracelet, the ID number, and they had no leads for this murder. And so then, then their whole case began and, and they They were very grateful and thankful. And so that was fun.[00:22:00]

Jason: So how did the system know a homicide had

Erika: occurred?

, we can see neighboring jurisdictions, all of their data. And it's so it's, so it's real time that we, like, I wouldn't have read. A neighboring jurisdictions murder case, but I got the report that was generated because of the GPS ping within the close proximity of the from time and then the murder location.

And

Jason: so does, so does that data automatically come into your system that. It does. You compared the GPS. Okay. All right.

Erika: Through, yes, through reporting services and the, our past sergeant that supervises our unit created many great reports after we switched to this new RMS. And so this was the fruit of his extensive labor.

So I received that and It maps all that data, and then you can drill down further on the information, and then that was, and then that was

Jason: it. All right, you're giving a nice [00:23:00] little fruit basket, to this police department who just had a homicide, don't really know too much at it, and you're saying, oh, by the way, I might be able to link somebody to that.

That scene.

Erika: Yes. And so they were very appreciative. And then we were going back and forth and looking into some social media on the information, the Intel that we got once we received, because we just look at the ID number of the person. And then we have to go to our. Our local department here to find out the who and so once, once we got that, they were off and running and it wasn't the actual murderer, but it was the guy that was in the car that had the bracelet on and didn't exactly know what was going to happen that day.

So then fast forward to, I mean, over a year, almost a year and a half later, I got a subpoena on my desk. And yeah, I've received those before, but the, the subjects have fled, [00:24:00] so I have never testified. This was my first time after so many years in law enforcement that I was going to be called to testify.

Jason: Who subpoenaed you? Was it the prosecutor or the defense? No, it was the prosecutor.

Erika: All right. And so, and just to, just to introduce like how this other jurisdiction, how they even started their case, because really it was the tip from, from our unit that sent them off and, and running.

So, It was just introducing that and

Jason: yeah, chain of evidence type of thing. And that makes sense. So from testifying, it's probably pretty easy testifying for the prosecutor because you're just basically telling you, telling them what you just told me, right. In terms of how it came on your radar and how you identified the person, but did defense give you many questions.

They

Erika: did, they were inquiring more with that GPS data kind of giving hypotheticals, [00:25:00] so like our department, we're located downtown, right next to all the courthouses, so I just had to walk across the, the way to go and testify. And so the defense attorney asked, well, so if I asked you to tell me how many GPS bracelets are located around this building right now, could you tell me?

And I said, yes. And he was like, okay. Just to make it more. Realistic and and then he asked if I did anything further on the case. And I said, no, I mean, if they had questions, then I answered them. But really, it was passing, passing that off to the appropriate detective.

And then

Jason: how accurate did you say the GPS was?

What do you mean? So, in terms of Pinpointing that the person is, is there a range there that the device gives like it's accurate with to like, I don't know, 10 yards

Erika: kind of thing. That is a great question. I didn't get that question when I was on the [00:26:00] stand, but that would have been, but that would have been the moment they actually had the woman come in from that company to testify to everything like regarding the bracelet.

So, but the the data, the the radius for the crime is 500 feet. So for instance, this case, the moment that it happened, there were two GPS bracelets within that

radius, but one left town very quick. The other one was still there the next morning like live down the street and has a GPS bracelet.

Jason: Oh, okay. All right. That's, that is, that is interesting. , I've only testified once. In my career as well. And it's very similar. I would testify it on a case where there was a GPS put on a vehicle and then the, the target ended up getting murdered in the vehicle.

So. I was doing something similar where I was basically following , the vehicle, the GPS coordinates, [00:27:00] the last couple hours of, of the person's life there and, and doing something very similar. Yeah, so that's interesting that we had similar experiences and. , I'm actually surprised that the defense didn't ask you more, more questions on that because, or you said they did, they did do the, with the, the manufacturer, right?

