Kevin Mitchell - The IT Specialist

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 Eller and today our guest has seven years of law enforcement analysis experience, all with the Oxford Police Department in Alabama. He also has 12 years of IT experience. He's here to talk about technology and law enforcement analysis and hopefully he will soften my hard feelings towards police department I.

T. Please welcome Kevin Mitchell. Kevin, how are we doing?

Kevin: Doing well, doing well, thanks. All right. How

Jason: are things in Alabama?

Kevin: Things are pretty good. We're gearing up for our holiday season. So a lot of what we'll talk about today is [00:01:00] going to be what I'm dealing with on a day to day basis.

Jason: All right. So you have I think it's a rare position that you're in because dealings with some of the duties that you're going to describe mixture of I.

T. And analysis. So I'm curious how your position came to be. So how did you discover the law enforcement analysis profession?

Kevin: So back in 2018, I was working for a local community bank and looking for an opportunity to get back in law enforcement. I had a really good relationship with our current chief Bill Partridge and some of the other investigators , who started our unit.

And so it came to me with an idea. As far as having some disconnects between what the police department and public safety needed as far as day-to-Day it operations and what the city it was able to provide. And so we were looking at a typical eight to five deal with it where if anything happened after hours or over the weekend, it was a little bit harder to get those things addressed.

Mm-Hmm. . And so my position [00:02:00] was created as an. To have someone with an I. T. background to help manage all the technology for the police department, which also has evolved into all public safety, including fire and EMS. So I'm on an all cost that is pretty much all the time and I'm able to address all of our technology needs pretty quickly with respect to networks in car and things like that and make sure that our officers and our staff are able to.

Do everything they need to do without minimal downtime. Yeah.

Jason: So I see on your resume here, your degrees in, is it criminology? Your criminal

Kevin: justice? Yes. Criminal justice with a concentration. In a concentration of

Jason: with what? Digital

Kevin: forensics.

Jason: Okay. And so you're not classically trained necessarily with it, so where did your.

I T knowledge, skills, and abilities

Kevin: come from. So I actually ended up taking an interlevel IT position at that local community bank. My wife and I moved to the Oxford [00:03:00] area back in 2013. And so I was looking for a full time career to jump to. And I befriended the president of that bank who offered me an opportunity to interview for that position basically started out with a computer and a phone and the IT director.

And self paced learning of basic networking server management and specifically managing our bank software at the time. And so a lot of what I've learned as an IT professional has been basically on the job training. Some organized training classes here and there, but just really just my need to learn, and I don't like saying I can't do something or failing.

And so I will learn. Anything I like, I'll become an expert at it, for lack of a better

Jason: term. . So, specifically, what did that position teach you that helped you once you came over to the police department.

The

Kevin: biggest one is customer service. You're going to have people who have hearing increases of comfortability with technology. [00:04:00] And so one of the things I think I bring run to the table was the ability to relate to people who are technology adverse and don't even want to turn on a computer. And then people who have way more knowledge, not yet, which helps when I interface with the I.

T. department here or working with other agencies on technology specific projects on top of that just basically having the ability to learn again the fundamentals of networking. Which directly translate to our camera equipment. So whether it be camera trailers, pole cameras, or building cameras, a lot of that knowledge and training made it easy for me to transition into helping manage our camera program and network and just understanding how technology works at its core where.

In order for something to happen on a computer or a network, the computer has to have the correct instructions, have to have the correct resources, the network has to be set up a certain way to allow certain traffic. And so all of those skills that I learned at the bank essentially helped prepare me for the role that I have right now.

And when you deal with a pretty dynamic situation where no two days are the [00:05:00] same, we're always testing out new technology. Just having that comfortability of knowing that I have a fundamental foundation of and then also knowing when I need to ask for help. As really being in the client class exists.

Jason: Now, do you think you interview well? And, and what I mean by that, as I am looking over this, it seems like you had two positions there that got presented to you and , maybe not necessarily having the typical. Education and background. And yet you were able to get both positions and flourish.

Kevin: Yes.

One of, for me, what I really pride myself on is when I do have an opportunity, I want to be the best at it. And so basically talking about taking a lot of self initiative to learn more about the craft that I'm trying to step into. The other thing that's helped me is having really good relationships.

And I've always been involved in the communities that I live in. And so having those prior existing relationships with the bank. [00:06:00] Unity and the leaders at that institution that I still have to this day really help people look past whatever deficiencies as far as my skills and training for the role that I was hired.

and give me the opportunity, which was also a jumping point for me to come to the police department again, leveraging the relationships that I had with many of the staff members here at Oxford Police Department. And then just giving people the ability to see the work that I did at the bank based on relationships with other individuals.

And so, yes, my interview skills like, as you can tell, I like to talk. I love what I do, and I love expressing Why I do what I do, why my position is so unique. It just basically promising and reassuring that if you gave me an opportunity, I guarantee you, I'll be one of the best assets that you've had in your organization, which is what I try to do every day is, is leave this place a little bit better than I found it the day before.

Nice.

Jason: And so your title. Is it specialist slash criminal intelligence analyst at Oxford police department. [00:07:00] So as you're walking in the door, is it pretty well defined what the goals of the position are? Like how much you're supposed to be doing it, how much you don't supposed to be doing analyst work or reserve something where you're at actually trying to build the position as you go.

Kevin: So, ironically, as it sounds, because of what I do with technology for the department, everything pretty much intertwines and the first focus that I had was the I. T. and then because of the skill set that I had prior law, I've done private security and executive protection for many years. And so I had a lot of disciplines that I brought to the department when I was hired.

I was able to fill a lot of gaps very early on and what led to the analyst title being added on because I had a really good understanding of how analytics work using different databases, programs and getting that evolved into managing our RMS program, helping with our CAD program, and [00:08:00] basically finding innovative ways to take all that data.

Give it to our employees and then figure out ways to make our department more effective and how we deplore our resources or how we evaluate buying

additional equipment or technology to make our jobs a little bit easier. And so going from just pure it, where I'm supposed to make sure all the computers work servers network to now, my position pretty much encompasses it and analysis work every day is evaluating all the systems and Programs that we're using for the analysis portion of it as the I.

T. slash user director or however you want to put it for public safety. But then also I'm a consumer of the things that we're using as far as servers and databases and programs. And so, because of my working knowledge of how everything works in the back end. I'm able to help push that software a lot further.

And in some instances, we're learning the software better than the vendors and the trainees that are training us. So specifically when FUSIS came to market about three years ago, we were one of the [00:09:00] first couple dozen or so agencies that adopted it. And we're more of a hands on type of agency, especially with technology.

And so once we got our installation, we were doing things that they didn't realize we knew how to do because we just basically tried to get under the hood as much as possible and actually started giving value to their product because of the things that we were figuring out and doing. And I think we've helped bring about 2 or 3 dozen improvements to their system over the past 3 years that have gone to market and have now helped other agencies, especially like in the metro area here in Alabama.

So that's how hands on we are relying on that analysis and IT background helps me help my team make sure we can

Jason: do things. So remind me again what FUSIS does.

Kevin: So FUSIS is billed as a real time crime center program where they can aggregate a lot of tools and resources for departments. And so as simple as pulling in all your camera infrastructure into a single pane of glass and putting it on a map so I can see where all of my assets are [00:10:00] for a analysis or real time crime center purposes, but then for us specifically we have our LPRs in there, we have our CAD tied in there we have other programs that basically create a single pane of glass for us as an agency so we can consume a lot of data in a single pane of glass and make decisions a lot quicker based upon the role or the type of operation we're

Jason: working on.

Yeah, now did the police department get any kickback for those improvements that you mentioned before? Not

Kevin: necessarily. One of the things that we really pride ourselves on is partnerships with our vendors that we work with. We're very particular about the vendors that work specifically at this department.

The biggest benefit for us is being able to influence these vendors in how the program develops over time. And then what we offer back is because we're a centralized hub for a lot of public safety agencies in East Central Alabama. We're able to showcase this product that we're using and help drive business their way.

And so when it comes to I guess, new advances and improvements, we may not [00:11:00] have to pay as much for a new advancement or improvement because of that partnership, because we're doing so much work on the backside for them.

Jason: So when you're starting the position, you mentioned some of program improvements, but is there certain accomplishments that you completed the first couple of years and you're getting your hands on on everything?

Kevin: So I think the first two things that immediately stand out the first being in any police organization, trust is paramount no matter what role you fill in that agency.

