John Seay - The Keyboard Warrior

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 five years of law enforcement analysis experience with 43 years of law enforcement experience overall. He has experience at Hialeah Police Department in Florida, North Carolina State University Police Department, And the University of North Carolina Wilmington University Police Department.

He holds two master's degrees, one in business analytics and the other in computer science and information system. He describes himself as an uber nerd, gym rat, and Businessman with a badge and a keyboard warrior. Please welcome John [00:01:00] Say. John, how we

John: doing? Great, Jason. Nice to meet you today.

Jason: All right.

Thank you so much for being with me. Got a lot to go over. Want to get into some quality assurance, get your perspective on being an officer, turned analyst, working at a university. But before we get to all that, how did you discover the law enforcement analysis profession?

John: Well, I've always been a tad bit of a hacker, so to speak.

Many years ago, back along the MS DOS 2. 0 timeline, you know, I discovered keyboards and I got fascinated with computers, so I kind of weaved them into my law enforcement career. First in operations, uniform operations, then when I was a detective for many years back. Back in the day when you're trying to figure out a case you're working on.

I liked computers. They were just, made me so much more efficient and made my life so much more easier. So I felt like the more I knew about them, the better I could do my police **Jason:** job. [00:02:00] Yeah, it is interesting as you look at different career paths for officers. You come in to the police academy, you put out on the streets, but from there, there are so many different paths.

That you can take within a police department because there's so many different roles. Talk about the IT part. Some people stay in patrol their whole entire life. Some people want to move up the ladder. Some people get into more administrative duties. Others get into detective work. Some people get into grants.

There's just so many different paths that you can take as an officer.

John: The grants, the... Special operations, the incident command, the emergency management. I've done all those things. I've done operations. The common thing in all of those is that I had to have this electronic tool called a computer to make me efficient and effective.

The [00:03:00] computer is a tool that amplifies the user.

Jason: Yeah, so, so you always had that in you and , you implemented that into your police career.

You become more on the analytical role side of things, but it kind of goes hand in hand. You said computer work that you like to do, but it's What the computer work does is deal with data, so it's not a huge jump for you to go from the computer task, into analysis.

John: The law enforcement, in general, is about patterns of behavior.

It's patterns of behavior of the bad guy, patterns of behavior of the victim, patterns of the behavior of the location. Once you understand that, it can become predicted. You can predict things that are going to happen in the future, and that's where the analytics side, I got it very interested into it.

Jason:, I'm going to actually move right into your analyst badge [00:04:00] story, Because I think from there stems a lot of different conversations I want to have during this interview. So, , it's 2016, and you are working on your computer science degree, and you pick a NIBRS topic to do as your capstone project.

John: The department at the time was not NIBRS certified, and they needed, they wanted to become NIBRS certified. And they want to implement NIBRS, so that was part of the reason why I was. taken off the road and brought into what was called support services at the time. At the same time, I was finishing up and working on a capstone project for the computer science degree.

In North Carolina, there is a database of all traffic stops. Millions and millions of traffic stops for every police department in the entire state. And it's all kept on a central server in Raleigh, North Carolina by the SBI. [00:05:00] the State Bureau of Investigations. Well, I became aware of it, and I asked for a download of it, and they gave me the database, which I thought was going to be very easy to analyze that database.

It wasn't. It took months, almost over a year, to figure out all the ins and outs of getting data out of that database.

Jason: That's because it's so large, right? , how big is this, file you're trying to deal with?

John: 32 million records. It goes back, I think to like 22, 000, maybe I'm I'd have to look it up again, but it's, it's millions and millions of records.

And the thing was, I was only interested in a small subset of

Jason: it. So what was that

John: subset? Well, what I did was I took all the. the police departments in the UNC system, which is 20 some odd schools last time I looked, I'd have to double check that number. And then I took all the police departments in New Hanover County, which is where the, my university police department resides.

And I, I took those data and that's the only thing I was interested in. [00:06:00] And then we turned around and we further refined it. We said, well, you know, anything older than five years is probably the information's probably become historic. I wouldn't say stale, but it's probably historic and it's probably not it's probably of diminished value.

So we kind of stuck with five years of rolling data for our geographic partners and our partners and campus policing in the UNC system. All right.

Jason: So what questions were you trying to answer? Well,

John: This particular database is geared towards demographics. So we were interested in, first, how was our police department stopping traffic stops?

By what rates? By what nationality? What ethnic? What sex? And then we were trying to get a profile of what our department was doing. Then we further refined it and broke it down to the individual employee level. Okay. So what was Officer A doing? What was Officer B doing? Then we started looking for outliers to see if there was any issues with any officer that [00:07:00] was not following policy.

Because every police department in the entire country has a, you know, you don't stop, you don't stop motorists for demographics. You stop them for behavior, for violating traffic ordinances, traffic laws. So that's, that was the genesis of it, and that was all pre, before the, the business with George Floyd broke out , into the national news.

So

Jason: how did your university compare to all the other universities in North Carolina?

John: Well, , we were comparable. We we actually stopped more cars per officer than the city, which the city is ten times our size, but per officer, we stopped more cars. We found that we were stopping something like 94% white motorist.

And, and a very small percentage of our stops had to do with people of color. Things like that. And occasionally I would come up with an officer that was outside the normal curve and then. We, we had to do a little bit deeper investigation. In one case the officer his, his [00:08:00] demographic stops were not, were outside the norm, and we found out it's because he was doing all of his stops in one particular area where there was a higher concentration of people of color.