Erika: Yeah, yeah. She, she testified after

Jason: me. Yeah. So, I mean, I, but in a way, cause I mean, the really, that's. Their only defense, unless they're going to say that there's something wrong with the device itself. That is like, okay, you yeah, so you could only say that he was the suspect or the suspect.

The person with the GPS was within 500 yards at the time of the homicide.

Erika: Yes. And then, because I also, in my like, in my chain of evidence, email chain of evidence to the other jurisdiction and that [00:28:00] detective, I mean, I gave like the screenshot clips of where he was at every single like minute after that the GPS, it also highlights how fast the car was going, or you can tell if someone's walking or if they're in a vehicle and you It was really just the beginning of how the whole case unraveled because there were two people in the car with the murderer and they both testified against.

Jason: Okay, and one of them was the one with that had the device on it.

Erika: Yes, that had the bracelet and I think they were they, they both received obstruction some jail time, but this guy got like 29 years life in prison. And wow. So, or life in prison with parole after 29 years.

Jason: , well, I would think that guy already having a ankle bracelet on, that means he's already on probation or parole, right? Yes, so he's already in trouble. So, I mean, if he didn't do anything that, [00:29:00] but it sounded like to the

way you were describing it is like in terms of the person wearing the GPS device is that he was not expecting the homicide to happen.

Like, they weren't going there to kill the person like that. They just sounds like they got something got out of hand.

Erika: Yeah, it was they were going to purchase some drugs. That was it. And then and then things went a different direction. So, otherwise, I'm not sure he would have wanted to go with the GPS tracking bracelet.

Jason: Yeah, yeah, well, I'm sure the murderer, too, wouldn't have thought otherwise. It's like, hey, if you're making sure that all his buddies don't have GPS devices on them,

Erika: so. Yeah, so, it was exciting. All right.

Jason: Well, good deal. So in your current position you're promoted and you've gotten into a little bit of the hiring of other analysts there at Akron.

, how many hires have you gone through? Let's

Erika: [00:30:00] see, we've hired three, four official, four, four people. Since, since being a part of it and one of those has left for a totally different job and then the other three, that's how they, that's how they came to be.

We have never been, we're actually five analysts now. We have not had five since. Since I've been here in, in 2009. So, so that's exciting. And the hiring process is exciting. It almost it takes you back to that time also when you're just so excited and wanting to break into the field so bad.

Jim: Hi, this is Jim Mallard. I'm the crime

analysis division

manager for the Houston police department.

This is my public service announcement.

This is a reminder from the people around you. Please don't make us listen to your half of your phone calls. If we're in a line or on a bus or in an elevator

or some other captive situation

we

can't get

out of,

[00:31:00] please be kind and hang up the damn phone.

Amanda: Hi there. I'm Amanda Bruner, president of the Carolinas Crime Analysis Association, and I'm thrilled to invite you to our upcoming training conference in the historically rich city of Charleston, South Carolina. Join us from February 27th. March 1st for an immersive experience aimed at honing the skills of crime and intelligence analysts in both the public and private sectors.

With over 125 attendees expected, it's a prime opportunity to learn and network with other professionals. We are proud to announce that Dr. Rachel Santos, author of Crime Analysis with Crime Mapping, will be our keynote speaker. Plus, don't miss masterclasses hosted by renowned experts like Dr. Eric Pisa.

Charlie Giberti and NW3C. But that's not all. We have a student poster session, proctored IACA exams, and more. And guess what? Your registration includes two full conference days plus the master classes. And it's not just about learning. It's about creating lasting memories. So enjoy lunch on us, indulge [00:32:00] at our ice cream social, and join in our networking events, including ghost tours.

Registration is a steal at 225 for members and 275 for non members. Don't miss out on this incredible opportunity. Join us for a conference that combines professional development with a touch of Southern charm. I look forward to seeing y'all in Charleston. Register today at CarolinasCrimeAnalysis.org.

Erika: That's CarolinasCrimeAnalysis.org.

Jason: Now you're on the other side of the table. A lot of things that we talk about On this podcast is about education and training and a lot of people are trying to advise people that are trying to get into the field and go through the, hiring process.