If the agency at large, the employees don't trust you, it's hard to do anything different. And then also an opportunity to grow and learn like that. And so one of the first things that I did when I got here is I would rise a shift with the shift officers at least once or twice a week. One was selfish because I want us to figure out what pain points are they having, what kind of technologies in the cars, and kind of build a road map of how I would like to improve these things, which then leads into the second part.[00:12:00]

One of the biggest rewards for me is the kudos I get from time to time, even from our patrol guys, because I think sometimes with technology, we forget that the traditional patrol officer has to deal with a lot of technology. And my goal is to make that as thoughtless as possible for them.

So. When it comes to their computers in the car, their printers, the cars themselves, the emergency equipment I've been able to contribute a lot to that as far as the car as a whole, making that mobile office for them as seamless and simple as possible. And I'm most proud of because of that starting point, these vehicles that we're putting on the road this year, some of the most technologically advanced vehicles that we have put in as a city.

And so something as simple as a modified battery exploding because it's been sitting in the heat all day. Now, transitioning to a cradle point where they don't have to worry about the battery on a modified, then I have to worry about it. The credit, the my fire is turning on or not just putting more and more technology this car.

So all I got to turn the car on, fire up the computer and start their shift within a matter of [00:13:00] minutes. What I have to worry about is my computer going to turn on my my fire going to turn on my radar going to turn on just really making intentional effort to make their office for 12 hours a day. as seamless as possible.

And we're seeing a lot more improvements. And again, I never take full credit. I have a wonderful team that I work with that helped me in every step, which makes my life a little bit easier with all the things that I'm responsible for. But those are the 2 biggest rewards of having the trust of everybody that I work with and then also seeing that they have the best equipment possible that the city can offer.

Jason: So, how about the programs in the cars? Is there much improvement that you've been able to put into those? And when I say you, I'll say your team.

Kevin: Yeah. So, typically with a patrol car. The bare minimum that you're going to see in a patrol car, of course, outside of the computer is your CAD system, which is what we're using to get dispatched to calls or look up records as far as previous calls.

Our record management system, which is where the officers are doing their reports, looking [00:14:00] at reports, getting basic local information for a person. And then some instance of what's called NCIC, which is the national database that has all of our criminal records, stolen vehicles, all that partner information driver's license information.

So basically preventing them from having to continuously go back to the office to do these basic functions every day. On top of that, we also have some software that is provided by the state where we're able to look up NCIC in the cars. From the state's, uh, organization, they can do rec reports, issue e citations. And so one of the wild cards, and if anybody's ever done technology or dealt with I. T., printers are the bane of our existence. And so something as simple as I get a call at 11 o'clock. Hey, I'm working step, which is a selective traffic enforcement program. My printer's not working.

I'm on the side of the road. I got somebody pulled over. I really need to get this ticket printed out and even coming out to that [00:15:00] traffic stop or remoting in and making sure that that ticket is able to be printed out or that warning is able to be printed out I think really helps out knowing that even when this technology fails, because of the things that we have in place, something as simple as a remote Access program allows me to take care of a lot of issues for the department, no matter where they are.

And then when we start getting into more advanced programs one of the difficulties is especially in today's day and age, making sure that we're correctly identifying people or finding information about these people beyond what we're able to access with NCIC or CJIS information. And so now we're leveraging third party databases.

That give us the ability to give additional information to the officers in the field where we're doing information sharing programs with other agencies. So we use a program called finder. That's becoming more prevalent here in the Southeast, specifically in Florida, Georgia, Mississippi and Alabama.

Where now I can access data in a data information sharing program under with other [00:16:00] agencies and so if I feel like somebody's giving me an incorrect name, incorrect date of birth, I'm not relying on just the CGS information. I can also look at records and things like that.

So if I got a nickname, I can search about. Anywhere from 80 to 100 agencies to see if that nickname matches the description to a name. And so, all this information is being utilized in the car, they're able to do a lot more advanced investigations, and then you start factoring in our interdiction units.

Now, these guys have way more information to figure out what's going on when we're doing interdiction, whether it's human trafficking or drug trafficking, and feel like by the time we end that traffic stop. But we in our interaction with that individual that we're interviewing on the side of the road, we feel comfortable about who they are and the stories that we're being told based upon all the information that we're being able to, we're being able to pull, not even having to deal with dispatch or deal with our intelligence unit. Now,

Jason: you mentioned RMS. Who's your vendor?

Kevin: So we currently use a [00:17:00] company called Southern Software. They're a, they've been in business for a number of years. So it's not the newest type of software, but using programs like FUSIS and other programs like Finder, we're able to bridge that gap between our CAD or RMS and the state software.

And best as we can without having a single cat and RMS program still give us the ability to do a lot of analysis to help our command staff make decisions about how we operate day to day. And so it's basically has all the fundamentals as far as being able to do case management. Evidence inventory, everything that you would want out of a RMS program.

We have access to it, but we're always looking for ways to improve our technology posture, whether it be RMS, whether it be CAD any kind of analytical program. So, we're always trying to make sure that we have the best. That we can offer our department. Yeah.

Jason: Now I usually ask analysts if their RMS is RMS y whether they like it or not.

But with you, it fall square on your shoulders if it's messy,

Kevin: [00:18:00] right? Yeah. But again, so we have an RMS administrator. that I directly support. And so she deals with the day to day administration. And so I think NIBRS was one of the biggest pain in the butts to kind of get past because every RMS provider had to be NIBRS compliant by a certain date.

We missed that date because the state wasn't ready to be NIBRS compliant. And then there were a few I would say for about six months after the drivers came down where all the vendors were trying to work through making sure that they were NCIC and state compliant. So we've gotten past that and it's actually been a little bit easier to manage because we just have that one RMS administrator slash records clerk.

And so that's a lot of work on her. And so I'm always looking for ways to make her job a little bit easier. And so when I first got here, kind of to go back to one of your original questions, We did a lot of stuff on paper and I would ask, why are we doing this on paper? We have computers and servers. Why are we doing this on paper? We have computers and servers. And so everywhere that I can implement. [00:19:00] Technology and reliably implemented to where we're not doing paper things, the officers not having to fill out all these different cards and papers and forms for little menial tasks like intake for our jail or doing a vehicle inventory.

When we're getting something told, the more we can do that in the computer, the easier is going to be for them and be efficient. But at the same time, anything that's on a piece of paper, I can't use in any kind of analytical form. But if I do a field interview card on my computer, that data goes into our database, and that's more information we can use for the analysis component, or something even as simple as, hey this person has now been identified because we did a field interview.

It takes months down the road. We run that person and now we have something to go back on to help us however they're involved in the case.

Jason: All right, let's get into Become coming more on the analyst side of things because as you mentioned, you started with the side and then your roles and duties as an analyst [00:20:00] came later. So how did that come to be? How had that bridge? Get

Kevin: formed. Okay. And so when I was hired I was assigned to a new unit that was stood up in 2018 called the East metro area crime center.

And so our unit specializes in digital forensics, digital intelligence. And we also have a real time crime center when before our building that we're in now was built, we all work out of a conference room inside of our special operations facility. And literally, we all sat around. A conference table. All of our computers were thrown around.

That's where our lab was. That's where we were doing our Intel. We were managing our cameras from all this little room. And so at the time, not everybody in the unit realized how much experience I had in public safety and law enforcement and also with my investigative background with security and things like that.

And so we would all be consulting on cases and I would start making contributions and as I contributed more. And how it works and raise your hand enough and start getting more and more responsibility. [00:21:00] I'm still

learning how to say no, but it just came out of me. if I see a problem, I try to offer solutions and I try not to be a problem.

And so if I could do something that allowed the best more time in the field or do things that we're a little more time consuming. I took on those roles mainly just feeding my long it's something that is really, really hard to get rid of. But it gave me the ability to feed that work in the field where they were doing investigations.

Just doing a ride along, just trying to immerse myself in what was going on and take that data and knowledge and be helpful. And so, as the department recognized that, hey, I have these skill sets that evolved into me officially being classified as an analyst because of my ability to help take information data and then turn it into something that we can use to be actionable.

And then my primary focus is on the technology side of analysis. And so now we're finding data points and data sets, whether it be cameras, LPR, [00:22:00] software programs, putting that all together in a digestible format. And then giving that to the appropriate end users to do whatever they need to. And so primarily what my day looks like, like that is we have a ticketing system where internal and external agencies can request a foremost and so whether they need Intel on a car that they're looking for, that may be a suspect in some type of felony or something like that, I'm able to go in.

