

Neil Hubbert - Guiding Decision Makers

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

Jason: Thank you for joining me. I hope many aspects of your life are progressing. My name is Jason Elder, and today our guest has seven years of law enforcement analysis experience. He spent time as a diagnostics analyst with the BJA Public Safety Partnership, an intel analyst with Booz Allen Hamilton, and is currently the research associate with I.

D. Analytics going to talk a little bit about G. I. S. and guiding decision makers. Please welcome Neil Hubbard. Neil. How are we doing?

Neil: I'm doing great, Jason. Thanks for having me today.

Jason: All right. It is nice to talk to you. We're looking forward to the conversation here.[00:01:00] The couple of different perspectives that we have on this show is what did folks do prior to being an analyst?

And then what did they do once they were done being an analyst? And I definitely think your journey. To become an analyst is a fascinating one. So let's start from the beginning. How did you discover the law enforcement analysis profession?

Neil: Yeah, thanks, Jason. So I, I think like a lot of analysts or at least a lot of individuals that's in the law enforcement profession.

I was really interested in policing when I was younger, I come from a law enforcement and emergency services family. I got three uncles , who were police officers. Now I have two current cousins who are detectives and sergeants in their respective departments.

And I just grew up around them and wanting to, . family business. So

Jason: they give you a hard time about going the data route instead of doing the actual law enforcement [00:02:00] route? No,

Neil: not too much. Cause I, I always like to tell them, I like to use my brain more than my body.

When they're so, and I, I've had some federal law enforcement experience, which nobody in my family has had that type of exposure to as well. So I always like to ask more questions about them. I'm very intrinsically curious about their departments , and how they work.

So it's, it's always really good conversations between me and my cousins and my uncles are all retired now, but at least me and my me and my cousins have some great conversations. Great. But but yeah, so in high school and college, I I, I majored in criminal justice. I was my whole, whole life.

I was, don't worry, I'm going to be a police officer. I'm going to, I want to be a police officer. I want to get into law enforcement. And the funny thing is, is when I was a senior in college, I was ready to go. I applied to my local, the local police department and in the In the city where I, where I was graduated, and I, I ended up failing the physical.

I didn't realize this, but , there was an eye restriction for correctness. Like, I guess eye corrective like I think I was 20 over a thousand both [00:03:00] in both eyes. So without any contacts or glasses, I'm, I'm, I can't see the big E. So that was a problem and I didn't know it was a problem.

Obviously I didn't do my, do my research ahead of time. But so I kind of had to. The audible a little bit , the last few months of my my college career, which kind of kind of put me spiraling a little bit, but I reached out to a prior internship that I had when I was a rising sophomore which was at a a government contracting firm and that's headquartered in in Northern Virginia called Booz Allen.

So I interned with them when I was a , rising junior and I reached out to my prior manager and I said, Hey, like. I hope I made a good impression. I'm hoping to potentially find some some employment with you. And they, they put me in contact with somebody who was hiring individuals who was kind of like a sink or swim situation.

They just kind of said, Hey, we're not going to, we're not going to pay you as much as somebody with a lot of technical expertise, but if you do, if you do really well, well, you'll fit right in here. So at that point. They I got hired onto into a company where they, which I didn't know it at the time.

It was very unique[00:04:00] centrally hired me onto what's called the bench and they found contracts that I would be able to hop onto based off of my skill set and knowledge and ability to hold a clearance. So at that time, they, they. They initially knew that people, sometimes it's difficult to find individuals who would be eligible for a top secret clearance.

And since I wanted to be a police officer my whole life, I fit that bill pretty easily. , so I went into Booz Allen right after graduating college. And they threw me on to a a department of defense cyber security contract supporting the anti drug network which inherently my whole, yeah, exactly.

Like my whole my whole life I've been wanting to support law enforcement and get into law enforcement. So being part of the anti drug network, I was, I was very excited to join that. So just to join that, I had to get a few cyber certifications, a security plus just to be able to touch a classified systems.

So it was very much a sink or swim situation with my first big boy job.

Jason: How did you, up to that point, [00:05:00] did you consider yourself data savvy or was a lot of this brand new to you? It was really

Neil: brand new to me so it was, it was very much a lot of, this is going to sound, this is going to make some people eye roll, but I didn't even know what a pivot table was going into that and now I'm, now I'm actually I roll in my eyes sometimes when I find out people.

They don't know how to do pivot tables. So it's like a definitely like a full 360 moment for me. But yeah, it, it, it was very much a, a very hard learning curve, really jumping into a brand new sector of, of the world that I was, I really wasn't familiar with I wasn't really, I was good with computers, but I wasn't like, I wasn't.

Hey, can you protect this network from from foreign adversaries type of savvy, but I got my got my certification. They got on my skill level up and I had some really great mentorship along the way within that company. I, I really can't speak more highly enough about. My experience with, with Booz Allen, it was a incredible experience of learning and yeah, I wish I could recommend that for other [00:06:00] people, but I think my journey is a little, a little unique there.

Yeah, because when I

Jason: was do you, was the hiring process tough? You go through, obviously, so I'm going to interview process and the background check . But how, sophisticated was the hiring process.

Neil: I imagine it's probably very, very competitive for individuals who didn't have the internship.

, I had that direct that direct channel there that I think gave me a little bit of advantage. I had some yeah. Some leverage with some family connections to even get in as my internship. So I think I think I kind of have, you know I had some, I had some help from some family there to even get the internship, which would help to me eventually when I was scrambling start emailing.

Hiring managers within within that company. So I was very fortunate there.

Jason: Okay. So no, that's that's interesting because that's quite a downshift. I know that's a wrong word. That's quite a, a change in direction is a better is a better term that you have this path and then choice [00:07:00] a yeah, you pivoted, and choice B is working, yeah.

Just some great opportunities there with Booz

Neil: Allen. Yeah, yeah, I was, I'm so fortunate that that was even in my that was an option for me. I think I would have obviously, I would have scrambled somewhere eventually, but I, I really do think that being able to leverage some of the, some of the the connections and networks that I, that I had available to me really set me up for success for where I am today.

So

Jason: go ahead for a fish slot. Yeah, no, no,

Neil: no problem. So like that I mean, everyone's probably trying to figure out, okay, that's an interest. You're not even close to the law enforcement profession there. And I, I think that was, this was probably eight or nine years ago. And then that as contracts, as some contractors would they would say it's contracts would end.

And I had, then I was essentially placed on a different different contract supporting the department of defense. Again, again, in that type of cyberspace, I was a I was a trainer teaching this is always so interesting, teaching individuals

how to distribute[00:08:00] digital certificates for access to the classified networks.

So I was teaching essentially called registration authorities, and I was teaching them how to become that and certifying them as well as performing help desk for that public key infrastructure network of It's called the CIPRANET, but the Secret Classified Network that the Department of Defense works on.

Jason: Yeah. So there's a whole class on how to give out certifications.

Neil: Yeah. Yeah. Well, yeah. Again, it was a lot of it was a lot of shoulder surfing and, and I, I helped out with a lot of the preparations for the training. I sat in on them, making sure all the computers work, they were all wiped and they were all ready to go for the training.

So I sat in on probably five or six and then unbeknownst to me, the person who was the lead trainer was looking for other jobs. So I was. thrown into the fire again and said, all right, Neil, you're the lead trainer. You're, you're going to be teaching individuals at the, of the ranking, the DOD as master chief, which I was very excited to meet a master chief from someone who has a non military background.

I was very excited about that.[00:09:00] And also kind of a A video game nerd with Halo, but yeah. So

Jason: what, what is ma sorry, what is Master Chief? I don't,

Neil: it's a ranking. It was, it was a ranking that was individual I met for who was in the Coast Guard. Okay. So I was teaching, I was, so he didn't distribute this the cer, the digital certificates, but he wanted to know.

What his individual subordinates would be getting into. So he wanted to take the training class just so he knew everything about what he needed to supervise. So but I, I was looking at the, the class roster and I saw master chief as the ranking and I got, I was just a little excited.