From time to time, people will point out the the job announcement comes up like some of the things that are in a job announcement is I stated as just like

anything else. There's well written job announcements and [00:33:00] then there's not so well written job announcements. Because some announcements, , they are very specific on what they want.

And so it makes sense to who the hiring process, but then there's other ones that seem like they're just throwing , every single. Skill set in there and then still paying the person like 40, 000. Oh, and we prefer to have a master's degree type thing. And it's just added a little bit shake your head moment there.

So I guess for you all with the job announcement. Is it a boilerplate job announcement each time? Or did you guys have a specific skill set that you were after for the positions?

Erika: Well, all the, the recent three that we have hired, we brought them on as crime analyst ones and that really opens up the pool of candidates because experience isn't mandated and certain things within your education are, and then [00:34:00] that person could also have experience and they're just wanting that crime analyst one position experience working or an internship, but , the last three that we have hired are crime analyst ones, but the one of them was written specifically for patrol and the other two are for the detective bureau.

And like I said, we've never been five. So the 2 recent ones for the detective bureau, 1 will be working days and then we actually have the other 1. The other job description was scripted for them to work afternoons, like a, like a 3P to 11P shift. So now we will have coverage for that many more hours during the day.

A lot, a lot happens at night, you know? Mm hmm.

Jason: Was there any specific in the job announcement for the patrol position?

Erika: Just, just the fact that they would be working for reporting to the patrol commanders and like embedded with their Work day every day and create creating reports and creating maps geared to [00:35:00] them.

Nothing more specific than that because it was also a new position for this for the department general. We've always served patrol, but unfortunately that was not as tended to as really patrol should have. Been and very much is now because that's boots on the ground and first on scene, and there's so much intel to be gained from them.

So , this was a fantastic addition. And then the analyst that we hired has just gone above and beyond what we ever thought could be possible for growing the analyst for patrols position, but then also of our unit. Just a great addition.

Jason: So how many? Candidates or applicants, did you guys typically get for these positions?

Erika: Now that specific number, I, I really would be guessing, but we did interview 10 people. So, and then we got all of their resumes and, and look through those. And so myself and the other. [00:36:00] Supervisor and then the sergeant of our unit and we all kind of just like made our footnotes or maybe things that we wanted to ask to prepare for those interviews and and then and then conducted them and and got to meet the people and some people if they applied from out of state, we gave the opportunity to do like a zoom or a teams meeting for the interview.

Jason: From your perspective, how did the decision making process go in terms of which ones you thought were more favorable over the others? What were some things that the candidates had that held more weight than other had their experience or task or attributes?

Erika: For me, it's really the, the skillset of, of knowing how to maintain big data sets.

You know, like if you have the Microsoft suite package experience, that was a perk. If you had studied criminal justice and then talked about like a project that you work on that was a [00:37:00] perk if you did it, it was even more of a perk if you could like feel the passion, like emanating from them.

There, there is, there is just. Something about a person's drive and personality that can transcend into the job. And I think that that is like a, like a really big deal because so much of what we do is skillset and technical, but if you can't work with other people or be a team player or walk into a room and feel comfortable with.

Many different kinds of personalities. Mm-Hmm. In a police department, then that could be a stumbling block that you might not be able to get over, you know? Mm-Hmm. . Yeah. So that, that was important for me. And and then also asking the question of if you get to a point in a project where you, you can't go further, like, what would you do next?

And then seeing how. How that's answered. It's, it's okay to ask for [00:38:00] help and I, I just think that that is also important.

Jason: Yeah. So how about education wise? I know you said that most of these are level one, but did, did most of the candidates have a bachelors? Did they have masters? What kind of education did most of them

Erika: have?

Yeah, several had every, everybody had their, their bachelors. Several had their masters. And then even work experience in other fields and like the candidates that we hired one of them, the one that's working for patrol and works like for and with me, like she had internship experience. She really had her like, like foot in the door and like fought hard for that to get involved with the field.

So that was an asset, but yes, they all had had degrees in a field that was related to our field.