Check all of our databases, check all my LPR data. If there are any cameras that are relevant to it, if there's any background information on that person, essentially we're building a case file to then give either to our investigators or an outside agency of information and data. That will help further the case along and we have example after example of our ability to go from the digital forensic side, the digital intelligence and the real time crime center capabilities that we have and basically doing a ton of work for agencies and turn over a finished product where very soon after they can get it.

Go and secure warrants or [00:23:00] basically come to a conclusion on what happened throughout the course of that crime or criminal activity and save a lot of time and effort because of the tools and resources that we have. Yeah,

Jason: digital forensics just to give the listeners a little more description

Kevin: on that.

So, on the digital forensics front the way I like to frame it, and I may have stolen this from somebody else, but. We're trying to do is create a digital witness where we're allowing technology to help give us a unrefutable timeline of what's going on. And so when you think of cell phones, computers, cell towers, Internet of Things devices, like your smart devices, TVs, Roku, Amazon Firesticks, all these devices are collecting data about you in some form or fashion.

And always give the caveat through legal process. We're able to leverage this data and create those digital witnesses that essentially either help us prove or disprove someone's involvement in some type of incident or criminal activity. I'll give a [00:24:00] short story. We were helping the agency north of us with a a burglary that happened over a weekend.

The prime suspect, based on the cameras, was a former employee. He ends up getting arrested. The FBI arrests him. They're doing the interview in the Birmingham area. He won't give it up. And we have all this evidence. And so what we have is, is data from his phone, his health data. So we had an Apple Watch in the Apple phone, so we had that from what we returned from the search warrant.

He even went as far as to when he went to the business usually if I work somewhere I'm going to connect to their Wi Fi, well, he forgot to delete that. And so we have all this overwhelming evidence showing that we can tell you how many flights of stairs he went down to get to the parking deck to go to his car.

Him driving from his apartment in Birmingham all the way up to Northeast Alabama. Spent his phone connecting to the Wi Fi, and then him going back home. He's on camera doing things. And the whole time the owner's like, Hey, just give me the money back. I want fresh charges. I won't come up on it. And then we hit him with this overwhelming amount of evidence.

And the [00:25:00] big key about that is, Is this your Apple Watch? Yes. Has it ever been out of your possession? No, it's been with me the whole time. Is this your cell phone? Has it ever been out of your possession? No, it's been with me the whole time. I will have you locked into these devices without having the ability to have someone else.

Do these maneuvers and do these movements. And now I have a huge digital case that I can take in front of a day. And that's another component that we've worked really hard on training our days and judges on how digital forensics

work because signing the search warrants and things like that can sometimes be a little intimidating when they don't have a good.

understanding of how this stuff works. So we've done really good with in our region, the seventh judicial region allowing our investigators, DAs, and our judges to understand how this stuff works and how we create these digital witnesses. And we've been very successful in leveraging technology to help us bring people to justice and give families some level of closure.

Yeah,

Jason: no, that's, that's fantastic. And it does sound, You're well versed in how to use the tools[00:26:00] so there's that aspect of technology, but then with the analyst position and understanding how people behave and how the certain Things happen within a city and understanding that more practical aspect of it so that you can you understand certain why certain bit of information is more important than other information is.

Is that something that innately came to you? I know you mentioned going on ride alongs, but I was just wondering if you thought about that and could articulate how that aspect of your skill set came along.

Kevin: Yeah. So I'm, I'm a hands on type of person. And so I'm very untypical when you think of an analyst.

And so if we have a crime or crime scene, I'm going to the crime scene. I need to see things. I need to look at things because it helps me figure out why things took place or how can I help in a situation? Prime example, recently we had an active shooter situation a couple months [00:27:00] back. And I'm also a part of our special operations unit dealing with drones and robotics.

And so it was a training day. We're playing with gas grenades and things like that, just trying to figure out a new piece of equipment. We hear a call go out as far as an active shooter. Now, could I have gotten my truck, pulled up my computer and pulled up cameras? Yes, but is that the most effective use of my time in an active shooter situation?

Because you still got to think about. I'm going to get called out anyway to start pulling video from the crime scene and a lot of the after effect stuff. So we all head that way and got there probably within a few seconds of the suspect being put in custody. We ended up having a crime scene that was, I think, roughly an eighth of a mile long and ended up having three crime scenes. So now we're having to pull video from our whole cameras. There was a couple of dash cameras that had potential video video from several businesses on top of doing the things that I do with special operations, which is documenting the crime scene with drones. Supporting our crime scene [00:28:00] unit with the technology that they're deploying.

And because I'm on scene, I'm able to kind of get a good lay of the land and figure out things that we need to do to help us document this crime scene as quickly as possible. And then this is the one of the worst possible areas for this type of situation to play out where the suspect went from an entrance to I 20 all the way to a local gas station.

shooting at a individual going to the actual gas station, shooting the gas station up. And by the grace of God, nobody actually lost their life during this event. But because of that drive, you'll say that I got to see it. I got to touch it and a trip contributing to making sure that we get all of the relevant digital evidence collected as quickly as possible.

And then that allows our officers to focus on crime scene security, allows our investigators focus on documenting and collecting evidence. And that's just one less thing that they have to worry about because I'm able to be on scene and help take care of this these type of digital things along with our other members of our unit.

And so some days I'm in the [00:29:00] office just watching cameras and helping stop shoplifters or catch shoplifters and other days I'm actually out on crime scenes just helping in the digital aspect and make sure that we're checking all the boxes as far as things that we need to gather during the course of that investigation.

All right. Now,

Jason: you mentioned yesterday in the prep call that population there is about 25, 000.

Kevin: Yeah, so the city of Oxford, we're now officially the largest city in our county, which is Calhoun County. We're located right off of I 20 about halfway between the city of Birmingham and the city of Atlanta.

Our African resident population is around about 25, 000, but our daytime population can swell in excess of 100, 000. Because we're a retail shop we have a lot of industry like Fort McClellan, we are close to the Honda plant. We have

some pretty large manufacturers of like drywall and furniture, things like that, all located within the city.

So we have a lot of, we have a good cross section of industry in our area. And [00:30:00] also with us being a shopping hub, we get a lot of people in and out of the city on a daily basis.

Jason: Some of the technology that you've described, do you feel that Oxford is, is

Kevin: unique with us?

We are very, very and not being boastful, but in order for us to be in the conversation. Where we're in the same league is like your L. A. P. D. G. N. Y. P. D. Your Chicago PDs because of the level of technology that we have per capita. We're very fortunate that our chief is a really good visionary. As far as thinking about the future.

We have really good support from our mayor and city council who make sure we have everything that we feel like we need to make a positive impact. Not only for Oxford, For our county in our state and beyond our ethos is if we push crime out of Oxford, out of Calhoun County, out of East Central Alabama and beyond, everybody benefits from it.

And that's evidenced by a double digit crime reduction pretty regularly, not only for us, but for other agencies that touch our borders. And so with [00:31:00] that with us only being about it's about an 80 man police department we're very fortunate to have the level of technology that we do have because it don't, it does not only impact us, but it also impacts about, I say roughly the estimates are about half a million people in our area of operation for the services that we have MOUs or memorandums of understanding with other agencies.

And that's doing who we have. Full-time aviation unit. Of course, we have the emac. We have probably one of the best trained and well-equipped SWAT teams, which we refer to as ESU. And then the third Special Operations Unit, which I'm also a member of, is the Technical Services Unit, where we're throwing all this technology at our agency, equipping all of our officers, employees, and staff to use this equipment, and then take it out, outside of the city borders to make sure that we're helping as many people as possible.

Yeah,

Jason: I find it fascinating because you certainly, Any department can buy they get their hands on the money or the grant. They can buy the technology, but . It sounds like [00:32:00] Oxford has been able to have really good investments in terms of. The technology that they have, that they've really been able to not have a wasteful spending is I guess, another way of putting it to where, where they've concentrated their efforts have really got a return out

Kevin: of their investment.

Correct. And we try to be good stewards for the money that our citizens have entrusted to us. As where we can save money we, we try to, but we also pride ourselves on. Not investing in things that will not last or things that are a gimmick or anything like that primarily most of the things that we invest in or things that we will have for a long time or really will really make a huge impact.

And so 1 of the biggest questions I get a lot of times is, especially with helicopters is why does a small town police department need a full time aviation unit? Well, because we're blessed with the generosity of our citizens and through the [00:33:00] tax dollars that are generated through hotels and things like that retail, because of all the people that come into our area and the people that are in the immediate surrounding counties, just having that resource that doesn't really exist outside of us in East Central Alabama makes our citizens a lot safer and we're able to do things in a safer manner because we have an aviation unit.