Jason: All right, , as you look back at this time, , what are some things that really stand out in terms of what you were able to accomplish?

Neil: It's a great question, Jason. I think I really do think it's more or less just a lot of resilience, a lot of planning, a lot of data, a lot of not even data, a lot of organization, a lot of responsibility was placed on my plate at a very young age.

It's like, hey, you're going to run this, you're going to run this 20 person [00:10:00] class and you've done this six times before and you're the expert. So get smart quick. , so really, and I worked hard. It was a really interesting part of my career that I definitely tipped my cap to just cause I'm proud of it.

It was a it was a challenge and I think that I, I think I did a pretty good job. Meeting that challenge.

Jason: Yeah, it's it's interesting when you look back because when you first start now you're just you're just excited to be in in the arena type of thing. Yeah, so you're really just wanting opportunities and you obviously need to get paid, but I think they definitely can get you get you at a cheaper rate because you're just starting out and you just want an opportunity.

Yeah,

Neil: absolutely. I usually keep budget numbers away from some of the younger folks, but I got, I got, I got an inkling as to how much they were billing the government for my rate, for what I was doing over at the anti drug network, because I had a lot more responsibilities there. I was preparing for different cyber inspections and everything, and I saw the rate that they were charging and how much I was getting paid.

And I was like, [00:11:00] wait a second. And that's when I learned my first lesson in business and how that works. Sorry.

Jason: What maybe some tidbits or maybe things that you learned in terms of just cybersecurity as a whole as you're going around and you're teaching and you're talking with different folks were during this time and what are some of the trends

Neil: that you were seeing?

So I did a lot of the, so as an information assurance analyst, I was really, really just doing a lot of patch management. Vulnerability scans to make sure systems were all up to date with the most recent patches. So there couldn't be any any ways that adversaries could get into the, any type of, any, to get into the network at all using some of the the known vulnerabilities.

So, I think what I learned was I was, I was very impressed with how, with how on, on the ball. The contractors are like, it's, it's I was just really impressed on how organized everybody was and how regimented everyone was and how a lot

of data doc, a lot of [00:12:00] documentation, a lot of. Making sure the inventories are correct.

Hey, tracking all the information. And it was just a, it was an eye opening experience to realize that like, Hey, like there are people actively protecting all of the United States networks from, from foreign adversaries, right? Like I was coming right out of college, foreign adversaries wasn't even my vocabulary.

And it was now it was on the forefront of, of my mind every day, making sure those my servers and my, my workstations were patched appropriately. And working with my sysadmin to make sure everything was good to go. It was it was, it was fun. It was, it was fun, but it was also very eye opening too.

So I can't recommend the, the path Jason, but it was because it was very, just a weird, a weird path that I've taken. I always, I always laugh that what part of my responsibilities I had to go up to, I had to go up to Fort Meade. And work there part time, what, oh, just part of the week each week and my, my friends, they hear they hear top secret clearance.

They hear you go into Fort Meade. So they're like, you're a secret agent. [00:13:00] They hear government contractor. And I'm like, no, no, I swear. I'm just working on, I'm just, I'm just a network guy. Like I just make sure the networks are protected. Like, oh, okay. So like I grew up in the Philadelphia area and To get, just to get a, just to get a clearance.

They have people showing up at their front doors, trying to, trying to interview, asking about my background. And it was a really funny, it was just a really fun experience of of people thinking that I have a much crazier job than just sitting behind a computer all day and making sure computers are up to date.

Jason: Yeah. Well, for those that might not know, Fort Meade is the home of the NSA. Somewhere I'm certainly familiar with during my time in in Maryland, but it it is funny when you talk with people outside the profession, how they automatically think it's the. The glamour of it, and then you go into it, you go into some of these places, and it's a very, just a very stale looking area, very like, not impressive [00:14:00] or remarkable, to say the least, , it could be interesting in terms of what you're doing, but some of these buildings you walk into, you think you're going to be walking into the Taj Mahal, and you're just walking into this very bland, Government

Neil: building absolutely and you know the and the shades are always drawn at a 45 degree angle so it's there at least i had i did have windows i couldn't look

out them but they were drawn in a 45 degree angle so yeah it was it was as you said Jason it was just.

It wasn't sexy. It was just a cubicle farm and you would just, you know tapping your badge to get in, to get out, leaving your phone in the car just the simple stuff, you know.

Jason: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So then you work your way up to this diagnostic analyst position that I mentioned in your intro with the BJA.

Yeah.

Neil: Yeah. No, that, that's a great, that's a great segue. So, again, my whole time working and supporting the Department of Defense, I'm always trying to keep my ears open for [00:15:00] law enforcement. My passion is always in supporting law enforcement. It's, I like to think of it as a family business. I'm very proud of it, and I was always looking, and Booz Allen isn't, typically doesn't really work with the DOJ too much, at least back then.

So I was always keeping my ears to the ground and just trying to make sure. If there's any opportunities, I was open for it. So actually, it was interesting. The person that I recruited for Booz Allen, he was in, we went to school together. He found the opportunity with the Diagnostic Center and he said, Hey, Neil, I know you love law enforcement.

Like, I think the job that I'm in right now. Should be your job. And I was like, Oh, really? And he's like, Yeah, I'm moving to England to go do Intel analysis for some some DoD thing over in England. And now he's like, I think I'll recommend you for the position. And I was like, Sure, I'm happy to look into it.

And a week later, I'm meeting with the project director and, https: otter. ai [00:16:00] Last names of franchise goalie stars of the Philadelphia Flyers. I don't want to give anyone anyone's last names around, but I'm instantly bonding with the project director and, and he, he was asking about my data skills and I was like like I can work my way around a computer and I'm, I'm pretty good with pivot tables.

But, and so he gave, they gave me a shot and I think they saw them. I think they saw my passion and my, my ability to learn quickly and my willingness to learn. And that's, it's really hard to find sometimes as someone who's just eager to learn, really, really eager to please and do a good job and with at least knowing

that it was law enforcement related and working directly with the police departments, I think they, they gave me a shot.

And I think that was a total life changing moment. When I was able to switch from DOD to support the

Jason: DOJ. Yeah. So then what specifically were you doing for the police department?

Neil: Sure. Yeah. It's a good question, Jason. So for, for those who probably, this is, this doesn't exist anymore.

It was a contract that went away due to some administration changes way above the pay grades. So [00:17:00] the so the the diagnostic center was a an entity out of the office of the assistant attorney general. Which was essentially the precursor or something that was close to what to what the public safety partnership is and what's still running today.

But the Diagnostic Center had that, had the recipe of, hey, let's, let's let departments request. Assistance. Hey, hey, we need help doing X. We think we have a gap. We would have specialists in the field. They would call them diagnostic specialists. They'd go out actually the person you've had on the on this podcast, Jessica, Dr.

Jessica Herbert she was a diagnostic specialist with me on this project, which is how I met her. And now she's my boss at the time she was kind of also my technically she was my boss because I was her analyst but She's a good person. Essentially, yes, yeah, that's where, that's how I kind of got led to a little bit, we can go, that's, that's later down the timeline there Jason.

Yeah. Yeah, so for the Diagnostic Center was essentially what it kind of sounds like. We would diagnose that, like, hey, I think, I [00:18:00] think this is the problem, and I think you could benefit from having this type of training or technical assistance, whether that's a peer exchange, which is what, which is when an agency would go visit another agency to learn on how, on how they do their operations, or they'd benefit from a subject matter expert coming in and helping them maybe unclog a cycle or unclog a process that they maybe Struggling with so what I would do as an analyst was I'd work with those departments, figure out, identify, have a lot of interviews, identify some of the issues that they're having at the department interviewing line staff, middle management command staff and figuring out, Hey, what do you guys need?

What's the, what, what do you think is the best best fix and making a recommendations and to that department saying, Hey, I think you, I think you guys could benefit from X, Y, and Z. Yeah. And then departments get to say yes or no, whether or not they want to go through with that type of recommendation.