Jason: Did any of them have certifications?

Erika: No one was certified like through IACA or or as, or as an analyst, but that would be a great thing, but that would be kind of hard to see in a crime [00:39:00] analyst one position because it's going to be intro for the most part.

Jason: hOw about the other members of the panel , did you get a sense in terms of what held weight for them? Was it different from, from what you just described?

Erika: The I, I feel we were all on the same page. It was just Where was this analyst going to work? Because if you were like two of the ones that we hired, they're embedded with the detective bureau.

So you're sitting in with the detectives all day, every day. Whereas if you are working alongside me and for patrol, we are in, we're actually embedded in work in the same office with I. T. And it's just two totally different atmospheres we're, yeah. In my office, like we listen to the police radio and everything all day and we go and visit people and we're upstairs with patrol for a good portion of the day, but when you're in the detective, you're, you're overhearing a lot more all their [00:40:00] phone calls arrested subjects are being taken to the interview rooms and people are playing those out loud.

And so it's just very different atmosphere. So the other analyst that works in the detective bureau. Yeah. Had a perspective that was much different, like, than mine. So that's why it was so good and beautiful for us to, like, come together and then talk about what these candidates are going to be exposed to.

Should they choose to come and work and be with us?

Jason: And so was there anybody that had a maybe a don't be that analyst moment, maybe an answer to a question or something that they did that you wish they didn't. They kind of, they kind of made you shake your head a little bit. I feel

Erika: like there were several, but right now I can't, right now I can't I can't think of one, but.

Yeah,

Jason: you know, it reminds me that Mary Craig she used to ask the question What is geocoding? That's what she used to ask on on the things and some of the answers that she [00:41:00] would get were just hysterical. People that obviously didn't know what it was, but we're just trying to guess like what.

It might be,

Erika: yeah, yeah, and moments like that, like my heart goes out to people, you know what I mean? Because it's like, they, they want to be considered, they want to be a part of this, they can very well not know and then come in and be like, but I've been reading books and books and books about this program and I I can do it.

So an ArcMap is, ArcGIS pro like it's, it's different. That's a very specific skill that you're, you could be taught in school, but even if you're taught in school, you do one project and usually everything maps just perfect and it's, it's not as realistic. So there's so much that's learned on the job, especially for a new analyst that there should.

I don't feel that there should be an expectation that you walk in like like you should feel walk in and feel comfortable, [00:42:00] but you don't have to know everything. It's okay yeah. And we're not, you're not going to learn it in a day.

Jason: Yeah. And I always say, it's a good thing that those jobs.

Interviews aren't recorded because , there would be, I know from my experience and my, some of my interviews, there would be some, a lot of embarrassing footage on those

Erika: tapes. Right, right. I feel like. I had a supervisor that told me like everybody, even the chief of police, he puts his pants on like one, like one leg at a time, just like the rest of us and, and when you're interviewing for a job, as much as like, like, as much as I was sitting at that table, asking those candidates questions, they were very able to ask us questions because.

I mean, as much as you want to work there, or as much as you're interviewing for the job, do you actually want to work there? You know,

Jason: Oh, no, I'm a big proponent of the idea that [00:43:00] the interview is a two way street for sure. Like, I know. I know maybe somebody just starting out that doesn't have a job that really is looking for a job.

You're maybe you're like beggars can't be choosers type of thing. But I still think that you should be going in there asking questions, making sure that you have everything that you need to make the decision on the job. Yep. And it's, it's, it's interesting as we're looking back now, we've been.

It's been 20 years since we were doing this for the first time through these job interviews. I always, I smile now when I think about resumes because there was at one point in time where I was like really trying to embellish my resume because there just wasn't much there, right? And now I'm like, Oh, geez, what do I gotta take some of this stuff off in order to get it to one page?

Type of thing, right? You get to, you get to that. And then it's just a different, it's just a different ball game, a [00:44:00] different mindset at that point in time when you're so nervous, the first couple go arounds and just wanting , that first job to having experience and then maybe going into the interview , just to see if if the transfer to that position is a good choice for you.