And then as soon as he started stopping, In different geographic locations, his stops normalized. Yeah, so,

Jason: so you review the data, find the outliers, and then bring this to the attention of the individual officer and work out some kind of solution.

Right.

I worked on a similar project when I was at Cincinnati Police Department. And we were dealing with stops, but it was specifically at like sunrise and sunset, right? There was part of a RAND study that they wanted to look at data at civil twilight. we were looking at outliers and everything else.

And of course, Cincinnati had just years before had, their issues with police involved So, they were Going through this process of reevaluating how they're doing [00:09:00] stops as well. And first go around, they didn't find, any racial component, but they did find that one particular officer was way on the outlier of pulling over blonde women.

And so I can't remember exactly the number, but if the. Average expectation was seven. He was like a 24, so he was like, he was like two standard deviations way off of that, but that was what we ended up doing this, bringing that to his attention and coming up with a solution.

John: In one case, another officer.

His number of traffic stops were so far outside the normal curve his, we brought it to the attention of his supervisor, and they were finding out that he wasn't, he was really focused on traffic stops, and he wasn't doing his other duties, so he was a little bit one, one sided, so they made him... slow down on his traffic stops and start working on some of the other things that were not as glamorous but are still part of his work duties.

[00:10:00] Yeah. So it's not a gotcha per se tool but it's a a management and power tool or supervisor and power tool that lets them better supervise their people.

Jason: When you originally get this data and you're working with this data, we talked about the size issue that you, you had to overcome, but did it also have all the data that you were hoping for?

Did you have to add to this data set? Well,

John: no, we, the basic data set we extrapolated on it. We, we, we started combining things and looking towards things I, some of my command users, some of my majors and. And a couple of chiefs that I wonder what it would be interesting to know, for example if, if People of color are being treated differently than people not of color after the stop.

So once they're stopped, are they getting are they getting more sanctions or do the white, do the white demographic get a break? So we started looking at that. So, you know, we started to compare there's a one page on the, on the system that says, White versus not [00:11:00] white, and then, you know, what's the warnings?

So, in the traffic stop, it'll say ticket versus verbal warning. So, we, we combined everything into either a penalty phase or an information phase, and, and to try, try to boil it down. because you know, the officer has discretion. He's going to stop you and give you a, a warning or a verbal warning or something like that versus a ticket or some type of citation or some type of penalty.

You know what I mean? And then the you know, we were trying to see if there was a substantial difference. There's always going to be a small fractional percentage of a difference. They're never going to be exactly the same, but is it substantially different? So far. I have not seen that come up yet with anybody that's treating one demographic different than another.

Okay,

Jason: well, no, that's good because, does it did you look at the time of the stop, the duration? Is, is that data

John: available? Yeah, so there's a time of day, so the theory is that if you stop more people of color during the during the [00:12:00] day as opposed to night, then you're, you're, you're targeting it because you can't see the driver at night.

And so far I haven't, I haven't come across that. There's nobody that, that, that there's a difference between, our shifts are 7A to 7P or 7P to 7A. And there's really not a difference yet that I've been able to find.

Jason: Yeah. Is there data that you wish was in the data

John: set? Well, some of the, the problem with this kind of comparison is it assumes that every neighborhood, everything is homogenous.

That's not the case. You can even down to the city level or the county level. There's neighborhoods that are predominantly one demographic versus another. If I could get the data, the resident data from, say, the, the driver's license bureau, I think it would be interesting to see if we could figure out just the demographics, because you have to be driving a car to get into that database. And, for example, a lot of the 5, 000 students that live here during the year they have a [00:13:00] driver's license, but they don't bring a car. They take an Uber or something like that, so this is not a, a comprehensive evaluation, it's just one of many tools we use.

Jason: And then, so when we talked in our prep call, you got the idea that once word got out that you had that, you started getting calls from other departments.

John: The way the state packs the database, you almost have to have an industrial server to be able to read the data, . You can't use anything off the shelf like Microsoft Excel or Access or anything like that. It's too big. You need an industrial server like a SQL server or something like that.

One of my professors who was one of my mentors said, You want to look at Power BI. It's the first time I ever heard those words. That's a Microsoft product that became the linchpin of all my operations.

Jason: So for those that might not be familiar with Power BI, just go ahead and give a description for it and we can talk about how you applied it.

John: So Power BI is a Microsoft [00:14:00] application that is an extrapolation of Power Query, Microsoft Excel, Power Query, Microsoft. Started with Power Query, and they expanded it out. It's a little bit of a database. It's a little bit of a spreadsheet. It's a little bit of an analytics tool. It's got some presentation in it.

It's a pretty powerful tool. It's if you're familiar with Tableau, it's probably comparable to Tableau. But when you're using Excel, you're using Access, you're using Word. I mean, we're a Microsoft shop here. So Power BI just naturally fell into the thing. , first version of, I used to use a SQL server, an industrial server, but I lost access to them.

So I actually called Microsoft and they said, power BI has a SQL Server light built into it. Just pick at the data you want out of the dataset and it will, it will absorb it. And it did. I was shocked.

Jason: Hmm. So how, how did this data come to you? You said there was 32 million records, but what format was that coming to you in?

A text file. A huge [00:15:00] text file.

John: And, on top of that , every category, they change to a number. So it's a zero, a one, or two, or three, and they give you an index sheet, and it tells you what the zero, one, two, and three mean. Okay, so

Jason: yeah, so then you had to have a whole series of lookup tables. Yep.