And then rinse and repeat. So departments across the entire country had the opportunity to request assistance from the Diagnostic Center and [00:19:00] we would respond. Sometimes we would send them to different tool, tool kits or tool belts, as they're called, with different type of opportunities of learning and ways that as I've mentioned, you can unclog that, that process issue.

But, sometimes it takes going on site visits and meeting with all the line staff and everybody to see what's, what's the best fit, how do we diagnose the problem and how do we provide the correct recommendations for it? So, yeah, that that was that project out of the office of the assistant attorney general at the DOJ there's, it's a maze.

It is, it is definitely a maze at the DOJ with the different types of, branches they have. Yeah. The non investigative branches of the DOJ can be kind of amazed. Yeah.

Jason: So can you give us an idea of maybe a particular project that you worked on with a specific issue and what the solution was?

Neil: Sure. Yeah.

Yeah, that's a great question, Jason. So the one of the one of the first project I did work on with my [00:20:00] now current boss and CEO was working with an agency. Yeah. In the South where there was an incident in which an officer had a use of force on a juvenile and our job was to see whether or not we could help provide additional training or assistance to that specific So it was the school resource officer unit.

I don't think that's given away too much for the specific department. And we, we went in there and kind of interviewed a bunch of SROs and got a good understanding of what happened for that whole situation that made national news and identifying what can we do now that's evidence based to help help.

that not happen again. And that, and so Jessica was, Jessica was my diagnostic specialist. I was the analyst and we were essentially pulling data, interviewing, pulling up different recommendations and findings. And it was, I think it was, it

was, it was a really good success. It ended up [00:21:00] being part of her dissertation, which was nice.

She was able to navigate those waters of conflict of interest and everything quite nicely. But I think it really helped that department shape up some different policies and awareness and different metrics on how to collect as to what SROs are actually doing in the school.

And, you know they're not, they're not, most, most, most SROs aren't using their law enforcement branch they're using the counselor and the educator portion. Of their role. So Nasro is the National Association of school resource officers, and they say it's a it's a it's a triangle. It's the education, the counselor and the law enforcement roles.

And what we what we found out is that the department just. Really wasn't tracking the metrics around how often the SROs are really helping the students with everything right education with with training on gun safety or counseling because the kids are having problems at home it's it was really, I think it was really eye opening for that department when we started [00:22:00] capturing the metrics around, hey, what actually are your officers doing in the school versus just the law enforcement part.

So. Yeah. I think that was a really good project from the Diagnostic Center. Yeah, because

Jason: I think most people, when you think of SROs, for maybe, lack of a better word, a security guard, right? Yeah, absolutely. And I don't mean, I don't mean that I, That's how I feel. I just think that that's when that's the image that people get in their head when you, when you talk about that.

And so that, and I think that fits that role. They don't necessarily think about the role of the

Neil: counselor. Yeah, they think of someone standing there, you know at the metal detector as you walk in checking backpacks, but what they don't see is the, the officers in the parking lot trying to help.

Parents get their kid out of the car. They don't sell it. They don't see the kids in the SRO's office crying because their mom or dad or had an incident the night prior and teaching, teaching kids about even safe [00:23:00] sex or safe gun gun safety and, and even like dare, I know.

There's a lot of flack around there, but even, even drug use and the impacts of drug use. So there's a lot of portions of that project that was very eye opening that I think was really positive as a way to help impact as to the, the positive impact that officers have in schools. That's not just the security guard.

Which is still important, right? As we, as we see that there are incidents in which students need to be protected. So that's, that's also part of their responsibilities. Yeah. So in

Jason: terms of the data itself, some of the things that you're describing is very qualitative. And so how, how was some of this data being Captured, is this like survey types of stuff or were the SROs required to document certain, certain things that they did differently?

Neil: Yeah, for that, for that specific project we used we used Qualtrics, which is a survey platform which [00:24:00] essentially we, we developed a survey in which an officer, every time they had some interaction with a student, they would document that interaction. Whether or not that was a criminal justice, was it law enforcement related, counsel related, education related, and they would answer a question, they would answer questions based off of what, what type of interaction it was.

And even within the first, within the first month, there were thousands of entries of just, you didn't realize how much the SROs were really doing because the department could only get reports, whether or not the officer wrote a reported crime. Right. Or some sort of incident happened in the school.

That's what they used to only report on. But now it's a, Hey, you met with little Johnny in the hallway. His mom passed out on the front on the front porch last night, whatever it may be. And and that's a row was there to counsel. That individual or that student and you're really starting to see the whole picture of wow, like these officers are more than the the security guards there, they're actually really impacting the, they're [00:25:00] impacting children's lives positively in the schools and they're, and they're not just they're not just there to the discipline.

Jason: , so then from here, you actually go back to Booz Allen. As an analyst, right?

Neil: Yeah. So these were all this was a that was a contract that Booz Allen that held it's a contracting can be extremely confusing. So it was just like it was a

contract that Booz Allen had won. There were subcontracting firms as well associated with the diagnostic center.

And essentially it was just a solicitation out of the out of the DOJ that said, Hey, we, we would like to have this project. And then there were a bunch of a bunch of companies submitted for it. Booz Allen said, I think they, the, the. But the DOJ said, I think Booz Allen has the best argument as to why they're the best fit for doing the job.

And then that contract just it, it ended and everyone kind of went their separate ways.

Jennifer: This is [00:26:00] Jennifer Loper. Good friends don't care if your house is clean. They care if you have wine.

Svetlana: Hi, I'm Svetlana Gubin, business analyst from Oakland Police Department, and my advice, don't be afraid to discover something new. Just try to do some small steps, find the people who can support you, and it will help you in a regular life, in your future job, and you will be surprised how more doors will open to you.

Jason: So you stayed at Booz Allen and then after that contract ended, you

Neil: switched to PSP. So for PSP stands for public safety partnership. It is an ongoing project at the end through BJA, the Bureau of Justice Assistance. And. PSP is a very similar to the Diagnostic Center, essentially, that departments would request to be part of PSP, and then [00:27:00] if they are selected to be, if they are selected to be a city, they're deemed worthy of, of being, of giving federal federal monies and resources that they are deemed a PSP city, in which which then they get all types of training and assistance provided by BJA.

So, for those, for that project, it was very similar to Diagnostic project where I was I was a PSP analyst and I had a PSP specialist I think they're called something different now. I think they, they renamed a few things, but I was a PSP analyst. And then of course my current CEO working in a subcontractor hat was my was my PSP specialist.

Yeah, I'm,

Jason: I'm, I'm laughing because it's so you're, you're working for the organized crime drug tech enforcement. Task force also. Oh yeah. Known, also known as

O-C-D-E-T-F . Which, yeah, is just way too long. It is. That's a mouthful and a half.

Neil: , it's just total mouthful. So , I was doing, I was dealing with a lot of [00:28:00] UCR and NIBRS data, which is very plain Jane not that exciting type of data work.

And eventually, when the PSB contract ended Booz Allen won a contract supporting the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force, also known as OSIDEFT who has a fusion center in Northern Virginia. And so there was an opening in which they said, hey, we need an intel analyst. Neil, would you be interested?

And I was like, Yes. Yes. This is the first time I'm going to be working hand in hand with federal agents doing law, like working on active federal cases in which I can help them and support them with their cases. So I was, this is when I was like, I made it. I finally made it. I did it. I did it. I'm not a cop, but I at least I'm, I'm as close as I'm as close as I could possibly be.

Then other than being a police officer or a law enforcement officer so I was, I was so excited and I, I, I loved it. It was a, it was an awesome experience. They had, they [00:29:00] had outstanding personnel there that the training that I went through for 6 months to be, to be the Intel analyst.

They needed me to be for the fusion center was, was spot on. The 2 folks, that with the trainers they did a really great job. And I use that experience all the time. Now when they're talking, when I'm talking to a lot of prime analyst supervisors around the different departments that I support now, I talk to them about all the training regimen that I went through and how important it is to make sure your analysts are all developing consistent analytical products.