So it's just, it just, it gets so different. So as the decades go by is, I guess what I would say, not that not that, not that a 20 something year old wants to hear that now that, that it does get easier, but it does get

Erika: easier. It does. I, I, we did have one. Candidate that after the interview was over, we were done with our questions we said, do you have any questions for us?

And she said, yes. And she had, but she had like personalized questions for us. Like she had done her research on on who we are, which that was fantastic. And then brought some of her work products that she wanted us to see. And I mean, if there's anything you can do in an interview, [00:45:00] things like that to set yourself apart from others.

so much. And make yourself memorable it leaves an impression a good one in my opinion. Yeah, now

Jason: do you end up hiring her? Yes. If you said no, I was like, oh, man, you're gonna be like, because I was like, yeah, I was like, Oh, I was like, maybe you thought she was stalking you or something.

But I

Erika: mean,

Jason: I remember when I was trying to get the job at Cincinnati Police Department. They gave each candidate a scenario, right? Yep. And the, it had, it had addresses, it had everything on there. And I actually was going to drive Out to the locations, the street, the addresses for that to add to the analysis that I was going to do, but then what?

Yes, but then I go to put them in the GPS. And of course, I wasn't from Cincinnati. So I had no idea that these weren't local. They were actually up in Columbus. [00:46:00] So I'm like, Oh, I was like, I don't know if I'm going to drive two hours, just two hours to Columbus and then two hours back just to check out the, this thing.

And this was obviously before Google street viewer or whatever it is. Right. This is

Erika: like Matt.

Jason: Yeah, I'm doing like MapQuest. Yeah, like once I saw it's like ETA, like two hours from now, I'm like yeah, I'm not gonna go do that. So, I mean, fortunately I got the job anyway, but I mean, it was, I do remember doing that and kind of laughing.

I was like, oh, yeah, I guess I'm not doing that today, so, but, anyway, alright,. So then we'll just finish that up while we're on the topic of just some advice that you might have for those that are looking to get in the field and going wanting

to go through the hiring process. I mean, obviously, one one thing you would add is like, OK, don't be afraid to move.

Right? It's there's more opportunities, more, more interviews you can go through that it's going to [00:47:00] increase your likelihood to get hired. But maybe what are some other things that you would recommend?

Erika: Right? And not every life circumstance can allow for that. I feel fortunate that I was. That I was able to do that, but just getting your foot in the door with your local jurisdiction and, and wanting to do a ride along or helping volunteer at local community events where law enforcement's there volunteer.

Internship. I see now that a lot of places will do paid internships also, but volunteering and to do research or whatever you can is great to network and build relationships and that that that would be key. And usually in our in our field, I feel like every. Five to ten years comes along a new reporting software that that we use to generate or automate or just do our jobs on better and [00:48:00] faster and with less and you know, like right right now.

Power BI is great and fantastic I go back to when I got into the field, obviously, and Microsoft access is still being used but back then and crystal reports and but There's usually a reporting software that can, that can do so much and be a game changer. So, whatever the game changer is at the time, you can do your research on that and, and learn.

Yeah,

Jason: yeah, I, I think it, as you're going through this process and whatever level you, you're in and the job hiring process, whether this is your first go around or you're just looking to transfer to another position understand strength and weaknesses. Is. Strengths are usually really easy for us to talk about.

It's the weaknesses that I think people struggle with, and I'm not alone in that. I definitely struggle with that. I mean, when I was first introduced. Interviewing. I was [00:49:00] always trying to turn that weakness into a strength type of thing. To make myself look good, but to your point where you've already made before is that it's, it's okay not to have all the answers, but it's just, what are you going to do with.

That like, how are you going to get the answers? How do you get

Erika: there? Right? Yeah. I remember that Jason, like back in the day and doing the interviews and what's your weakness and you got to make it sound like, it's something that you're like, you're good at like, like you take on too much, but actually now you're really good at multitasking and you're like, see, my weakness sounds okay, but, yeah.