Then with the Power BI, was that an... added expense for you for this project?

John: No, I've got the, I've got the blessing. I have no budget other than, than what the department pays me. But the office doesn't have a special budget. Now, I can't say they haven't taken care of me. They've given me, upgraded my equipment several times, but there's no...

Extra budget for it. Now, what I do have access is all the university licensing for this software.

Jason: Okay. , but , for those that are listening that might be interested in Power BI, this is, would be an extra expense for their department. So I

John: believe last time I looked at it, Microsoft's going to charge you, there's different pricing configurations.

They're going to give you a free software for your [00:16:00] desktop. So you can build your application, but if you want to export it, you build your application on the desktop and then you export it to the cloud server. And then whoever you want to use it, say, if I wanted you to see this report, they would probably want to charge you 10 a month to let you have power access to the Power BI service.

But I would forward the listener to Microsoft's, pricing policy, but I think it was 10 a desktop, you know, after, you know, for the consumer.

Jason: Yeah. And was, is this data stored on the cloud or is this stored locally?

John: It's all on Microsoft

Jason: server. Okay. All right. So that's, that's you don't have to have server space and all that other stuff either.

So, okay. I mean,

John: if you have a small police department of, you know, maybe 10 officers and everything is what the consumer of the report is what is browser based. So you develop a report and you want to send it out to [00:17:00] everybody in your small police department. I can't think of an easier way to do it because it's all browser based.

The officers right now. Access my reports from their, their cars using , a web browser base. One officer even went so far as to use one of my reports on a phone. He said, I got, there's a phone version of your report. I go, great. I didn't know that.

Jason: Yeah. That's what I always got. And this is, this is 15 years ago now.

It's like, okay, whatever you're building, how, how do I get it in the car? You know, this is before cell phones, and I can just imagine now, like, how do I get it on my phone?, you know, certainly understand where they're, they're coming from,

John: know. One of, one of, one of the applications that I do on a weekly basis is bicycle thefts.

That's our number one crime on this campus, is bicycle thefts. You know, it's not a, you know, 50 bike anymore, they're 1, 600 e bikes and things like that. So one of the things that we do is we have a bait bike we put out, and they use , my bike theft report because it shows the [00:18:00] locations where the bikes have been stolen from, and that's where they, they use that as a pattern to try to, to put out the bike.

And every once in a while I'll get a call, we got the guy, he was stealing the bait bike, and we put it there because of your report. Thank you.

Jason: So it's August, you're gearing up for the students to come back.

Two weeks! Yeah, is there particular issues you're looking, to tackle?

John: Well, this is just my own opinion and there's nothing more. I COVID generation. These are the high school students coming into college now that are post COVID. You know, they spent 21 and part of 22 maybe you know, getting out of COVID and they're maybe not as socialized as previous generations or previous years, lack of a better word.

So I think that I'm just have some personal concerns towards mental health. So we, we need to pay close attention to that as a police department and be able to provide those services to them and get them towards the governmental services they need. First year college is very stressful [00:19:00] for a young person and it can become overwhelming if you're not mentally.

Prepared to deal with

Jason: it. It's interesting because 20, 30 years ago, there was more interaction, right? If you're a college student, in the, I went to school in the 90s, right? We, there wasn't. And we weren't doing very much on on the computers. We weren't doing much online communication. We were, you know, hanging out with each other.

We were going to parties. There was a lot of person to person communication and contact, which can lead to all kinds of. Crimes that the police department would have to handle. But, you know, today you're dealing with so much online, you could be fights online. There could be harassment online, or it could be all this stuff that, you know, police departments, you know, patrol officers of the run and security at.

A university, you're going to think everything's [00:20:00] fine, but there's a lot of stress and turmoil that can go along inside the dorms , with these online communication.

John: Yeah there is a study, a recent national study said 50% of the teenage population in the United States is clinically depressed, which astonished me, but that's, that's the people that are going to be coming here to this college and to other colleges around the country.

in about two weeks. That always

Jason: makes me wonder when I hear stats like that. Is it truly the number, is that much higher or is the way that we're collecting the data or asking the questions

John: changed? Yeah, that's beyond my expertise, but I just think it's something to be addressed. A warning NC State is the largest University in this state and last semester they had nine suicides, so I just, it's something like if you're prepared for it, you can mitigate the effects of it and rather be unprepared for it.

So that's just [00:21:00] my, my particular opinion. Students, when we interact with our, our, our companion university elements such as student groups or. peer groups or things like that. And we educate them using community policing. You know, if a student is depressed, if a student is isolated, if a student is showing warning signs, call us so we can get them counseling.

We have a counseling counseling center here on campus. So if somebody is showing signs, Let's use the University resources to get them assistance before it becomes a problem. That's my thing.

Jason: Mm hmm Yeah, I had drew Dasher on the show a couple weeks ago And he works for University down there in Texas and he spoke similar language with the idea of Acknowledging the services that are available at a university and, targeting students, not for crime and punishment, but to get them the help, [00:22:00] that they need.

Yeah,

John: it's a, it's a fallacy of Hollywood that. Cops are going to catch the bad guy. That's a small part of modern policing's job, catching the bad guy. You know, you're providing governmental services, you're, you're remediating things before they become a problem whenever possible. Do you, I, when I did actually did police work, I more than one occasion brought drunken students home.

Tucked them into bed and gave them their citation next to their pillows. So when they got up in the morning, they could see it. But I made sure they got home all

Jason: well put. I wanna switch slightly to a different topic. I wanna talk a little bit about quality assurance.