So it doesn't matter which analyst that produces the product. It's going to come out probably the same because they were trained the same way. So I, I use it. I use that experience that are set up all the time. Great. It's a so for those who don't know who is it's a, it's book. It has, it has one of the largest I think it is the largest federal law enforcement databases of all of the cases in which a federal law enforcement investigative agency they created a [00:30:00] case it went into this It was obviously put into the, that specific agency's case management, but also put into this this massive database.

And the purpose of OCDETF was not only to provide support for the the task force across the country, but also it's to help to de conflict. So sometimes the

federal agencies don't talk to each other very well. So to try to prevent blue on blue issues, we have analysts. It's every day sifting through case files and making sure that like, just making sure the DEA is not coming through the back door and FBI is coming through the front door without them knowing, or about accident, accidentally DEA arresting FBI CIs, like just making sure that didn't happen.

, that's a

Jason: lot of effort. Right? And he's the same suspects type of thing or same persons of interest, right? Oh, you guys are querying about the same person or place or or address. It's. There is a lot of that needs to be studied and [00:31:00] again for deconfliction purposes, so it definitely has an opportunity to put people that don't know that they're looking at the same thing in a conversation with one another.

Neil: Absolutely, and the aliases is where it really gets crazy, you know. You could have Pookie over here. Pookie's, Pookie's doing bad things. And then, so DEA knows Pookie, but they don't know what Pookie's real name is, but over here, FBI is looking at them and they're saying, hey, we know I'm going to use a Doug reference, Roger Klotz over here is doing all these bad things too, and they don't realize, Roger Klotz and Pookie are the same person.

Like DEA knows his alias, but FBI only knows his real name. So it's a really interesting deconfliction of like, Hey, did y'all know Pookie is Roger Klotz? And it's, it's a it was, it was, it was an outstanding Outstanding experience and I it was, it was a really, it was a well oiled machine that I can't, I can't speak more highly about.

So

Jason: you talked about the training and how it was spot on and certainly you talked about the [00:32:00] standard that was established, but what, maybe what specifically, what were some of the things that they, they taught you that You believe worked really well in the fusion center. Yeah, it's

Neil: a great question. So the training regiment that I, I went through was it was a description of every single, every single type of federal agents at federal investigative agency, every single agency writes their case reports differently.

So we had to go through and say, this is where this is where ATF puts their information. This is where not necessarily. DOJ, but this is where Coast Guard

puts their information. And this is where, et cetera, et cetera. So we had to learn how every single agency stores their information.

And then we had to learn all the different types of databases we had access to, how to use them, how to use them properly and equitably and safely. And I think One of the best things that I, I experienced with, with the training was it was the prove [00:33:00] it method, which I just kind of made up on the spot, but I call it the prove it method.

Yeah, which is, yeah, it's just like the the, we had to, they'd say, okay, your individual that you're interested in looking up more information on this is their name, go. So, Okay, so I used the training that I did. I the basics of this is how you use this tool. This is how you use this tool. And I would produce using the template they provided.

Very important. They had templates for every single analytical product that they expected to be produced. They said, okay, so you're going to create this profile on this individual. You need to have X, Y, Z. Etc. So based off the training, I would do X, Y, and Z. And then the person who trained me would also fill out that same analytical product based off the same instructions that I received.

And I'd essentially have to prove it. If I knew, if I did it the same exact way that the lead trainer did, that's a good checkbox. That's, that's good job. And I had to do it three times before I was [00:34:00] allowed to be like off my leash to be a full time analyst. So you have to kind of prove yourself three times with all the different analytical products before you got off your, before you got off your analytical probation.

Jason: I like that. I mean, it's tough. I wouldn't want to do it myself. Don't get me wrong. But I mean, I feel that training , is a lot of lecture and a, not a lot of doing as a analyst, right? You go to all these trainings all these conferences and it's just one talking head after the another.

And it's not anything really actionable that you're actually learning that you can bring back to your office. And so this while it would be really, really a pressure situation type of thing requiring that you. Do stuff the same way as your instructor. It's also, it shows that you know what you're doing.

Neil: [00:35:00] Absolutely. It also shows trust in the entity to trust to trust that the trainers are training in the correct way. Because if the trainer's not I think that's one of the hardest parts is making sure that having the confidence as the,

of the trainer as being as being a trainer in my past life To making sure that, yeah, I, I do know my stuff and I know exactly what I have to do.

I think, I think I received some of the best training of my life at, at that fusion center. They did such an outstanding job. But I, I do talk about I'm, I'm working with several agencies now with some of the the civilian supervisors and they're like, Hey, Neil, like how do I, how do I spin up my analysts quick?

Cause there's some turnover within, within our. Our jobs here as crime analysts and when there is turnover, it's like, how do I spin this person up as fast as I can? And I, I always talk to them. I say, train them the way that you expect that you would do your job and then test them to see if you would do it the same way.

And they're like, Oh, okay. And if they don't, then you have to tell them to do it again. And there were, there were analysts at the fusion center who never made it out of [00:36:00] training. They had to be let go because they just. Unfortunately, they just they just didn't do it. You need to be the best of the best for the, at least for that federal law enforcement.

And they had to let people go because those people weren't able to replicate what their instructors were replicating, what we're doing.

Jason: And I know from your perspective, is the, The federal level more regimined in terms of having standard operating procedure, because I know a lot of departments, the analyst tasks aren't part of any standard operating procedure, like there's not anything that tells you exactly what an analyst should and shouldn't be doing.

Yeah, is it more regimented on the federal side? Do you think

Neil: at least at least from my perspective as being a person joining a fusion center? It was extremely regimented. So, in my current role, I work with a lot of smaller to medium sized police departments who they never had an analyst at all.[00:37:00]

So they just hire somebody because They're like, Hey, I think we need a data analyst because that seems where police seems going. So they hire somebody and the person is totally on an island and there's no protocols. There's no procedures. There's not even a way how to navigate through the RMS or CAD data.

There's no database like architecture or at least like a structure about which table talks to which table and how they're connected through keys. And it's just so to answer your question, based off of my experience the federal analyst route is very regimented, very organized, because they've been doing it for the past 15 years, 20 years a lot of the departments that I've at least supported in my experience, it's it can be a little chaotic and the analysts really have to.

Set the standard and the precedence for their own departments, which can be a challenge depending upon the person that they hire. Yeah,

Jason: I, I think for the analysts and what I've talked to with several analysts is there is, it is really awesome to. Plow [00:38:00] your own path, right? Like, Oh, I'm the first analyst.

I get to basically build what I think I should build. And you just establish the position. , there's a level of accomplishment there that you're starting from scratch. But it definitely does get harder once the units build and you get multiple analysts and keeping that standard that same look and feel.

It's it's difficult. I mean, you you have five analysts. You're probably going to get five different ways to do

Neil: a product. It's also really tough because that supervisor who's trying to set those standards is also getting pulled in so many different directions and they're wearing six hats. They're trying to figure out what lieutenants requesting what?

Who do I descendant? Who do I distribute that to with based off their skill level? Like, It is really hard to just like for a supervisor to say, I need to hit pause in my department. I'm not taking any more analytical requests. I need to get my unit straight. It's extremely difficult to have that [00:39:00] type of weight and.

In your in the departments, it's just like you can't sometimes it's really hard to say no to a deputy chief. So it's, it's just like it's a, it's a really tough situation when supervisors should put it put in that like, I really need to get my unit to a point where. Like every other unit in the police department has the policies, has the procedures, has the A, B, C, D.

But a lot of the, a lot of these, a lot of the analytical units are just like, the sworn staff are just like, oh, I don't know what they do over there. And they just expect it to be magic. And what, what needs to happen is sometimes the supervisor is to say, hey, we need to take a break for the next. Two weeks and we need to get

ourselves straight so we can produce the best analytical products and we can for the department.

So it's just sometimes like that. Just can't happen. I wish it did.