Because we have a drone and robotics unit, we're able to do things that not only keep our officers safe, but also keep our citizens at large safe. Having an aviation unit is, I've heard estimates that that's equal to about 20 to 30 officers on the ground. When we're doing a search for a child, or we're searching for a suspect, or we're chasing a car that resource really cuts down on the time and effort that it takes for us to capture an offender or...

find a missing child or find a missing hiker and things like that. We're doing things from the ground and just that much more harder having that technology like drones and helicopters and all the resources that we've been entrusted with just makes our jobs a lot more effective. The biggest blessing outside of all that is having the [00:34:00] appropriate staff to be in charge of these things.

If you ever get a chance to come visit. Our department looks like it was built yesterday. All of our equipment looks like it just came off the factory floor. We really take pride in everything that we're being given and the people that are behind these machines and equipment. Take pride in it as well. **Jason:** All right. You mentioned drones a couple times now and that deals with one of your analyst badge stories So let's get into that and for those that may be new to the show the analyst badge story is a crew to find in case or project and so this deals with a barricaded Suspect situation and I think it's 2020.

Is that is that right?

Kevin: Yes, sir. So up until this year, 4th of July has been the best and most chaotic day for us. With respect to the city of Oxford. So, uh, just to kind of set the tone for us, 4th of July or the actual whenever we celebrate 4th of July is the one day of the year that no one can take off because we [00:35:00] usually have events throughout the city where including where we do our fireworks show in the surrounding areas where people are watching We've had estimates of over 100, 000 people attending these events.

So we try to have all hands on deck to basically set the tone that we're gonna have a good time. We're gonna have a good event, and we don't expect any problems. But when it does happen, we're gonna deal with it, deal with it swiftly. And allow our citizens and visitors to enjoy these festivities as simply and safely as possible.

So during that event we have the fireworks show everything's wrapping up and I remember I was doing the traffic detail on one of the major intersections where we're getting people out. So it's a very... chaotic situation. You gotta got thousands of cars trying to get out of two roadways going toward one of our two major roadway.

So it's very chaotic. It's dark. You work in traffic, getting tired, your hands are hurting. So that's kind of what we are. Before we started dismissing traffic we were hearing that there was a active shooter situation where officers pinned down and all the SWAT guys and all the [00:36:00] technical services guys kind of itching like Do we need to go?

Do you want us to go? The chief and our captains at the time, which included one of our SWAT commander, they go out to the scene, just kind of try to assess it finally activate our SWAT team. They're grabbing our Bearcat and our equipment truck and getting everything down there to go ahead and get to assist.

So the, what we knew about the, the scene at that point in time, apparently there was some type of domestic dispute between the husband and wife. He ends up pulling a gun. I believe he threatened the wife with the gun at some point in

time during the altercation. And what set him off is I think he was confronted by one of his neighbors and that's when he started shooting.

I don't know if he shot at the neighbor specifically, but shots were fired. That police department that we went in support of is a very small department. I think they may have like one or two. Offices on the road at any given time. And so they don't necessarily have the events equipment that a SWAT team would have to deal with a active shooter situation or barricaded suspect.

And so it also just so happened that a local police chief that agency north of us lived there. And so basically they [00:37:00] strap on all their attack vest, grab rifles and basically drive personal truck, get the officer cover, jump in the back of the truck and get him clear. I want to say once the crime scene was processed, I want to say there was an excess of 100 rounds fired by the suspect during that event and even disabled that agency's patrol car.

I get the call. She says, Hey, get the drone needed out here. And so it was about a 20 minute drive from where we were for the fourth of July. Celebration to where we were in that city. And all through that, this was actually my first live operation as a drone operator, so not only am I nervous, but I'm running through scenarios in my head as far as what I need to do, I need to make sure I have all my equipment trying to just think about all the things, all my fundamentals as I'm trying to get myself mentally prepared for walking into a situation with a barricaded suspect and then something that's not very common for me every day now Which is throwing on a bulletproof vest and going into an active scene to do something to help make that scene safer or [00:38:00] bring that suspect into custody.

That was kind of a new thing for me in a civilian role. And so I finally get on scene. One of the things you see with public safety when we're going to a scene, everybody comes and everybody forgets, Hey, we may have to get something through this street. And so I have to grab like four or five cases and hump them to a point to meet the SWAT team, get in the back of the Bearcat and then drive back up to the scene where we're going to operate from.

And so we're very fortunate that we have a lot of equipment that help us get situational awareness. Chiefly among that is with my drone, I'm able to stream. To a single display that I keep with me or stream with fuses so that people who are not actually in the immediate zone of being able to view my drone and see that contribute and make whatever changes or suggestions or plans to deal with that situation as quickly as possible.

And so, as I'm set up, I'm positioned, I'm operating basically outside, just outside of Bearcat. Outside the structure, basically in the line of fire in the back of my mind, like, man, this is pretty daggone cool. This is what I signed up for.[00:39:00] aNd I kind of get the best of both worlds where I'm not a door kicker, but I get to hang out with the door kickers.

But it's a very chaotic scenario, but it's very calming seeing that. I have overwhelming support at the time my sergeant over my unit was on the issue team. So he's pretty much my eyes and ears because I got my head down and my controller. And I don't know DGI products are pretty easy to fly, but once you go inside of a house, it's not the easiest thing to do.

And so finally get set up, get my drone to approach the house. And then I had my first problem. And so every time anything that's going to go wrong goes wrong. So my drone wasn't responding the way I needed and it wouldn't go inside the house, so I had to bring the drone back, recalibrate, reset up some of the settings and also gave me an opportunity to kind of calm my nerves because I'm used to having my drone, the coordinator right there with me doing stuff and telling me what to do.

And I don't have that luxury right now. And so I got the ESU commander, the team leaders kind of hovered around me looking at the. The controller and looking at the screen and it's pretty [00:40:00] intimidating scenario. But you just gotta gut check it. There's people's lives on the line.

There's potentially victims in the house. We're trying to make sure that none of our guys are getting hurt. And I don't have the opportunity to put a robot in the house just because The robots back at Special Operations Building and right now we're going to rely on a drone. So I start making my approach again.

They were able to reach the front door and keep the front door popped, propped open for me. That was a single story structure, so that was a really good relief because I only had one floor to cover and no, no basement, no upstairs, no attic. The only thing we were really worried about is their first floor.

And so I make my approach into the house. We immediately go into the living room of the structure, and typically when I'm flying inside of a house, the biggest rule is don't fly backwards. So I'm doing a lot of 360 motions, making small deliberate movements to make sure that I'm holding what needs to be seen by the ESU commanders, and they can see, feel good about, all right, we don't have suspect contact here. And I was able to clear about, I would say, [00:41:00] conservatively about 65 to 70 percent of the structure. and defensively tell SWAT commanders where the suspect wasn't. So this is where it starts getting interesting. So, if we're looking at the front of the house, the left of the house is we have a living room, small dining room, kitchen, and then leading out to a carport storage area.

And we felt pretty comfortable based upon our ability to view into the house that we had all those things covered, and we hadn't seen any movement for quite some time. So now comes the hard part. To the right of the house is the hallway where all the bedrooms are. So I believe we had a three bedroom house.

It's a bathroom in the hallway, so now I'm moving down the hallway and it's a lot darker. One of the things we've done to help us out with that is to put lights on top of our drones and on the bottom of my drone so we can get as much light as possible, even if there's total dark. And so I'm able to clear the hallway and this is where things go very south.

So I go into a bathroom that's the place where he could be hiding and barricade himself, had the door open. Before I go into the bathroom, there's [00:42:00] three other doors that are closed. One of them was partially closed, so I could not fly in them, but just because the doors are closed.

So the last viable place for me to check with the drone before I'm going to make my exit. Is in the bathroom and so I'm doing my 360 in the bathroom and when you're flying a drone without GPS, you're pretty much at the mercy of the drift of the drone and making sure you can stay out of trouble and we have prop guards and make sure we don't call up and I make my final 360 and I see a shower curtain in my face and my drone just goes belly up.

And so I lost the drum and so the decision was made at that time. Hey, we've cleared the majority structure. We feel like we know that he's not on the left side of the house where the living room dining room and kitchen are. We have units holding down all the breezeways and everything. The carport. We don't know.