Yeah, it's okay. Not to be great at everything, but also understand that you could be called upon to do something that might not be your strong suit. And it's okay to just navigate that and do it, do it the best you can

Jason: All right. What about teaching? So you've gotten into teaching over the years how do you like teaching? Yeah,

Erika: I have enjoyed that. [00:50:00] That kind of links in with where we were with an honest weakness. I would not say that it is a strength for me to stand up and command the presence of like 50 people or take a microphone and speak loudly. I'm, I'm a bit more soft spoken than that, and I kind of like to be more like behind the scenes and doing the work and, and creating the products and presenting it like in smaller meetings.

But commanding the presence of a room full of people is something that I would love to just get better at over time. So teaching, I teach at the University of Akron, they have their, they have a crime analysis specific program. So, they we, we give them some data sets and, and the students will do projects and then we will go over each semester and I present about our unit and where we're at and what we do to work for Our department, but also working with the other city entities and [00:51:00] the local, the neighboring jurisdictions and, and crime trends and what's up and what's down and how we were on social media and we stock people there.

And so it's, it's fun. It's always, it's interesting cause especially with the social media, like talking to a room of college students, that's their bread and butter , so we say Facebook and that You know, that's, that's, that's old school almost anymore, but sure, so it's it's been, it's been a really great opportunity.

It's also provided some networking with the students and then with the professor and like, if they want to look at our data and, and we can read their projects afterwards and, and it's just good. Should our unit grow further in the future? Who knows? Maybe some of the analysts locally would be end up working here.

Jason: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Is Jeffrey's still there at Akron? He is

Erika: at Kent State. He's at, was he always at Kent? He was at Kent State. I don't know that he is still there for sure, but Dave LaCotte is at he's at the [00:52:00] university.

Jason: Okay. All right. And then Ohio doesn't have their own like regional association, right?

Erika: No, there's a, a, NOVCC group, Northern, all the acronyms in our life, right? Right? Ohio Violent Crime Consortium. And it's, it's comprised of the bigger cities of this region. And then they talk about the crime trends and hotspot analysis and grant funding. And, They, they have been in existence since I have been here in 2009.

Jason: Yeah, yeah, when you were talking about listening to the student projects, it made me think of, I know this, Carolina Crime Association, their conference come up at the end of February. They actually have a, an event, an ice cream social, I believe it is an ice cream social in which they're going to have local college students.

Have a booth, a [00:53:00] poster to talk to the folks. So you walk, you get your ice cream, you walk through, you talk to students about the projects. So I thought that was a very clever way to get some integration between college students and practitioners.

Erika: Yeah, that is, that's great. We've participated in things like that over the years.

But yeah, it's it's it's great because the university is located right in the middle of the city. So really, they're just like down the street from us. And so thankful for that. Thankful for that relationship.

Jason: All right. Good. All right. Let's finish up with personal interest then. I talked to you about being the California girl that made it to Ohio and I love what your comment about beaches yesterday when we were talking about it in the prep call about beaches.

Erika: Yes, and Lake Erie and like, Oh my God, I was like, Oh my gosh, I can't even remember yesterday. This is not good. Listen, Jason, so many people [00:54:00] here in Ohio, like they are going up to Lake Erie. And then, but they call it beach, edgewater beach, whatever beach. And just because you can't see the other side of the lake doesn't mean it's a beach like at all.

And there's, those are not waves. Like it's cute. That's cute. Like this is the lake. This is where we skip rocks, which you can do at the beach, but this is not a beach.

Jason: It's funny that you mentioned skipped rocks, because I don't think there's actually rocks down here in Florida to, to throw like I, every once in a while, we'll go to a waterway and I'll go down to skip rocks with the kids or show the kids how to skip rocks.

And I'm like, there's no rocks down here at all. So that's, that's interesting, but they're in Ohio there. You really can only enjoy Lake Erie beach wise about two months out of the year. I mean, you're really talking about just July and August. After that, it's pretty, it gets [00:55:00] pretty cold and cloudy pretty quick.