Jason: Yeah, it's it's really. It is really tough because. You have all these requests. You have different requests and different [00:40:00] ways that your customers want to see things. And so do you just let's just get these done versus having them all look the same

Neil: way?

Yeah, I think that's one of the hardest parts is Is if you have a template you're like, oh man, that template's really good But being able to shift the template based off of what your audience needs because that that ultimately is what the analyst needs to do Is that if you're producing products that nobody uses just stop doing it like you're wasting your time You need to shift with what your department needs and the only way you can find out what your department needs is if then this is a struggle with a lot of analysts is to Raise your hand and say, Hey, I need to meet with I need to meet with line staff.

I need to meet with middle management. I need to meet with command staff. I need to know what you guys need to see from from the from the analytical unit. And that's I think it's one of the bigger struggles from what I've heard with my. Over my career is, is that type of feedback loop disconnect is that the [00:41:00] analysts are like, Hey, I'm producing these bulletins and I have no idea if the bulletins are working or not.

And it's like, it's really kind of heartbreaking to hear that because you're like, how don't like, do you get any feedback? And they're like, no, I just email it out. And sometimes I, sometimes I I hear it worked or it didn't. And yeah, yeah. And

Jason: I just envision Dr. Rachel, Boba Santos in my ear, like if it, the analyst job was part of a standard operating procedure, it would, you wouldn't need to ask that question.

Right? Right. Like her, her view is , whatever is being produced by an analyst needs to fit in the grand scheme of the standard operating procedure and be used in, in accordance. To the entire police department, not be this little island, just this free radical, if you will, bouncing all over the place, wondering if it's being, if it's useful or not.

Right.

Neil: Every, every [00:42:00] analytical product needs to be timely, accurate, and relevant. If it doesn't, if it doesn't meet any, if it, if it misses one of those three legs. It's no longer useful, you should stop doing what you're doing and just move on to something else that is timely, accurate, and relevant. So, yeah, it's just, yeah,

Jason: it's tough.

But even that can be short lived, right? I mean, you might find a good project to work on for the time being, and then it may run stale eventually. Yeah, unfortunately, it is. There's a, there's a lot to it. If it is one of those things, if it was easy to get the analytical role in the standard operating procedure, police departments would do it, but it's, it's difficult to get there.

And so that's why it's, it's just a lot easier to have them be free radical. It's

Neil: difficult, I think, because yeah. Well, what I'm, what, at least what I'm finding, and this is a total personal opinion, this is, I, I don't think this is a hot take, but I don't want anyone to take the, take it, take it wrong.

Mm-Hmm. . But it's, it's difficult for sworn staff to manage [00:43:00] civilians. Mm-Hmm. They, they're sworn staff are used to managing at least like lieutenants and above. If a lieutenant is in charge of a civilian analytical unit, or at least supervising it. They're used to supervising sworn staff who have a certain job, a certain role.

They, they know they have, they have all their procedures and they have to make sure each one of their, their subordinates have to check the box when it turns into a Lieutenant being in charge of an analytical unit, that's brand new. They're like, I have no idea what an analyst can do. That's, it's very difficult.

It's a very difficult oil water situation, but unfortunately, like, and I don't want anyone to get the idea that I think. Analysts and civilians and sworn is oil and water because it's not and it doesn't have to be, but sometimes, but sometimes it is. Yeah,

Jason: well, I mean, I always say this too, that you also have the idea of your sworn supervisors rotating at any moment, right?

So even if you get [00:44:00] a lieutenant or a captain or a major that really. Knows that is in line in tune with the unit, there's going to be opportunities for them to switch because they want those leadership positions to be well rounded. And so you're can be starting all over again with a new lieutenant or captain.

So, absolutely. Yeah. So, all right. Well, hey, we got a little bit off target there, but it's a good conversation. Absolutely. So let's move on to you following Jessica to idea analytics. So just talk about that decision and then we'll get into what you're

Neil: doing.

Yeah, yeah, definitely. So the decision to move away from most of that was very difficult. It was both professional and personal. I had an opportunity to not go into an office every day. Opportunity to work from home with a pretty more of [00:45:00] a flexible schedule and That's that's that's kind of like the easy way to get out of why I switch jobs, but I really think I think they're the real the real reason is is Twofold.

The first is Dr. Herbert, Dr. Jessica Herbert, who's been on your your podcast is an incredible leader. She has a mission and she is driven to change policing for the better using data. And it. And just the restriction sometimes that federal, federal law enforcement has on what you can or can't do was was a little, a little debilitating and the ability for a small company to kind of get in, help, do the best they can impact the change and really change the culture of a police department to be more accepting of data it was really, it was really difficult not to jump on board.

I just. I, I can't say more enough about how her leadership and her [00:46:00] vision for where where policing can go using the data they have at their fingertips. It was just, it was an easy jump. I, you know moving to a very cushy corporate job moving to a small business was it was an adjustment that my family and I had to make but I think it was for.

It was the following your passion and while I could be sitting and doing case support for federal agents still to this day and be just as happy because I know that I'm making an impact at least at reducing helping, helping those agents reduce crime reduce violent crime in the country but the opportunity to work with.

Multiple police departments, multiple analysts on how to make them better and better for their smaller jurisdictions. I just it was, it was too good of an opportunity to miss when the opportunity was there. So

Jason: yeah, did you ask her or did she ask you?

Neil: That's a great question. And she may have, she may [00:47:00] have a different, she may have different answers .

But I feel like I, I reached out to her and I did some part time work for her during COVID because it was like, go to work, go home, go to sleep. And I needed something different. And I, I think I, I started doing some part time work for her with, with my corporate jobs approval.

I went through all my channels. As my friends know, I'm I'm kind of a rule follower, which I have to be, I think, I suppose, with the roles that I've had. But yeah, I think it was probably me reaching out to her, but I think. There's one story, Jason, I have to at least, it's very briefly talk on is when I was in a meeting, I was I was very early in my career and I was kind of the note taker of an interview and she was interviewing a sheriff who's, who was tenured at least for a very long time in this, in this county.

And she She just straight, she just shot so straight with that sheriff. I was like flabbergasted. Like she was, [00:48:00] she has 15 years of law enforcement experience. Like she can talk cop and she just went right after him and said how they were messing up, how this was bad, this was bad, this was bad and how they could do better here.

And I was like, oh my gosh, I need to follow her because she sees what's. She sees the gaps. She knows what's missing and she knows where to go. So I think it's not that if she recruited me or, or or if I jumped ship to her, I think it was like, I think it was more or less like I, well, I guess, I guess I jumped ship to her.

Just cause I was, I was so amazed with with. How put together and how organized and how I was, I I was ready to get on the boat for where she wanted to go.

Jason: Yeah. So let's talk a little bit about what you're doing because you are as you are guiding decision makers, right? You are trying to, help these police departments, these entities improve. So I just maybe talk about the your process, how you go about [00:49:00] things, or maybe some trends that you're

Neil: seeing. Sure. So it really so we work with departments based off a variety of different reasons. Sometimes we are the research partner for grants where we help departments write the grant.

And then we, we support them in the typically around 3 years of, of that, of, of grant funding. So it really depends on whether or not it really depends on the situation. So that that's 1 example. Another example is we could be selected as the strategic advisor for a federal initiative, in which case, a police department.

Is said, Hey, you're receiving federal funding, by the way, here is your strategic advisor, ID analytics. And we kind of, we just kind of show up and we're like, Hey, we're, we have experience with 80 different police departments in 34 different states. We know what we're talking about. We like, we know what we're talking about.

And let's, let's, let's have a few interviews to figure out where your gaps are. And it kind of goes back to that diagnostic center thing. Every time it's like, let's identify where we can meet. The [00:50:00] department. So, hey we, we recently met with the department where man, this was, they were, they were total rock stars.

I was so impressed with a, like a lot of the they had a weekly crime, crime meeting where the analyst was leading It was leading the whole, the whole meeting with Like a ComStat type in. Yeah, yeah, it wasn't, it was, it was more advanced than ComStat. It wasn't, it wasn't just looking at percentage changes.