'cause this is something that is a little bit your gateway into. The data realm for law enforcement is coming in and doing quality assurance evaluations for police reports. I think when it comes to civilians, and I say [00:23:00] this as I am part of this same group, , you get some of these.

Reports and it's very boilerplate or there's not much detail and in some of these reports and it can get frustrating as an analyst trying to work this information with reports that don't have very much meat on the bone for lack of better terms. you've seen it now on both ends as someone that wrote these reports and then someone that did quality assurance and now you're on the analyst side with studying and analyzing these reports

John: well anybody that's been in police work more than about five minutes knows the job's not done until the report's done and the report has to be at least what I call good enough, meaning you're going to have to take that into court sometimes years later, and that's going to be your, that the actual record of the event.

The procedure is the officer writes the report, and then a supervisor signs off [00:24:00] on it, and then it goes to records. In 2018, I was asked to come off the road and become the records officer, which meant read the reports, study the reports, make sure they were sufficient, not rewrite them necessarily, but make sure they were sufficient.

On and around that time, we were starting to implement the NIBRS protocols here. So if it was, we had to like track the manual, we didn't have the computer software at the time. So we started to manually track them in spreadsheets and later on databases.

And what I found was over the years that 95 to 99% of the reports, at least here, were good enough, meaning they covered all the elements. Occasionally, I was, you know, I would talk to the officer and say you charged him with 32 felonies and then you didn't put any of the elements of those felonies in the narrative.

Do you want to revisit this narrative and we'll hold up this report for the next three [00:25:00] days while you rewrite your narrative, you know, but that was the exception. What I have found though is they don't always categorize them correctly. For example, if I get a report that says miscellaneous in the category.

And then they turn around and describe disorderly conduct. That's not a miscellaneous instance. It's a disorderly conduct. And if we don't put the right category, then they don't get counted correctly for NIBRS protocols. Initially, we were doing the categorization manually. But as of April of 2022, we went to a computer, a new computer, RMS software.

That counts all these different events and for the neighbors reporting to the state. So if you put the wrong category, you're counting one miscellaneous sentence instead of that disorderly conduct, for example.

Jason: , as you said, , most of them , are correct.

But then the civilian wants so much more. Data, so much richer data, , how , should they manage their expectations of what should and should not be [00:26:00] in the report?

John: Well, if they're charging with charge one, two, and three, you have to meet the elements of the crime and you have to make a complete and accurate record. There's an, you know, there's no saying police and police were who, what, when, where, how, and why. You know, you have to make, you know, he said, she said, is there witness statements?

You don't have to repeat word for word what the witness told you, you can have them write out a statement, but you have to kind of summarize and make sure you cover everything in the aspects. And then today with different digital media, you've got photographs, you've got PDFs, you've got all kinds of, of digital evidence, and it's not just handwritten stuff anymore.

I just looked at one 15 photographs attached to it. Yeah.

Jason: Does your department do voice to text? We

John: can, but typically it's not, it's not part of a report. Occasionally a detective , will make a transcription of a voicemail and they'll attach the voicemail [00:27:00] and they'll make a, a document a written narrative of the statement and they'll get You'll get both versions in this, in the case file.

Yeah. There's a difference between a police officer initial report and a complete detectives package, you know, a police officer making initial reports, not on a homicide or a rape case is not going to. It's not going to write a complete investigation. It may take the detective weeks or months, depending on the circumstances, to have that complete case file.

Jason: Yeah, yeah, because I always think of the patrol officer responding to a call, writing up the report, and he or she's got other calls to do. Got to get to the next call or the next

John: run. Yeah, that goes on all the time around here. On a typical night, we may only have, you know, three or four.

Jason: Yeah. So put your analyst hat on now, or maybe even when you were quality control is there data or something that you wish , [00:28:00] Officers would either write down or wish that was more readily available to you. It

John: astonishes most officers when I tell them that your chief of police, the deputy chief, the major, the captain, all of the, the amount of people that read their reports.

They don't, they just don't think that. And then they turn around and then those reports are given to a A district attorney's office, you know, that's going to represent you in front of a lot of people that make decisions as far as your career. Think about what you're putting down and put your best foot forward.

You're not making a report, you're making an initial investigation. You are a uniform investigator. You're just doing the initial investigation. If you think like that, you will write a good report.

Jason: I don't, you know, you, since back, since you mentioned that 90, 95% of these were done accurately, good enough.

Right. I mean, it does, we're not talking about somebody that has to be a novel writer in order to [00:29:00] get these reports complete. , I always like to put myself in their shoes. And I, I'm not a very good writer. I always say that the reason I'm doing this podcast is because this is my way of.

writing a book without writing. So, but I know I'm not a, a very good writer. So to me, it would take me probably, I would say longer probably than average , than most officers given the similar experience to write a

John: report. Yeah. If the if you're coming off the end of a shift, say you, you get off at seven o'clock in the morning and you're just finishing the call at six o'clock, you got an hour to get that report done.

Now, if it's a routine report you know, that can be done in an hour. Fine. But don't hesitate. What a lot of people make a mistake is they do an incomplete report because they don't want to be past seven o'clock in the morning. And I don't blame them. I didn't either. It's okay to say this report is incomplete in the narrative and I will finish it when I come back to work on my next shift.

I've done it a thousand [00:30:00] times. And it lets the administration know, Oh, it's not done, but , this is what's the status of it.