We don't feel like he's there. So then the decision is made to start gas in the house. I think we logged a ton of gas in the house that night. No comment. Yeah. attack and then we hear a single gunshot. And so what we believe is as soon as we started casting the house, the [00:43:00] suspect realized that we were coming in and he was going to be confronted an hour ago and he decided that he would take his own life.

And one of the few rooms that I could not get in is where the suspect's body was actually found. And so I like to beat myself up when it comes to, I want to be perfect, I want to do the best. But what we were able to contribute as a drone unit, Prevented our SWAT team from having to go in and clear that house room by room by room and directly focus on where we feel like the suspect is minimizing our time and exposure in that house, being able to secure the structure.

And every, all of us go home safe, all the citizens go home safe and the suspect is neutralized and no longer will victimize anybody. So that, that was a pretty hairy day, but it was a good day goes to show that even a little bit of technology and that drone that I flew in that house wasn't expensive.

It was a little 600 mini one. It did what it needed to do. kept our guys safe and had a positive outcome for us. Yeah.

Jason: Now with the drones, and this might be Jason getting into too [00:44:00] much sci fi, is it, is it possible to, as you're flying into a room, that it gives you a rendering of that room? Like it would

Kevin: scan that?

Yeah, that technology does exist. It's a little bit more costly. That's something that we haven't specifically delve into. But essentially you're using LIDAR so if you ever think of like a ferro scanner or some of the similar scanners, the technology doesn't exist to do stuff like that.

It's just not affordable right now. Yeah.

Jason: Hmm. That's, that is interesting. So, yeah. All right. Well, I don't want to spend too much time on that because I know we got a couple other stories here. So let's go on to your second one here because it again, it's July, it's the following year, 2021, and this is a kidnapping.

Kevin: Yeah, so I don't know what it is, but again, that train for the 3rd year in a row and so how this situation panned out again, it's our 4th of July festivities. It's a very festive time, [00:45:00] but again, we've been working all day. Typically, my days start between like 4 and 5 just because all things that I have to contribute to.

And so. By midday, I'm pretty gassed, but that's nothing a few Red Bulls can't cure, at least for a little while. And so we have a really good relationship with

all of our public safety. So I have conversations constantly with our fire chief assistant fire chief or EMS director. And so the assistant fire chief came up to me.

This is about like 10 o'clock. And he was saying that, Hey, did you hear about Miss Cobb? And at the time I didn't know her she wasn't familiar to me but I've heard her name in different circles. And she has been a volunteer firefighter and EMT for decades. And it's just been a real pillar of Calhoun County, especially in public safety and part of goal would help anybody whenever she can.

And so this is why this case was so special to us. And she actually was a really good friend of our police chief. And so that's kind of. When things hit home, you kind of remember them a little bit more details or any of the details that I would like to forget. I can't just because of just [00:46:00] how vivid that day was.

And so having that conversation with the assistant fire chief, he was asking, Hey, did you hear what happened to her? And he's describing the scene to me that just based on my training experience sounded like something that we should have been called in on a lot sooner, but hadn't yet because that agency was trying to figure out as much as they could.

And so basically the way it was described. Her husband came home found a bunch of grocery bags all over the driveway. Her trunk was still open. I think she was missing like a shoe or something like that. Her purse was on the ground, which I believe contained her phone as well. So the initial assumption was she may have had some type of mental episode or had some type of event that caused her to freak out and run to the woods.

And so all of the teams that were up there at that point in time are checking the woods, trying to check other people's houses. I think there may have been like a pond or something like that in the area that they were trying to check and see if there was any signs of disturbance. But when you see things, you hear certain elements, you kind of get a feeling that something is just not right.

Right. And so that whole time, our unit's [00:47:00] like we're just waiting on the call. We ended up sending an officer to be a liaison, to just give us information. Had our aviation unit on standby, had a couple of our tech guys on standby, and the intel unit we're just waiting for the call.

And so, that's around 10 a.m., we start the festivities, we're going through the event. Still don't get the call and so our roll call is at 3 o'clock that day. We go

to roll call still no calls. We're kind of getting our briefing for the day and we're about to head back to our post 1 of which is the Mac and the other, which is where we are at the event and so we were having a quick staff meeting at the max.

All of our unit members were actually in the building and we finally get the call around 4 o'clock. And so I'm talking to the sheriff directly and the investigator who is, it is the primary on the case and we're getting all this information, getting all those details. And the one piece of evidence that really broke it open for us is they actually found one of the receipts from where she was shopping, which gave us some key information.

[00:48:00] One, where she was shopping at, and then we actually have a hard timeline of where we can start checking our cameras. And it's fortunate that most of her shopping was done in the city of Oxford, where we have really good camera coverage. But this is where it starts. And so we finally find her car on the cameras and we work with that retail with those retailers to get their videos very quickly so we can start looking for what we need to find.

Not much bothers me with respect to my job, even with all the things that we deal with in public safety, but actually seeing a unknown offender. This is not something where this suspect knew the victim or anything like that. This is totally random. Hey, I saw this lady come out. I'm going to victimize her and watching that old busted up vehicle following somebody from camera to camera, the camera, the location, the location, the location made the hairs in the back of my neck stand up.

It was very eerie. These are things that you typically see in a movie, but that doesn't happen in real life. And actually seeing that. in real life just I guess took it to another notch for us as we're doing that. [00:49:00] And so what we're actually looking at is the poll cameras that we have in these strategic areas where we have several shopping areas.

And then what broke the case for us was our LPR. And so the suspect actually drove his personal car as he stopped for a victim. And so we were able to track his movements based on the car and confirm that when her vehicle hit LPR, his car hit the LPR very soon after. And we were very fortunate that we had LPRs in place that were able to paint this picture for us.

And we were able to track her and him all the way up to the point where they left the city limits. Based on that information, now we have this tag, we're running the history and this is where we have our, I guess, our first road bump.

Car comes back to a female, and we start running the history on her, and using all of our tools and databases, and we develop a male suspect.

Through the course of using those tools and so we're running a history on that suspect. We go agent on the phone number get a location, find the [00:50:00] phone somewhere in the western part of the city, start sending investigators in, attack teams in that area, get our helicopter going in that area to do overwatch.

And we start running a criminal history on that person. And so by this time chief is in the building as well, just kind of getting information, getting prepared to release whatever information we need the media, just kind of keep them abreast of what's going on, but not compromise our investigation.

And so he sees the name of the suspect we're looking at. He's like, Hey, I know that guy. He's one of the vendors at the event that we're doing for 4th of July. And we're like, So we send two of our investigators over, talk to him, and the female that actually the car comes back to is there as well, ends up being his daughter.

And so investigators are asking questions, and no, I'm not trying to really allude to what's going on, but trying our best to figure out who potentially is the suspect driver. And so they ask the daughter, hey, this car is registered in your name, who's driving it? Oh, that's my ex husband. He, he kept the car.

It's just registered in my name. And so now we have a new suspect and we have to start this process all over again, where we're going as on the phone get the location. And [00:51:00] we finally get a location to another house in a city north of us. And so Unbeknownst to us, she jumps on the phone and calls him and says, Hey, the police are looking for you.

What did you do? Now, I was a little upset about that because that tipped him off. So we weren't able to apprehend him at that moment. But at the same time, that probably stopped the victimization of our victim from that point on. And so we get that GPS location of the phone. We find him and he ended up taking her to his house, where his name was registered to the house.

Which again just makes it more, hey, she might not make it out of this if we don't find her quickly because he didn't cover his face. He took her in his car and took her to his house and assaulted her. And so, we get the helicopter oversight we got about three or four different cities, TAC teams going to the house and then investigators from our unit heads out there as well.

We take the house down, start systematically searching it, and they ended up finding her inside of a closet. Obviously signs of assault, things [00:52:00] like that. But she's alive. She's okay. But now the suspect is outstanding. Helicopter does a search of the area. We don't find any cars that are registered to him.

We don't see him walking. We don't see him walking anywhere in the area for us to let go apprehend him or anything like that. So he's in the wind. He was in custody within 36 hours of us. involved in that situation, which is pretty, pretty fast with respect to dealing with a suspect who's on the run.

And through the tools and resources that we had, we knew where he was and where he was going for an extended amount of time. And we were able to catch up to him in Kentucky. And actually the Kentucky State Police was able to stop the vehicle that he was in being driven by I wanted, I would say unwilling participant who didn't really know what he had just done, but we're able to get him in custody and nationalized him back to Alabama.

And then it gets even crazier. And so the sheriff's department doing, their press conference just kind of explaining the events, what goes on and we knew this, but [00:53:00] this is the first time that the public was was being notified that, hey, this suspect matches the description of a serial rapist within Calhoun and Talladega counties.