It was looking at the people, the places and then obviously what crimes were occurring and how, and how that, and how they all relate to each other. And I was really impressed by it. And they're like, hey, so they kind of come to us at the end of the site visit and they go, hey, so what do you think?

And we're just like, you guys are doing everything. Great. Like you're using your data, you're, you're, you're pulling place-based initiatives, place based appropriate place-based responses, which is not just dumping extra patrols in the area, like you're doing more procedural justice type of patrols and.

You're also doing a person [00:51:00] based initiatives where you're focusing on victims and who can, who could really benefit from additional services, or you're focusing on some of those offenders who they just, they're only offending because they have to pay for their grandma's diabetes medicine.

So it's just like. It's they did a really great job and then we identified a few gaps. I don't want to get into too many details because it's an active, an active thing. But we identify things. Oh, okay. So based off of the interviews, we know you're doing X, Y and Z really well. But I think B and C could be could be improved upon.

And what's the heart? Some of the We call them, what do we call them? Not perfect clients, but there are, there are clients in which that we know are not going to work right off the bat. And we know that our clients that are going to work right off the bat. And I can tell you right now, the clients that we know are going to work right off the bat all depends on the leadership.

Of the department. If the leadership is not interested in data and they're not interested in learning how data can improve their responses or be more effective in their decision making, then we [00:52:00] know it's going to be a bad. It's going to be a bad contract or a bad project, and it's just it's it's great.

It's really eye opening to see like we've had plenty of instances in which we provide our Our services, we say, Hey, I think you guys, I think it would really benefit from this and we're not like telling them to go to the moon, right? We're just saying, Hey, I think I think this would benefit you if you got this type of training, or if you hired one more analyst to do X, Y and Z, this could benefit you.

And then sometimes it's just like, yeah, no, we're not doing that. And it's like, okay, well, because. They're they're stiff in their ways and they, they want, they don't like people who have never been chiefs to tell chiefs what to do, which, okay, fair enough. We understand.

Jason: In today's environment, , it's interesting that somebody would just not be data driven.

I mean, I, I understand that concept 20 years ago, but with data being so prevalent and so much out there [00:53:00] and so much case study and so many success, it's hard for me to fathom that there's still police departments out there that are not. Data driven, right? Because I can understand, because your first part was about the data driven that, that's it's kind of, I'm struck like I'm struggling with that.

But in the second half about like, okay, you made a recommendation and they just didn't fly with it. I mean, I, I guess I could see that for whatever reason they didn't, they didn't pick up what you were setting down. Right, and for whatever

reason, so I, I guess I get that aspect of it. , but to just not be data driven or of ignore the data just seems kind of like just an old way of

Neil: thinking.

Yeah, it is. And we, I mean, we can't change. Sometimes you can't. You can't teach old dogs new tricks but when it, well, we, well, we kind of tip what we really are pride ourselves on at idea is we, we like to leave the agency with an [00:54:00] analytical sustainability. So we do a lot of, we're not, we're not the research partners that just say, give me your data.

I'll do the analysis and I'll send it back to you. Good luck. Like we don't, we don't do that. So we. We say, Hey, can we see your data? Can we have, can we at least have a portion of it? Can we at least get an idea of what's happening? And then what we do is we work with the analysts and the entire analytical unit and we train them and say, Hey, this is how we would do the analysis.

And this is what we're going to, this is the findings that we're seeing. What do you think? Let me teach you to let me teach you on how I did that. So then you can do it later. So when we're no longer here, you can do that same thing. And then you can start leading your department and being data driven.

And I think that that's kind of sets us that sets us apart a little bit. And this isn't like a, this isn't like a selfless pitch for my company. I'm just, I'm proud of it because I, I'm the one typically doing the trainings. It's, and I've seen other, I've seen other research [00:55:00] partners just, they do that.

They say, give me your data, I'll do the analysis and I'll send it back to you. But I, I'm, I'm proud of the, the trainings that I've taught some of the analysts because I get to see them succeed which is my fit, which is, I think, one of my I think we, I don't think we have time to do this for some of my my bad stories, but it's just fine.

I think a lot of my career defining moments is when I, is when I get emails from analysts that say, Hey, look at this feedback that I got because I did this analysis and look what happened as a result of it in a positive way. And that's, that's the part that I get really excited about because I like, oh, I taught you how to do that.

Oh, I mentioned that in my training and now you use that and you went further and then you literally solve the robbery spree because of not because of me, but because of their intuition and but I just I kind of help set at least like the basics

of ArcGIS, the basics of Power BI, the basics of Excel and I set them there [00:56:00] and then they they took it to the next level and I think that's where I really tip my cap.

To, and I'm proud of so when I'm at the ICA conference and I see the analysts that I've supported and they're all, they're all chatting and they're presenting and everyone's asking them questions after their presentation. And I'm like, I'm just so proud of them because it's like, they're like, they're so smart.

They're so willing and there's like, they're so passionate and it's just like more or less like a. It's a feel good story for me to know that, like, I had some part, even if it's, even if it's a sliver, to getting them to a point where they can brag and present their findings to a whole conference of analysts.

Jason: Yeah. Does it drive you crazy that with the training, though, you're, you don't have, like, There's three straights and you're out. All I say is right. You do your deal. Were you teaching so many classes that you don't have that, that luxury of like, okay, we have to come to the same conclusion three different times for you to pass.

Yeah, no,

Neil: it's we've had a few analysts that have [00:57:00] struggled with some of the trainings and we do record a lot of our trainings that are available on our virtual learning network. But so essentially I don't, I can, I can teach a class. I usually teach a class twice and then I'll record it and then I'll put it on to our network in which the analysts that we work with, they can just go watch, they can watch the training without me.

And then we set up office hours in which I can answer all the questions. But yeah, we've had instances where analysts just sometimes they just. They just, they didn't get it. And, and fortunately, well, this is very, this is not meaning to sound bad. But it's like, I don't, I mean, the analyst is if they don't get it, they don't get it.

And I can at least point them in the direction in which I think they can add the most value to the department based off of their Their skill level

Jason: when you're, dealing with all these departments and you just look at the landscape of all these departments what, what are some trends that you're, you're seeing is, and it can [00:58:00] be both good and bad.

I mean, the good, the bad ones are probably more juicier, but I mean, what, what do you see in that is pretty consistent across various departments.

Neil: Yeah, and just to give a caveat to my answer is that typically we support a lot of smaller and mid sized departments typically around cities with 200, 000 people or less.

So around 150, 180 officers or less, I feel We have the most impact just because it doesn't, it's not as political. I have access to lieutenants and command staff. If lieutenants are not part of the command staff sometimes it's really hard to enact change or at least promote change in a department when I'm only working with sergeants and below.

So that's why that's kind of our bread and butter is like, Hey, like sometimes, I mean, Cities like LAPD, Chicago, Philadelphia, Miami, Houston, like these, these departments are so big that it, it, as, it's just, it's not [00:59:00] feasible to have that much of an impact. We can have impact for a specific unit, which we've had success for some of those larger departments but, but for, so for my answer this is only.

Pertaining to some of the smaller midsize sometimes we, we see agencies isolate the analysts not purposefully, they just don't know they should include them in a lot of the conversations. So recently, I was like, I was working with a very small agency with the city of less than 20, 000, and I said, as your analysts in all your, all of your different strategic planning meetings, and they're like, no, and I was like, well, how are you supposed to be data driven?

And your strategy if your analyst is not in your meetings and they kind of look to me and I was like, and in a good way, they look to me like, oh, like a kind of an aha moment of like, oh, man, like, maybe we should include the analysts in some of these sessions because they are, they are seeing what some of the.

The line [01:00:00] staff may not be because they're going call to call to call and the sergeants are going obviously like approve, approve, deny, whatever. So what happens is the analysts, I like to say, fly at the 5, 000 foot level, they're able to see patterns that line staff won't see, sometimes detectives won't see, because detectives are also going on a case by case basis.