Kyle: Hi, I'm Kyle Stoker, and I'm encouraging you to vote in the IACAA elections. Between August and September, you have the opportunity to vote for your candidate. So make sure you go to the IACAA website and vote because

our membership has a voice in who leads the organization and you want to make sure that your voice is heard.

Thank you very much.

Caleb: Caleb Meyers with Garner police department. And my PSA is. Put the phones away, man. We live in a society now and I'm a culprit of this as well is I've never had a clear mind when I put that phone down and when I think about some other stuff. So, and there's so much to learn out there.

Kyle: I mean, this can go for anything right at the job at home on the road. You see it everywhere. We're so attached to our phones and like I said, it's just better to put it down and to [00:31:00] just learn something else do something else because you're going to have a clear mind and be fresh for

Jason: whatever you're about to tackle.

So I see you're a data analyst, and so how would you describe, , data analysts versus maybe other types of analysis?

John: This is kind of a blurry concept, but between a data analyst and a data scientist, or, I don't know you know, or a computer analyst or a crime analyst, these are terms that are somewhat synonymous.

Yeah. You know, when I first got into this business, I said, what interested me was studying it and then it wasn't tools to study it. So that's when I got interested and started creating the tools because I was trying to study it. There's numbers, there's data all around you. It's not just RMS.

It's not just you know, your CAD. [00:32:00] If, if you really want to predict behavior of your officers, if you really want to predict behavior of your bad guys, predict behavior of your, of your population, the data is all around you. It's never ending. It's a never ending challenge to find that data. And exploit, exploit it into actionable information.

To me, that's the most fascinating thing about this business.

Jason: Yeah. Cause even take it more on the law enforcement side, you know, there's data analyst and then there's the crime and intelligence analyst.

John: Well, I'm not sure what the difference is, at least on my level. I'm not big enough to be able to specialize.

I do everything.

Jason: But yeah, it always cracks me up how many different ways that of these position titles that we come up with to talk about the same thing so I don't I don't know why we can't just have one term for. Analyst, but we don't. We call all these different titles talking about [00:33:00] all these different ways to analyze data.

Yeah, it's amazing. So, all right. Good deal.

Another topic I want to talk to you about. Given , your master's degrees, given the work that you've done, one of the things that I think in terms of just looking at the entire landscape of law enforcement analysis is I wonder if there's not enough math in, in what. A typical analyst at a police department does I think for the most part, the stats that we, we collect today are the same that we've done for the last 40 plus years.

Right? I think calls for service. You might response time or just counts of, of the different calls or counts of the different crime every once in a while. I'll see somebody talking about a Z score. , but for the most part, it's averages and maybe comparing 28 days in different [00:34:00] ways and different time periods in different ways.

It does seem to me as I've, you know, was exposed to analysis 20 plus years ago, I would have thought that there would be more math. Given technology, given the computer power that we have now. So, , what do you think of that? What

John: what you're describing in general is descriptive analytics.

One of the things they taught us in the analytics school. is there's descriptive analytics, what's happened in the past, there's predictive analytics, what you think might happen in the future, and there's prescriptive analytics, what you want to happen, per se. In law enforcement, it's basically, this is what's happened, okay?

Now, if we can take that data from the past and focus it towards what might happen in the future, I think you have a powerful tool. If your data is showing that liquor stores are getting robbed between 11 and 12 o'clock at night and a certain zip code or a certain neighborhood, then you, your, your operations people, your special operations people can set up and [00:35:00] be waiting for those individuals when they come to do their, their, their robberies.

So that's where I'm interested in it. We talked a little bit about mental health before. One of the things I track is medical calls around here. So, I'm trying to come up with a predictive algorithm that a lot, when we get a medical call, it's going to be percentage of the time alcohol, drugs mental health, injury, you know, it comes down to about five different categories.

We're trying to, you know, we're trying to focus on You know, what's going to happen in the future? There's another database I'm trying to tap out. All of our people, to get in our, our residence halls, they have to card in with an electronic reader. So, the bars in this town close at 1 o'clock. So, after 1 o'clock, where do people go?

They go home, because the bars close. So, as the people surge back into their residence, the city surged back into their residence, you know, I told the operations people, that's when you should start surging your officers into the residence and do foot patrols and things like that. That's when you, [00:36:00] that's where your people are.

Jason: . So the algorithm piece, and I think I believe I know what that is, but that's something that I hear from time to time. And I'm I'm not sure if someone asked me right now, Jason, create an algorithm.

I don't know if I know how to do

John: it. Well, I'm, I'm hardly an expert at algorithms. But it's, you know, it's basically what's the word I'm looking for. It's a step by step procedures with, you know, looking at numbers where you're you're, you're trying to get something out of it. You're trying to get an outflow out of it.

Based on number of calls on a Friday night, you should have at least this many officers working, for example. That's an algorithm that will tell you, based on your past data, you should have X amount of officers, if that's what you're trying to figure out, or come Halloween, Halloween's a big deal around here.

So based on past Halloween's, calls should go up by X amount of percent, and then [00:37:00] maybe you want to. Schedule additional people.

Jason: So then back to your mental health evaluation, the cause of analyzing the mental health calls, you're looking for certain types of calls, sub, subcategories. And then when you have maybe three or more of these categories, it meets one thing.

When you only have one or two, it might meet another. If you don't have any of these, it might meet another. Is that, is that kind of what you're

John: after? So it's been my opinion for what it's worth. And that's all it is, is that most good cops, not most, but good cops are almost psychic. in their, in their respect, if they've done it for a while.