We're going to be submitting his DNA fast track to see if he is actually a suspect. And if you look at the drawing of the suspect from the unsolved crimes versus the suspects. A mugshot, it's almost like somebody traced his picture off the mugshot. Oh, wow. Like, that's how act, and so once the DNA came back, we were able to actually tie him to two unsolved rapes.

Mm-Hmm. One where the victim had already died and one where the victim was still alive. So he was able to be charged with that from that agency in another county. When we started doing the history on this individual, that's when it continued to keep getting darker and darker and darker. And so he was a certified nursing assistant, and he worked in nursing homes and worked with the elderly.

And so even though we had three victims that could attribute to him, we will never know how many people he potentially victimized because of the [00:54:00] area that he worked in. And so... Going from all these ebb and flows up and downs. It's an emotional drain when you know it's online, you know it's at stake, and literally having a part in. Literally saving someone's life is one of the most rewarding things that I've ever experienced in life in general. And I think that was the first time I got a actual basically a citation of excellence or however they word it from this agency. Just because of everything, our unit.

Everybody, um, literally all the efforts of everybody who can shoot that they save this lady's life and in a very impossible situation scenario where at any moment, her life could have been taken in order for that suspect to try to conceal his crime again. And it's just because of technology and the people behind the technology.

We were able to save that lady's life that day. So

Jason: you mentioned , capturing data earlier, trying to get it away from paper reports. And that's the beauty of [00:55:00] LPR is it's scanning the license plate and digitizing that. So you could search the license plate of the vehicle when you are dealing with.

the surveillance cameras. Do you have software there or is it just a tedious process of knowing where the camera is and what time frame that the victim and suspect would have went through that that

Kevin: area? So initially all we had were cameras and the worst kind of scenario all we had were PTZs and everybody had to log into it.

And so, even if I knew the camera was supposed to be looking at something, it would hit the shot that it had exactly what I needed at the time. And so, when that's right around the time I was hired, and the goal was to try to find a better solution, so that's when we started doing multi camera systems that would allow us to be able to document a water area, even if the PTZ wasn't showing exactly what we needed to, we still had other cameras, whether it be bullet cameras or multi [00:56:00] sensors that documented the entire area.

Minimizing us losing any video that would be relevant, but then the downside to that is as we start getting more advanced cameras and we're getting more cameras around the city. It's not fun trying to watch a video even 10 minutes to find 1 little piece of of a video clip to help with the investigation.

That's something I actually ended up doing this morning. It's the 1st thing I started out with was analyzing the video. We actually are now relying on, and I don't like using this term, but everybody uses it, artificial intelligence or machine learning, take a lot of the human error out of what we're doing.

And so we're using some software called BriefCam, where I can take About 98 percent of the video formats that are out there, put it into this system and it does all the heavy lifting for me. So if I'm looking for a red two door car that went northbound on one of our roadways, I can get that granular with this system to minimize how much video I'm actually having to review.

Now they showed [00:57:00] me 30. Red two, your two door cars going down this roadway for this particular timeframe. But out of thousands of potential objects, I'm only focusing on 30. Now I can do 30 mm-Hmm mm-Hmm, , I can figure it out back my way into that. But it's basically increase infinitely our ability to process video and get actionable intel and data.

Literally, within, I say, as simple as as little as 5 to 10 minutes, we have actionable data in Intel that we can go back and review and start making investigative decisions or law enforcement action based upon what we're able to get out of that system., and one of the coolest cases so we had a trailer stolen about 6 a.

m. because of that software, because of the OPR, we had a trailer recovered by 9 a. m.

Jason: Nice. So let's get to your third analyst badge story then. And this is. 2022 and it's

Kevin: a bank robbery. Yes. And so we're, again, with the technology that we have, makes it a lot quicker for us to take [00:58:00] traditional information and data and make it actionable a lot quicker.

And so during this time we had a bank robbery ironically at the community bank that I used to work at. So this made it even more important for me to help solve this bank robbery. So essentially because of our proxy I 20. People get off on our exits, you'll commit a crime and then jump back to line 20.

And so we didn't have very much the means of physical evidence. So we had no fingerprints, we had no DNA. All we had to rely on was video. The investigator that was analyzing the video, it, I think, within about a day or two, he finally identified the suspect's car. He came off one of our first exits.

From I 20 going westbound parks the car behind a local restaurant, walks over to the bank, has a mask and a hat on, you know. Here, COVID makes things a lot harder to identify people. Does a note job, pass the note, asks for a specific amount of money, gets that money, and then gets back on the car and goes back onto the freeway.

By just happenstance now that we [00:59:00] have a general idea of what his tag looks like one of our other analysts, who is now one of our digital frenzy examiners, just happened to be in Georgia driving and sees a drive out tag that exactly matches the suspect's vehicle. The suspect, wow, on a very unique price point were able to call that dealership now that we knew what dealership it was and say, hey can you tell us about this car?

Did you sell it? It's like, well, you got to give me more information. He said, well, will the picture help? And he's like, yeah, yeah, send me that. And so within about 10 minutes, we had the suspect's name, address and phone number. And we're working in conjunction with the FBI at this point, too, because it's a bank robbery.

And so, because of the information. Thankful to the state of Georgia, their drive out tags are readable by LPRs. Not every state can do that. Yeah. And so through that, we were able to basically track his history. Literally every day we're tracking him, seeing where he's going. I think he ended up robbing two more banks after ours.

And the last bank he walked out, the FBI and Sheriff's Department arrested him. And then about four or five months later, he [01:00:00] pled guilty to all the robberies that we were aware of. Man, that is

Jason: something though. Hmm. All right. Very good. So I guess In terms of all of this technology, you've talked about a couple of different stories now in terms of using this technology and in key events, either what do you wish you would have or what do you think is next in terms of.

Your police department in terms of technology, what's coming down the pike?

Kevin: I think the biggest need that we have right now, which I think everybody is facing is manpower. We're very fortunate that Our department 1, if you come here, it takes a lot for you to leave as far as going and seeking another appointment elsewhere.

And so now we're getting to a point where a lot of our command staff and mid level supervisors are close to retirement and it's at the point where they're actually losing money, but not retiring. And so they're having to go ahead and. Take that usually, and we just had a [01:01:00] huge change in our command staff over the past few months.

And so keeping the people technologies are great, wonderful, but if you don't have the people that are willing to put the time in to learn how to use it, use it effectively and make an impact. I think that's one of the biggest things that I'm seeing. And especially in today's climate with law enforcement, it's not the most glorious profession.

Take a lot of heat within the public on social media news, things like that. And so it's not a career that this younger generation sees as something that It's something that is desirable and then the other part is we're dealing with younger and younger generations where they don't see the value of coming up the ranks putting your time in you got, I, we go through recruiting events and what I got to do to be an investigator.

Like, can I get hired as an investigator? Well, no, you got to start out learning basics work the road for a few years and then maybe you can apply to be in a specialized unit. A lot of kids think that based on TV and these things that you just, Go from high school, graduated from college and come in and do the things that we're doing in these specialized [01:02:00] units.

And so just the education of how law enforcement works and getting people turned on to it and then specifically with technology, one of our biggest hurdles right now is in. The legislative arena, whether it be on the state or federal level. And so 1 of the things is a lot of this technology that we use as a negative connotation to it, because there's potential reality for people's civil rights to be, violent.

So, 1 of the things that I always try to address, even for me working. At this agency and just having access to the things the state says I can, I have to go through a bunch of hoops periodically to make sure that I can legally do these things. And when I'm using this data and information. It's done under legal authority in relation to an investigation.

We have a lot of checks and balances to ourselves, but you still have certain elements of our legislative body or even citizens at large that have a huge misunderstanding of how we use this, not this technology and the potentiality [01:03:00] for it to be abused, which I understand. I can empathize with that, but at the same time, we have to do a good job of letting our legislators and the public know why this technology is important and how it's used every day.

literally saving lives every day. And I don't want to become a situation where it is not realizing to your loved one is the one that needs the help from us. And so I think that's the two main areas is personnel and also getting the world at large and our legislatures to understand that the more we're handcuffed, I don't mind oversight and making sure that we document when things are being done.

But if there's any kind of Dutch, our ability technology any in any significant It's that can be the difference between us being able to save someone's life and not all right.