Basis and it's an analyst are able to fly just above that and say hey detective Did you know you're working on the same case? There's the baby mama of Detective so and so's case and he's like no, I didn't know that and then you get them together So it's it's sometimes it's really important that I find at least

sometimes it's really important to just mention to leadership And say hey don't Don't just because they're an analyst, and they're just because they're a civilian doesn't mean you should exclude them from your command staff meetings, because they probably have a lot more insight as to what's happening and the patterns in your city than they realize.

So we always like to promote that idea of [01:01:00] of, Bringing the data person to the meetings, so that seems to be a big one. I, another, another second thing when we, when we kind of guide our decision makers is is really promoting the training. I kind of, I like to speak in analogies a lot and you have to promote.

You have to let analysts learn more sworn staff get, are trained a lot especially if they have a specialty like canine units, but like, it's okay for a sworn staff to train once a week, but God forbid an analyst trains once per week. I think it's important that we always kind of remind them and say, just because you hire a civilian for a specific role doesn't mean they don't need to be trained anymore.

So always promoting that training avenue for analysts because technology is always, is always changing. Esri always has incredible, this is, I don't, I have no part, part of Esri, but I, I [01:02:00] love Esri. Esri has incredible trainings just to help with your geospatial analysis. Microsoft has incredible trainings on Power BI.

The only the only difficult part with those is trying to translate between business intelligence and crime intelligence. So they're trying to figure out, well, the training told me I'm trying to find the percentage of red shirts sold, but I'm trying to figure out how many robberies happened. So that translation sometimes it's difficult.

And I think ID analytics has at least come to a point where we've, we've got to a point where we know how to translate. A lot of the business intelligence trainings to what crime analysts need. And really, we, the third thing, and this is the final thing,

the is probably working , with departments on their hiring processes and procedures. Just because someone has criminal justice experience doesn't make them a good analyst. Which is funny coming from me, because that's all I had was criminal justice experience, but from my undergrad degree, but the hiring somebody who [01:03:00] intrinsically is curious about anything who sees a, who sees a problem, who sees an obstacle and tries to figure out how to go around it, above it.

below it or blow up the obstacle. Those are the people you want as your crime analysts. It doesn't matter if they have a crime, like they don't have a crime analyst degree or a criminal justice degree. Like you need to find the data scientists who are intrinsically curious, who want to solve problems who are also resilient to some of the, to some of the tough languages and some of the tough love that may be shown at a police department.

But other than that, it's a Yeah, it's just the hiring practices of analysts. I think it become sometimes HR puts people in a box and we have to kind of go back to HR and say, no, no, no, let everybody apply. And then let's look at who comes in. Who's interested in the job? Because sometimes you'll be surprised.

You may have somebody who's just a computer science major or whatever. Who's new to the field, but , has that passion that , [01:04:00] wants to help and is really literate when it comes to data and the data and the data life cycle and everything. Those are the people you want to hire. Just because I know the difference between a robbery and a burglary doesn't make me, doesn't make me qualified for the job.

Jason: All right. And I, I do want to get to some GIS questions, but before we leave this topic, so I, I'm curious, so. If it's time for you to be the straight shooter to decision makers, how close do you think you are to Jessica's level? Oh,

Neil: oh no, no, just I'm, I'm, I'm in my mid thirties. I don't have any active sworn law enforcement experience.

It is, to be honest, it's difficult to connect with some of the command staff because they see me as the data guy. I'm the wizard, which is fine because that's what I kind of pride myself on. But how close did she, did she ask you to ask that question? I [01:05:00] think she's trying to figure that same question out that same answer out for me.

No, I think I'm, I'm getting there the more experience I have with working with police departments and kind of understanding some of the, some of the shortfalls that departments may have, whether they, it's not a bad thing. Every department has some sort of shortfall. But it's a I'm not sure I'm there yet, but I, I'm extremely confident in providing analyst Specific guidance to command staff but when it comes to strategic planning I'm a little, I'm not sure I'm there yet, but I think maybe after a few more years, I think I'll be ready for

Jason: that very careful, deliberate language there.

Good job. So I do want to talk a little bit about G. I. S. I had Kevin Armstrong from injury on last week. And he had a professor describe GIS is guaranteed income stream, so I did want to follow up with you and get your perspective on on [01:06:00] GIS and I guess in particular here you have this one of the certifications you just mentioned is as we are GIS Pro Foundation certification.

So just did wanted to get your perspective on GIS and then maybe talk a little bit about the certification.

Neil: Sure. Yeah. So GIS I feel is becoming one of the most important skills to have when it comes to being a tactical and strategic crime analyst for your department. It's it's a skill that, that Esri I, again, I don't work for Esri, but I am a total fan boy of Esri

This, it is, I'm so impressed by what they've done over the past five to six years when it comes to focusing on public safety, focusing on making sure crime analysts have the right information and tools at their at the ready to, to do the analysis it's a and it, it's getting easier.

I mean, they've even designed ArcGIS Pro to look like Microsoft Word with the with the content [01:07:00] specific toolbars like it is once you get past like the, oh my God, I clicked something and everything got deleted part it's, it it gets pretty easy. The only challenge is sometimes manipulating some of the data within within the infrastructure can be a challenge but that's where kind of Python comes in and kind of really honing in your skills with.

Some of the coding languages and Python and Esri go hand in hand but yeah, I can't speak more highly enough about every analyst. If you're interested in or any future analysts, if you're interested in getting involved or interested in really. Get into the next level. It's really becoming a very proficient as proficient as you can in geospatial analysis, because it is so as part of the crime triangle, there are 3 right person place.

Crime problem, victim, etc. I think I named five. I think that was a pentagram. I think that was a pentagon right there, but so but definitely places in there. So if you're looking for an [01:08:00] appropriate response to a particular problem that you're having in your city place. Has to be at least talked about, and if you don't have the geospatial skills to provide that accurate, timely, relevant analysis you're not, you're not there.

It's not it. So you need to get up. You need to get up to speed. And as we provide plenty of training to get you up to speed. Most cities or counties have,

enterprise systems through Esri again, I'm not, I do not work for Esri but if you're like, oh, you know what, I wish I had access to Esri, contact your local, your county, every county probably has a GIS person, or at least the city does, well, sorry, the city probably does, and your county most likely does.

And usually GIS folks, GIS professionals are usually So excited to get involved in crime and any type of crime data because they're used to like plotting sewer lines and construction. And if you second, you say, [01:09:00] Hey, I need to help. I need your help plotting some shots fired data. And they're just like, Oh my gosh, my, my, my afternoon is wide open.

So I definitely recommend any analysts who was a little, even a little a little shy about their their GIS skills, reach out to your, your regional. Your local GIS department and they will they will help you i've had great success over my experience working with many departments and working with the GIS departments and they are so capable They are so knowledgeable and skill.

I have so much skills regarding GIS. So yeah, that's my yeah, and it's definitely it's definitely a guaranteed income stream because it is It is it's it's hard to find people who are fully capable and qualified to be GIS professionals.

Jason: The departments that you've worked with, how many are doing GIS type work and how much are not?

Like, what is that? And you can ballpark it. I mean, are you seeing a lot of departments where the analysts aren't doing any GIS work at all?

Neil: So some of the departments I work with, they they can[01:10:00] they can display X, Y which they, they right click on the, the CSV, they, they throw up an ArcGIS and they right click and it says display X, Y, and they click that it works based off of whatever the projected or geographic coordinate system is but And if that's it, cool.

I mean, that's fine. That's good enough for now. But I would say it's, it's kind of hit or miss. I think, I think people have a general idea on how to use some of the tools, but I think there, I think a lot of the analysts sometimes, and again, I work with the smaller and medium sized departments. I think they're thirsty for the GIS work because it's kind of sexy.