But you've got a generational shift. I've got officers that are just fresh out of the academy. I've got officers with less than a year's experience. They just don't have the knowledge base or the experience base. So if I can give them a tool that says, Hey, you're there on an alcohol call. The student drank themselves into a stupor, [00:38:00] and you're, you're there to support EMS.

But based on our past data, 50% of the time, 60% of the time, 70% of the time, There's usually illicit drugs are, are involved, so that's something for you to look out for. It doesn't give you probable cause, doesn't give you a legal, legal justification to do anything, but it gives you a mindset to look for it where a, a veteran officer is already looking for it because they know, for example, that's an example of a, of a predictive algorithm that may help them.

If, if an officer deals with somebody that's decreased. They know that maybe that isolation is the beginning of a mental health issue, where if somebody is isolating themselves, are they? Based on past experiences, that's somebody that could benefit from joining a student group to, you know, if they have a common itch with people, their, their, their RA, you know, hey, this guy's a little bit isolated.

Maybe you might want to invite him to more meetings or involve him in [00:39:00] more student affairs activities, something like that. Good.

Jason: All right, let's move on to some advice then. For our listeners , what advice would you have for

John: them? Well, for the, I'm hardly an expert in giving any analysts advice, but I can, I will tell you that I'm very proud of my work.

And I've thought I've made the greatest mousetraps. I've made the most beautiful applications. I've created the best code. And I also put alarms in some of my reports. Actually, I put alarms in all my reports. But basically when I say alarms, it says. How many, what percentage of the end users actually open their reports? And sometimes on some reports that they should be looking at 50% of the people are not even opening the report. So what I've had, yeah, you know, you work yourself to death. So what I've found is that for whatever application you do, there has to be a need for it, a product [00:40:00] that you design or you'd build.

Has to have a need for it, or if you see a need and the department doesn't see the need, you have to educate the consumer of the report, the consumer of the application. This is what I can do for you. This is what I want to make for you. And this is how I can help you can make your life so much easier. If you will open up, you actually have to provide training to the end user.

You have to go to roll calls. You have to meet with managements, the chiefs and and deputies. All kinds of things. You have to show them that they really want to use this. This is a better mousetrap than the way they've been doing it. I find it took me years, but I finally convinced a police captain to quit looking at citations and just look at the database and the reports from databases that I've given him.

That's all right there. And he finally agreed with me. It took him years to admit it, but you know, he finally went and saw it my way.

Jason: Yeah. And I would say this to add to your advice. In that, you know, in [00:41:00] john situation here, he's got a background in computer science. So he's got the knowledge, skills and abilities to build all these mousetraps.

And for analysts there, you don't necessarily have to be the one that builds the mousetrap, but you are going to have to convince the decision makers why they should task I. T. To your project, right? So there's a little bit of salesmanship that goes along with this of trying to get this process improvement in place.

John: Yeah, absolutely. You, they, you, you have to get them to buy into , the actionable intelligence, the actionable information. This is part of your job, and this is what has happened, and it will probably happen again, based on our past data, or this is the information I've got received, and this is what will help you in the future.

Jason: And then a question I like to ask these days is [00:42:00] what I call the unpopular opinion question, it's basically your hot take, something that you believe to be true, that might be a, against the grain in terms of general thinking of law enforcement analysis.

John: one of the things that I've said to my peers, I'm old school. Arrest them and take them to jail. Okay, but that's only part of the job. People get hung up in this business with the word community policing. They get that's social work. I don't do that.

I'm a cop. I put the bad guy in jail. But if you will substitute the word crime prevention for community policing, that you have to have a victim, that you have to have a subject, that you have to have a location where they all meet, you know. If you will focus on that and how you can affect that going forward, how you can make sure that the girl going to the party doesn't get raped, or at least reduce the probability that she's going to be raped by educating her, it's very much your job.

If the [00:43:00] girl gets raped and you catch the bad guy and you put the rapist in jail, she still got raped. As opposed to you tra teaching her and educating her on how not to get raped if she doesn't get raped. Which one's the better outcome? It's obvious. That's all part of modern policing. You know, it's not just put the bad guy in jail.

It's not just responding to the tactical operation. When you have the active shooter, you have to have the tactical response. But everybody knows that once they start shooting, you know, it's too late. You have to, you have to intervene before the shooting starts. You have to focus on... Making sure you don't grow active shooters in the future.

Every active shooter, you know, they all, everybody looks back, Oh yeah, I can see there was a problem there. But, you know, looking backward doesn't help. You have to look forward. So that's a little bit different thinking than maybe some people in this business think about. You have to deal with everybody and you have to use that lens on it, you know.

If it takes walking grandma to the, to the corner, make sure she doesn't get robbed, then that's what you have to do. And because [00:44:00] you know that a lot of elderly folks live in an area and that's where they're going to start hunting because they're easy targets. Yeah,

Jason: yeah, a lot of this and with law enforcement, police departments.

You seem to get this new concept, this new buzzword we've gone through. If you've studied police departments long enough, you know, they go through all these current key terms, whether it's community policing or intelligence led policing, or Predictive policing, predictive policing. I mean, there just goes on and on and on.

And, most people say, well, isn't that basically just these one or two things anyway? Or isn't this exactly what we should have been doing all along? And it always makes me smile when I think about that, because it all comes back to the money, right? The reason you start this new initiative with these keywords is then you can, new money can be assigned to it, whether that's a federal grant, an outside grant You know, city money can be earmarked for it.