Jason: Very good. So we're going to move on now. And this is where I'm looking for your help. Because as I mentioned in your introduction, , I have very hard feelings towards police departments, it staff during my history, I have I have often [01:04:00] described them as the party of now and not giving me any kind of workarounds to my current problem.

And I've actually nicknamed them fit, which which you probably get the it of that, but the F version of that is some might Describe it as freaking, but I don't need freaking. Okay, so I realize I am conscious of my bias and my frustrations as an analyst trying to do the my best job and understanding that a lot of police departments have limited it sources. And so when I am been part of police departments asking for something and they'll be like, well, yeah, we probably could do that. But that's going to take like 3 or 4 months when. All these other projects that the IT staff are doing get freed up.

And so I've always been an advocate of is trying to allow [01:05:00] analysts to have maybe some more freedoms with the data, with technology, with the computer programs. At police departments allow them to to come up with solutions that can help them do their job better, faster that they do it.

And this gets into admin rights and just having more access. To computers, and so I lay all that out to you knowing your background and so seeing that maybe you're either going to talk me off the ledge or you're going to push me

Kevin: over and so again, that's why my job was created in the 1st place is to try to bridge that gap.

between the things that are IT no nos and allowing our end users to be as efficient as possible. And so my approach is always customer service first and that comes from my time spent in the retail world and banking and things like that. And it's even changed my perspective on policing because before I did all that, [01:06:00] I worked at a previous agency and kind of had that.

Law enforcement mine, but now I have a customer service law enforcement of how do we bridge that gap. And so for me and the things that we're working on, and these are actually active projects that we're doing. So we're about to go through a huge culture shift when it comes to. Respect to admin rights and things like that.

And so when I first got here, everybody had access to all their PCs, things like that, which seems convenient. It's the easiest way to get things done. But at the same time, that is the most prevalent way where networks are compromised, where city governments, county governments. Are at a point where they're at a standstill because they've been attacked by ransomware.

And so our approach and this is me working with city at as representative of public safety is what do you guys want? And how can we make it easier on our end users? And we always find some kind of middle ground. Or initially when I Everything that was connected to the city was ripped apart, and it was my responsibility, including networks, [01:07:00] databases, and even though I like having that control, it sucked because there were other individuals that could be helping me out.

But because of the disconnect I was basically on the island by myself. Now I learned a lot as far as the department, our needs how we can adjust and try to fit closely more to what it should be while still giving that great customer service and allowing our users to work as freely as possible.

The other concern was that my unit specifically, we have to see and do and access things that typically are not done in the average corporate or police environment. And so that's another balance that I have to do as far as making sure that they have everything they need in our intelligence unit to be as efficient as possible.

And so I have all these different scenarios and I have to make them all work and work cohesively. Fortunately, initially, basically the charge that I got from chief was, hey, however you want it to do, that's what it's going to be. And I went back and not wanting to abuse that and just be the IT, uh, czar and it's my way or the highway.[01:08:00]

That's not the way I try to approach it. And over the years, I've been able to help CDIT along with HATE. We can find common ground up until the point where I'm turning a ton of stuff back over to them because now... I'm a fourth member of the city's I. T. team. So I have access to purview for the entire city.

But if I needed to do things specifically for the I. T. department, I have that autonomy and flexibility to do that. But then I have three other I. T. minds that can help me on big projects or things that we all have those moments where we may be really good at something, but I just can't figure it out.

It's on the tip of my tongue or my brain is in a fall. And I have 3 other minds that I can go to you and bounce ideas off and it can be the most simplest, stupidest thing, but I can't figure out just by talking to it gets solved or just big project as far as, hey, I have a server. I need to buy.

This is going to be a lot of money. How can we save money and not abuse the city's graciousness to us. And so that's kind of our approach now. We're finding that. Synergy between the end [01:09:00] user for public safety spectrum is not going to be the same for somebody accessing YouTube, but it's in your garage to figure out how to fix something.

And so we've done a lot to upgrade our network. To kind of at the first initial point that our networks touch the world, we're throwing everything we can at it to block as much as possible. But then on the same breath we're only as good as that least trained user who, and we've had this happen actually this week where somebody got an email, you need to log into your OneDrive.

What do they do? They log into their OneDrive and then a bunch of emails from their email account start being sent to other people, trying to get them to compromise their stuff as well. And so because of these events lately, now we have the support of the mayor and the city council that if it doesn't say it can be done as far as technology, it's not getting done, but we understand the power that we have and we're not trying to prevent anybody from being efficient, but at the same time doing as much as we [01:10:00] can.

To prevent the end user from getting themselves in trouble. And so we're taking that security posture where secure the network, secure the endpoint, and we've got some pretty robust programs and systems to help us do that. And then now we're going to start embracing the culture of the end user by training them, making them feel better about using technology.

I have one user that'll text me, Hey, is it okay to update the apps on my phone? And then you have that other user that is pretty decent that makes sure that all the computers that they're responsible for getting patches or getting updates basically with like windows update, nothing that needs admin credential. And then now we're introducing more iOS and Mac devices into our ecosystem where now we're able to empower the end user. Hey, I'll be able to, I'll get an allotment of admin time per week. And so if you need to install a quick program, you get click request. It gives you admin rights for two minutes, install your program, log out of that to save time.

And then I get an alert as one of the IT staff. Hey, this [01:11:00] program has been installed. I make sure it's okay. And so now. Now we're equipping them to be a little more autonomous, but still have that roadblock that will prevent them from creating chaos for us. And for me specifically, why that's so important is we've had agencies that we partner with that have gone through ransomware and still have not fully recovered as far as where they need to be from an IT infrastructure.

And so we don't want to put ourselves in a position where We keep ourselves vulnerable when we have clear cut resources to prevent it, but then also not be too strict on our end users and find that middle ground where we fulfill our requirements as far as the IT team, but also allow our users to be as efficient as possible.

And the last point to that is a lot of people don't realize, but, for instance, for cyber security insurance, in order for me to get the lowest rate for cyber security insurance as an IT department and for the city. There are certain things that insurance companies expect us to do. And every time we say, no, we're not doing this or no, this has not been [01:12:00] implemented yet.

We're costing the taxpayers more money. And so we're always trying to find that balance of being good stewards of making sure we have that protection. But at the same time, reducing the cost of that protection by making sure. The department in the city are doing things that are industry standards to make sure that we're protecting ourselves, protecting the city and reduce the chances of us having some type of cyber attack.

Or if it does happen. We can mitigate and compartmentalize it as quickly as possible.

Jason: wHen and I think back and some of the frustrations that I have is as an analyst, I want to limit the amount of time that I have to process data. And whether I'm cleaning the data or getting it in the right format, the right product, I want to minimize that because you want to get to the analysis portion of your job.

And so I think that was my main frustration. It's like, look, I, I want to schedule tasks. I wanted, I want to be able to do stuff, go more into [01:13:00] automation. With with some of these everyday tasks, so I don't have to come in and spend my first hour hitting all these buttons and and trying to run macros and all this other stuff to get my day ready.

Kevin: And so for me, the simplest solution for something like that is. That's a dedicated machine that has a particular set of tasks that need to be done, and so it goes on a separate network. I put it on a different VLAN. It can't touch certain things. All it does is what its functions are supposed to do.

And if I need to pull resources or things like that, I can create certain firewall rules to allow it to do what it needs to do to talk to other machines. But there, for every problem, there is a solution that can fulfill the security needs that we have, but also let that in. Operate. So prime example, our forensic lab does a lot of stuff that if you checked our internet history and our internet traffic look very suspicious, but at the same time, that type of traffic can't be on my normal network.

And so by me segregating them all, and even a lot of our equipment doesn't even touch the internet. So it [01:14:00] doesn't even touch the network. We've created an environment where we've got them siloed and isolated off our main network so that if they do get into something that could potentially damage our network, it's just isolated to what they're doing in their machines, which is a lot easier to recover a handful of PCs or devices versus the entire network.

And so it takes a little more brainpower and a little bit more probably budgetary considerations, but for every problem that a user will run into, there's usually a few solutions that will be very amicable. And for us, so like our network at our intelligence center. It's totally separated from the rest of the city.

And so that allows us to do things that are a little bit more aggressive or more administrative type roles in a way that makes it easy for our end users, but also protect the city at large. Well,

Jason: it doesn't sound like you're the member of the party of now. Sounds

Kevin: like I've been there before. And that's kind of my approach.

When I was on the road when I was first started [01:15:00] my police career. I knew how much it sucked to not be able to do something right then and there,

but that's why I try to keep an open mind and the city. It is kind of on the same page for me is the answer is not always knows.