It's fun. It's fun plotting hotspots in specific. Beats and precincts and creating this hot street maps or creating those testing and polygons based off the intersection points where you can create like a more equitable or more

reasonable core plot map based off of, the size and length of your city limits versus just having a broad [01:11:00] stream 400 by 400 square grid, which means a hotspots on top of a hospital.

It's like, yeah. Of course. Of course it is. Yeah. Of course it is. So yeah, it's a I think, I think analysts are eager to learn GIS but from my, from my experience with working with departments, I think at least a smaller and midsize, I think I think they're at least at the beginner level. But I think they can at least get to the intermediate pretty easily through not only what Esri provides, but we also provide Idea Analytics provides a an intermediate training that's taught by me that we go over how to kind of take your geospatial analysis, crime analysis to the next level.

Jason: Yeah, nice soft plug there, Hatch.

Neil: Good job. You like that? Yeah, that was, that was my only self, that was my only selfish plug, I promise. What about the

Jason: certification? Is that Is that recommended for certain people's others? Like what? What's that certification about? Sure.

Neil: Yeah. So I've I've had, I've had to take certifications [01:12:00] throughout my career just to sink or swim as you mentioned, as I mentioned, talking, going back, even going back to the anti drug network, I had to get a security plus certification just to be able to touch classified networks.

And then I got my certified ethical hacker certification just as a a proof that I know what I'm talking about. Yeah. Credibility type of thing. But so for the ArcGIS foundation certification I really wanted to be sure, the foundation certification is really just making sure you know how to use ArcGIS pro and you understand the basics of.

geospatial analysis, cartography, et cetera, even just very general things. They even recommend you have zero, I think it's zero to two years of experience to get the foundation's certification. So like it is, it is not an advanced certification, but it's more or less, it was a opportunity for me to demonstrate that, like, I can get a certification in geospatial analysis.

Or just the utilization of a geospatial tool such as ArcGIS Pro to do my job. [01:13:00] So I don't think it's absolutely necessary for an analyst to get that certification, but it's definitely adds the credibility of, hey, like the difference

between a geographic coordinate system and a projected coordinate system, and you know how to bounce between the two as necessary.

For your jurisdiction it's, it's, it's things that, hey, I know how to, I know how to create a, a layout or professional printable map for my community meeting or when my, my chief's in front of city council and the map doesn't look like I just pulled it off of Google and say it's, it's really just a, it teaches like the way that you get to that certification, I think is valuable and I think it teaches you the basics of what you should know to be a crime analyst and in the current age, if that answers your question.

It

Jason: does, and then for those listening, I will put a link in the show notes for that certification if you're interested in getting more information about it.

Neil: Sure, and I'm also happy to help anybody with any questions they have about the certification and the process. All right,

Jason: well, let's finish up with [01:14:00] personal interest then, and I really enjoy asking this personal interest questions because every once in a while I will get an answer that I.

Never saw coming and so when we talked about this, you talked about golfing and soccer and bars, but at the very end, you mentioned that you, you keep track of wing places and cheesesteak places. So I thought that's where I really want to focus because I, I really. Didn't think I would ever hear somebody keeping track of cheesesteak restaurants.

Neil: Yeah. Yeah. I, I didn't think that was weird either. It's almost, it was just like a totally bizarre when you started, you asked more questions about it and I was like, Oh, I didn't, I didn't think that was weird. But yeah, so like I, I live right out, this actually, this might be a huge connector to why this is the case.

So I, I grew up and I live right outside the Philadelphia area. And. [01:15:00] For some odd reason I have, I have some sort of affinity towards trying wings and cheesesteaks at every single bar that I can possibly go to. And I don't, it's just a I'm, I'm, I'm on the search for the place that I can go to, to feel like I'm a, I'm a member of Cheers despite, despite it not being near my house.

But I, I think a cheesesteak wings, wings are a whole different art. So I can't speak too educatedly about wings but cheesesteaks, I think I can at least speak

somewhat educatedly about it's just, it's a thing that I think I grew up, just, I moved around a lot when I was younger, so every time I moved, we'd have a local pizza place, and at that pizza place we'd always have cheesesteaks, and I'd always order the cheesesteak, and I would always say, oh, that's a little bit better than this one, but what about this one over here?

Mom, can we try? Can we try this, can we try this pizza place next? [01:16:00] And it just kind of became a thing. I don't, and I, when I lived and this is a total, this is actually, I am actually trying to make fun of Northern Virginia here except for one place that I found in Herndon it's named Jimmy's, but, I could not find a good cheesesteak place in Northern Virginia. And when I lived there for 10 years, I was a big struggle. And the second I moved back up right next to Philly, I'm like back in, I'm back in cheesesteak heaven. Like it is every, every corner has a, as a pizza place with cheesesteaks and yeah, it's just a weird thing that I do.

So even, even last night, my, my wife Kendall and I we went to a bar 10 minutes away and the waitress comes up to us and she's like, so why, why, why did you come here on a Wednesday night? And I go, Kendall looks at me and she's like, you can explain. And I was like. I'm, I'm trying to find a really good cheesesteak.

And that, and the waitress, she laughed, her name was Jeannie, and she [01:17:00] was like, Oh, that's great because we have a really good one. So I was excited and I was like, Oh, perfect. So it was good. It was definitely good. And, I don't do like the one how I don't know if we're allowed to say I'm like barstool sports or anything, but like, I don't, I don't do that.

I don't do the recordings or anything. I just, they're all mental notes. I'm not, I'm just, it's more or less just like a personal thing. It's just like, I like to. Jot it down.

Jason: Yeah. So your trick, the trick is, is finding the one place that's going to yell Neil when you, when you enter the building. Just like Norm, right?

You use the cheers reference. I got to explain that. I might ruin the joke, but I have to explain that, that, that reference. But yes, that's, that's the trick. All right. So if I'm in Philadelphia, I got one place to go. Where am I going for a cheesesteak? Oh,

Neil: it's oh man. This is this is definitely there's a there's a lot of debate.

I'm not Hopefully some people from philadelphia can listen to this but I would say the two I want to give you two. Jason I have to give you [01:18:00] two because there's so many it's going to be ish cabibbles and john's roast pork Those two places I would say probably have the best some of the best cheese steaks in philly All

Jason: right, send your complaints to me.

No, I'm kidding.

Neil: Yeah.

Jason: Very good. All right, Neil. Our last segment of the show is words to the world. This is where I give the guests the last word. You can promote any idea that you wish. What are your words to the

Neil: world? I think the words to the world here. I'm going to talk more or less about what I've experienced over my career is I say this to every analyst I work with, is you have to manage the expectations of the audience in which you're producing the analytical product.

Don't be a yes analyst. Don't be a, I'll get that to you today. Like you have to say, hey, that's going to take me 20 hours to do. If you're okay with that, I can, I can get that to you, but you just have to manage the expectations of all the requesters who are asking your [01:19:00] services. It's, it's so important to make sure that the audience and the person who's asking for knows what, what they're getting.

Critiquing or, or, or really honing in as to what they really want out of their product is so important to make sure that they're happy with what you produce as an analyst, I am so proud as I'm so proud of all of the products that I produce. And when I find out someone's not happy with it, I instantly think that I did something wrong, but sometimes it's, I didn't, I didn't really figure out what.

What the requester really wanted. So that's what there was a little bit of a disconnect. So always manages expectations really hone in the request to make sure that you are producing exactly what what the audience expects. That would be it. Very

Jason: good. Well, I leave every guest with you've given me just enough to talk bad about you later.

But I do appreciate you being on the show, Neil. Thank you so much, and you be safe.

Neil: No, thank you, Jason. I really, I really appreciate it. I had a really good time.

Mindy: Thank you for making it to the end of another episode of [01:20:00] Analysts Talk with Jason Elder. You can show your support by sharing this and other episodes found on our website at [www.](http://www.leapodcasts.com)

Neil: [leapodcasts. com](http://leapodcasts.com). If you have a topic you would like us to cover or have a suggestion for our next guest, please send us an email at [leapodcasts at gmail. com](mailto:leapodcasts@gmail.com). Until next time, analysts, keep talking.