And it's, that's really, it's, [00:45:00] it's a new campaign. It's not necessarily, it doesn't necessarily have to be a new concept. It's just a new campaign. And

John: it's been my experience in the past that. Experienced, good, experienced police officers do things on an intuitive basis. They know in the past bars get robbed, liquor stores get robbed near closing, so that's usually if they're, if they have available time, that's where they'll set up.

Okay, whether they do it by intuition or they do it because the data shows that that's where they should be setting up, it's the same income. It's the same. You get to the same point. A lot of great cops have have an internal intuition that is data driven, but they just don't know that that's what it is.

The computers and the software and the analytical software is just now kind of catching up. And now we can be explicit about it. We can, we can put it down in black and white. This is why we did this. This is what we should be doing. Rather than just going by somebody's intuition, you know, as an example, whether I have a six month rookie out of the [00:46:00] academy, or I have a 30 year veteran captain, you know, the captain is going to have more knowledge and experience than the rookie, but the captain is not on patrol rookie is, so we have to bring the rookie up to the experience in the, in the training level of the captain, but using the latest information technology.

How

Jason: about, a return on your investment advice, man. Maybe something that an analyst can study now, because five years from now it'll be important. Well,

John: I don't know enough about chat GBT, but that seems to be all the rage lately. It's coming out and everything and it's going. And it's going to replace all the humans and do everything for us.

But it's certainly a new innovation and, and you probably should at least have a working knowledge of it. I was looking at something today and the chat GBT or some form of AI came on and says, how can I help you? I was just, and I, I said, not right

Jason: now. Yeah, no, it's, it's one of those things that with conferences, every [00:47:00] conference.

It seems like you go to, it seems the certain topics come on board and just last a while, right? You're not going to go to a law enforcement conference today without having something about social media or the dark web, or, you know, there's just certain key ones that you're going to see. Repeated throughout any conference in the country and A.

I. Is going to be one of those. I mean, it's going to be at every conference from this point forward.

John: I just came back from a 2 day training class and it was all about. It was titled threat assessment. But it was all about social media and doing online assessments of events that have happened. And the next day I come back, I get a report about a student that's trying to, somebody's trying to blackmail him because they put online video of himself.

Explain, you know, an intimate video of himself because he met a new girl over the internet that he was trying to impress, if you catch my draft, [00:48:00] you know, and now the quote unquote girl from Russia or wherever she was was probably an AI or it's probably a bot. And it's, you know, we want 5, 000 bucks not to give your mother the video.

Yeah. Yeah. And that was exactly what they talked about. And the training class sextortion.

Jason: Oh, geez. Yeah, it's all, it's all kinds of stuff. See, it's it's not just what happens on the sidewalk. How

John: do you, police departments have to be able to handle events that happen in cyberspace? And it's not just physical jurisdiction anymore.

It's events happen in cyberspace and you have to be prepared to handle them. It's not that easy anymore. **Jason:** No, no, I forget. Who was it? Talking about crypto fraud. Oh, God. How, how police departments, especially these smaller jurisdictions, like, how are they going to handle cyber fraud?

Right? It's a, it's a, it's a whole different animal.

John: Cryptocurrency is beyond me. I don't understand [00:49:00] it. Yeah,

Jason: All right. Well, let's move on to personal interest then as we finish up this interview. And as I mentioned in your intro, you are a gym rat. And you actually have accomplished a great feat in the last couple of years. And since 2019, you have lost a hundred pounds.

John: So on or about April of 2019, I went to get my driver's license. I was shocked at the photograph. And I said, wow, I'm going to have to do something about this. Because, you know, you sit for eight hours a day in front of a screen. You, you know, you don't even realize things. You know, you can easily put on weight and I was upped at 252 pounds.

Well, today I weighed in at 153 pounds. So I've always liked going to the gym, but I probably never, never could, , control my eating habits, if you will. I decided to focus my attention on that and said, well, I'm going to lose 10 pounds. Then 10 [00:50:00] became 20 and 20 became 30 and COVID hit and things got very structured.

And then I said, well, it's all about behavior. I'm not going to eat at cookout anymore. I'm going to make my own food and I'm going to bring it with me. And then I know it's healthy food. So it, it, it didn't become a diet. It became an interest in cooking and it became an interest in personal health and learning new things.

And again, going back to that, finding that information to achieve that in and integrating it into, into you know, my daily work. So you have to get up every, every. You know, once an hour, stretch your legs, take a quick walk around the building, then walk, come back and go back to work. You can't just sit for eight hours.

And I think that probably most analysts face the same thing. It's very easy to get in that rut. So, , one supports the other. If you want to do this job, which is primarily sedentary, you have to be a focus on it. So when I get home with my daughter, who's a special needs and my son, who's a student here and my wife, there's not time for too much of anything [00:51:00] but the family. So I do everything in the morning. So typical day for me starts at four 30 in the morning and I eat my breakfast and I go to Planet Fitness, then I come to work. You know, this seems to work for me, and it seems to be sustainable. So some, incidentally enough, when I started doing it the 24 hour gym, I didn't see any cops there, but now I'm seeing at least three or four of them start going in the mornings, so I'm, hopefully I've been a good influence.

Jason: So yeah, I have one of those Fitbit watches. I always say, you know, 10 till if I haven't. Walked enough steps for this thing. It gives me a little rattle saying that, you know, Hey, yeah,

In terms of the exercise portion, I'm curious to know what you did there to help you lose weight, cardio versus weightlifting versus whatever you might have, regimen you might've followed.