Can we find a solution that allows us to. Do what we need to do from an IT standpoint, but also allow the end users to do what they need to do.

Jason: All right, very good. Let's move on to some advice for your listeners. Specifically for you, if an analyst is listening to this, is either maybe in a real time crime situation, , or is maybe supporting investigations.

He's getting into some of this technology that you described here today. What advice would you give them on how they can better educate themselves to be better , at doing what

Kevin: you do? Me? The fir The thing is, don't be afraid to fail if I haven't failed or got in trouble several times in a day.

I don't [01:16:00] feel like I've been trying harder and not in the sense of me doing something that will mess with my integrity or prevent me from being a law enforcement employee. But don't be afraid to break stuff. Don't be afraid to try new things. And then that leads to being open. I get to learn new skills, learn new technology.

And probably 1 of the biggest assets for me is I've been fortunate enough to attend several national and regional conferences where I get outside of my bubble and compare what other people were doing. Take some of those best practices. So. Things like the the ACA and just all these organizations at the real time, organizations I never thought that I would be a member or associate member by CP.

There's just so many resources out here where you don't necessarily. I don't have formal training or formal background to learn a skill and learning as many skills that are applicable to where you want to go in your law enforcement careers is to me very key. I'm learning every day. I don't feel like the [01:17:00] way I describe myself is I'm allegedly an IT guy because it hasn't um, but for one that keeps me humble because I know, I don't know everything.

I have a lot to learn. I'm not afraid to make mistakes. And I'll probably make a ton of mistakes. I'll probably be stressed out of my mind, but nobody knows it because I try to be the same demeanor, whether we're dealing with a high stress situation, whether I'm having a bad day, I just want to deliver the best I can for my agency every single day.

I have good days. I have bad days. But you'll never know it. Every day is a good day for me. It's kind of my ethos and everything. Anybody asked me, how's it going today? Well, it's a good day. It's a beautiful day in the city of Oxford and I could be dealing with the worst type of scenario in my life.

My personal stuff should not impact how my agency is being serviced. And if that's a problem, take some time off, reconnect with my spiritual being and with my family, go back to work, refresh and renew. Don't don't be afraid to learn. Don't be afraid to break stuff and seek knowledge. I wasn't real big on LinkedIn as far as[01:18:00] I'm not big on promote myself.

I don't like a lot of notoriety. I'm fine. Hey, chief gives me a handshake. Appreciate that and go about, but starting to put myself out there to see where this industry is going, where I can contribute. And then I've been a part of something that's new and. State of Alabama. As far as driving technology for public safety, I've been a part of a group that basically changed the face of the post happy technology in the state of Alabama.

We've been able to do things that have literally saved people's lives or bring closure to a family based on the resources and training that we've been able to have. All that came from just putting a group of people who decided, Hey, we're going to become good. It is. We're going to become great and utilize whatever chief and the city council and mayor is able to give us to the best probabilities.

And I could talk days about what we've been able to do with what we've been blessed with. And then specifically Don't get a criminal justice degree. That's probably one of my biggest things. I wish I never did. I wish I got a degree in something. [01:19:00] Not saying there's anything wrong with a criminal justice degree, but there's more to public safety than just putting bad guys in jail or studying case law.

Having a background get an I. T. degree or get a degree in public administration out. If you saw the things that I was able to contribute to day to day it can go from consulting with the mayor on something that I have no business consulting on to dealing with the public on how do you protect your home network or how do you deal with spam on your phone?

Just every day is different. And the more that I gain knowledge, more than I'm willing to step outside of my comfort zone I'm thinking about getting my masters. I just can't decide whether what I want to get in because I don't want to just continue down this path of criminal justice, criminal justice.

I do this every day. And so what value am I getting by just getting a masters in criminal justice? So I want to challenge myself, expand my tool bag and be able to long term. To be as marketable as possible. And at the end of the day, someday I'm going to have to retire. And with that resume that I've built maybe the private sector will be something that [01:20:00] I'm able to step into with that wealth of knowledge and training be able to help public safety from the private sector with one of our partners or other vendors that are out there and just continuously equipping myself and not being.

Content with just, Hey, I got an analyst job and I'm going to be an analyst for 25 years and retire if that's what you want to do, no, but that, so if you're willing, you showed initiative to the command staff, you never know what opportunities may fall on your lap. Yeah,

Jason: and I, I'm right there with you on the, education piece.

You could take criminal justice as a minor. You take five classes in criminal justice, and I think you would get a basic education to to understand the system. And then some of these other. Other majors that business accounting computers, as you mentioned, it does almost seem like it's it's a little bit better to get some hands on education and then just have the criminal justice minor on the side.

[01:21:00] And in terms of return on investment something that an analyst can study now, because five years, it'll be important. I mean, obviously, technology is going to be the future. Is there any particular technology or anything that we should be keeping our

Kevin: eye on? So just looking at four fundamentals of things that won't necessarily change.

They may evolve. Having a basic understanding of IT, I think is very important. Even in the analyst standpoint, because if you're working in an agency that may not have a on staff IT person, that allows you to have a little bit more influence on maybe your chief or whoever's in charge of the analyst may say, hey because you have this understanding, maybe you can take on more roles to influence how the IT infrastructure at your department is And that opens up to getting into cameras understanding just basic.

Networking like we got a gentleman that's been in law enforcement for over 40 years and he came to the unit and I don't really know much about the technology, but he was willing to [01:22:00] learn and he may not be the best

person at networking, but he knows enough to help us stay efficient and keep up on our maintenance for our equipment.

Taking. Analytical classes or statistics or just things that help us take numbers and turn them into actionable data. Even being, I know Google and Microsoft do a lot of certifications for managing a lot of their software. There's many things that are outside the traditional training of analytics or an analyst that can bring value, not only to yourself personally, but being able to be an expert user in Excel and things like that, where.

That may be the only product that your agency can use for analytics at this point in time, by you having expert knowledge, being able to turn out really good reports and really good data and start linking all these different cells and things like that to put a real picture behind the And allow us this part of what we're doing.

I remember probably the first fundamental thing I did from analytics. So from our unit I have to justify [01:23:00] our existence every year. And so literally, I took a spreadsheet and put down we tracked all the types of requests. I think we had, we were up to, like, 20 or 25 different services categories that we use both from just general it to all the services that we have as the agency.

And then at the end of the year to be able to take that to the chief and mayor city council. Hey, look. We help with about we had about 1000 requests this year for all these things. Last year, we've increased about 20 to 30 percent in different areas. And then now we can ask for, hey, can we increase our budget for this for about 5 to 10 percent and then we'll also have the ability to now even internally in the city.

Track crimes in a different way. Track trends in a different way, even just using very rudimentary programs that are out there. And so learn as much as you can about the basic fundamentals of things that are out there. A lot of this training is free. I think that helps build that little foundation.

Now, does that mean you have to train to be an IT manager? No, but just knowing a little bit about the fundamentals of technology, I think opens a lot of [01:24:00] doors and it also removes a lot of the inhibitions of. Getting into more advanced technology. I really feel like everybody in my unit has some level of understanding to be able to help me in any capacity of my IT responsibilities here.

Confidently. All

Jason: right. Very good. All right. Let's finish up with words to the world. This is where I give the guests the last word, Kevin, you can promote any idea that you wish. What are your words to the

Kevin: world? Essentially I would just love to see a world where we had less conflict.

I want to see a time where my job is not relevant because We live in a very polarized society. There's all kind of things going on in the world. I just really encourage people who feel like they can contribute to public safety. You don't have to be a police officer. You don't have to be a firefighter.

If you have a call to be of service, to be a servant, there are plenty of things that you can do in the public safety spectrum that don't involve you carrying a badge, carrying a gun. putting yourself in danger that will literally do things that can save a person's life or change a person's life for the [01:25:00] good every single day.

It's just as important as those officers that go from call to call those firefighters that run fire calls and E. M. S. Calls E. M. S. Guys that are basically doing CPR and saving people while I've been transporting them. There are other support roles in the background that make a difference for every type of public safety agency.

And I just encourage people, if you have that desire, you have that drive. To be of service to your community considering getting into public safety.

Jason: Very good. Well, I leave every guest with you Give me just enough to talk bad about you later But I do appreciate you being on the show kevin, thank you so much and you be safe.

Kevin: Thank you

Mindy: Thank you 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. leapodcasts. com If you have a topic you would like us to cover or have a suggestion for our next guest, please send us an email at le8podcasts at gmail dot com.

Till next time analysts, keep talking.