Erika: Yeah, definitely that. I will, I will say spending so much of my life on the beach, you could live right next. To something that's amazing and just not take advantage and do it. But now living in Ohio, I mean, you get your summer and it's go, go, go, go, go. I mean, you're just, because you're enjoying the warm weather and you're gonna kayak and do all the things that you can't do in January.

It's almost like you go so hard. Then the colder months happen and it's like, okay, we're just going to. Hibernate, you know? Yeah. Yeah.

Jason: Do you have a favorite

Erika: beach? Down in San Diego? Anywhere in the world. Oh, then it would be San Diego. Moonlight. Moonlight Beach. And it's in Ansonitas, California. And Jason, there's so many rocks there.

You should take a kid there.

Jason: It's funny. I do, it's funny. I do actually have a San Diego story. So I was, I tagged [00:56:00] along with my wife. She had a conference out there and this is years ago. I might've been before I had kids. I can't remember, but it was my really my, one of my first trips to the West coast. So I was, but it was by myself,

so I was walked to the beach from the hotel and I wanted to put my hand in the. Ocean, but there wasn't there wasn't a direct way to get down there, but there was this area there that had some rocks . And so I was like, oh, okay, I'll just I'm

just gonna go down here and and jump on some of these rocks and then put my hand.

You know, I had a camera in my hand. I was very touristy, right? And so I go and jump on the very last rock and it's wet. And I slip totally out from under me and crash on my back and easily could have hit my head and gone right into the water and died kind of thing. Yeah, I mean, that escalated quick. Yeah, and I don't think anybody saw me go down there. [00:57:00] So there's not anybody that would have realized. What had just happened kind of thing. But fortunately I just hit my back and just felt embarrassed because I had slipped, but I did get the picture of me putting my hand in the ocean. So it was not for nothing.

Erika: Right. Oh, I'm

Jason: glad you're okay. Yeah. Yeah. So, but anyway well, no, good. Do you make it to San Diego very often?

Erika: You know, I used to go back like five or six times a year since. Since living in Ohio, but unfortunately my family is gone now at this point. My family was very small, like my dad and my grandparents and my mom.

And so I have, I haven't been back in since like 2020.

Jason: All right. Well, hey, maybe, maybe you'll get there soon, then. All right.

Erika: Yeah, visit those Florida beaches. Yeah,

Jason: I was gonna say, but you could always discover another beach so that's, that's the thing that's not connected [00:58:00] to the Great Lakes.

Erika: Yeah, no, it's yeah, now I get to Florida a couple times a year, and it's beautiful down there.

Jason: and if someday your children listen to this episode, what do you want to say to them?

Erika: Oh, gosh, I would want them to know that I would want to say thank you. And that doesn't skim the surface for them knowing that they have, they have given me more than I think I could ever give them. And I, I just, I learn so much from my kids with the boundless, immeasurable love and that they just, they, they fill my bucket so to speak.

So being a parent is the hardest, bestest gift ever. It is more than 24 hours a day and seven days a week, if that's possible. And I love it. Challenge accepted. I just, [00:59:00] but yeah, I would want them to know if they hopefully they feel loved up and supported by me But that's just like a tenth of how they truly make me feel every day So yeah, I would want to thank them.

All right. Very good, So the last segment of the show is words to the world And this is where I let leave the guests with the last word erica You can promote any idea that you wish what are your words to the world

Erika: my words to the world are every day Is a gift and connecting that to our job today.

I can hear a call on the radio or read a case report and from yesterday where somebody else was having a totally different, maybe pretty awful, devastating day. And you just, you don't know what you don't know. Time's not promised. So enjoy every day, hug the people that you love. Just don't take time for granted.

It's a gift. Very

Jason: good. Well, I leave every guest with you've given [01:00:00] me just enough to talk bad about you later, but I do appreciate you being on the show, Erica. Thank you so much. And you be safe. You too.

Erika: Jason. for making it to the end of another episode of Analyst Talk with Jason Elder. You can show your support by sharing this and other episodes found on our website at [www.](http://www.leapodcasts.com)

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