John: Well, I hate aerobics, but if you want to lose weight, you got to do some aerobics. So I've always liked to lift weights, [00:52:00] but like I said, I could, I could out eat five people put together.

And then I realized. You know, using the, the Apple you know, different software on the Apple, Apple phone and the, and the Apple watch. And this is how many calories I was putting in, I was intake and I said, well, okay. So then I studied a little bit and experts say, try cutting a hundred calories out, try, try eating this much protein, try eating that much carbs, you know, and see what you can do with it.

And little by little over from 2019 to 2020 to 2021, probably about 20 for the last year, I've been probably maintaining it to 2022. I got to what I wanted to be. I went from a large pants, a large shirt down to a small pants and a small shirt. And it was like, I never dreamed I was going to do that. I just wanted to drop 20 pounds, but you know, I just kept going.

It's not a diet. My captain complains I eat more than him, but I'm eating, you know, good stuff. I don't eat. like I say cookout or [00:53:00] McDonald's. Fast food is probably not really good for you, although I'll put a plug in for Subway. That's the best. Well, that's probably the most healthy fast food. If you're going to eat healthy, if you're going to eat fast food, but you know, everything in moderation, as long as you understand what you're doing and the behavior, it goes back to that word behavior.

Why you're doing it, you know, there's always a substitution. I had one fellow come in here and he wanted my advice and I said, well, you know, do you drink

beer? He says, oh, six pack a night. I said, okay, well, that's a lot of sugar. So maybe try some light beer and switch to a light beer. Well, when he switched to a light beer.

you know, he lost 10, 15 pounds fairly easily. So, you know, one thing at a time, you know, he still drinks his six pack, but it's a light beer, not a regular.

Jason: Yeah. Well, you mentioned subway. I said, my, my wife just saw the, I just had some documentary on Jared there. I was going to say, you don't want to go down that path, but Oh, it's interesting.

I, I have [00:54:00] similar advice for folks. It, you know, that will, one of the first questions I asked. them when, when they come to me is like, how much soda pop are you drinking? Cause that exchanging one can of soda pop it throughout your day with water or some, you know, low carb drink. We'll pay dividends. That's a lot.

That's a lot. And, you know, there was one guy that, you know, would drink two during lunch every day. And I told him just cut that out and see what happens. And yeah, it's the same, same thing that

John: you described. Everything's about behavior and human beings. And if you can modify the behavior everybody.

I've never met anybody that does one of two things. You do things because you like doing it or you do things because you don't want something to happen. I mean, nobody wants to pay the electric bill, but we don't want the power turned off.

Jason: Yeah, that's true. The most

John: powerful motivation I can think of, [00:55:00] nothing else more powerful is when people do things because they like to do it.

If you can tap into that, you've got power, very powerful motivation.

Jason: Yeah, I think so too, one of the things I did when, when I was losing weight was cut down on my alcohol and, but I've never historically been a really big drinker. Right. It's not one of those things where I have to have X amount per day.

You know, sometimes I'm very inconsistent. Sometimes I can go having a drink every day for two weeks. And then maybe for three weeks, I won't even have a drink at all. And so for that, cutting back on my alcohol wasn't too bad. Now, cutting back on my sugar. Consumption has proved to be, you know, I, I'm really good at times, but then I get a, that's tricky for me as well, is that, oh, I can tell that I'm eating too much, too much sugar, too much carbs.

So, but it [00:56:00] is, you're right there. Like I, I enjoy running. I enjoy running outside. So that's, that's something that I've continued to do. To keep keep the weight off, I was

John: talking to a friend of mine and he was complaining that he liked to run and then his knees were starting to bother him. And and then, he wanted to walk instead of running.

So he bought something called a weighted vest. That was like 50 pounds or something like that. So he walks. He doesn't run anymore, but he walks with his weighted vest on. So it's, it, it gives him the same, you know, caloric, you know, events. You know, he, he looks ridiculous, but he gets a lot out of it without beating his knees to death.

Yeah.

Jason: Yeah. I was, well, same thing. I've seen people where they have the, they'll be walking, but they'll be walking with. Like walking poles. I can't remember what the names of them are. I mean, yeah, again, same thing that you see them walking down the street. They look ridiculous, but they're definitely doing more than the average walker is in terms of exercise.

So, [00:57:00] all right, well, very good. Well, our last segment to the show is words to the world. This is where you can promote any idea that you wish. John, what are your words to the world?

John: If this is a fascinating area of study. I got into it later in life, I, looking back, it would have been great if I could have done it 10 or 20 years ago, probably wasn't ready for it.

There's business analytics, there's law enforcement analytics, analytics is, is, if you've got, if you like puzzles, or if you like to study things, or you like to predict the future, or anything like that, this is the way to do it. If, if you like chess. Study analytics. This is, this is fascinating. The every, everybody gets a little bit afraid of the computer.

Computers are just tools. They're just glorified pet rocks with electricity attached to them. Okay? But if you can, if you can understand what's happened, why it's happened, and, and apply it to the future, [00:58:00] you can see the outcome coming. And I can't think of anything more fascinating or more interesting.

Then predicting the future and then exploiting it to you, for you, your family, your department, or your business, or even your community. The demo, for example, the demographics from north to south and from west to east, you know, that, that is a mega, mega The application is how is that going to affect communities going in both directions?

You know, people are moving in, people are moving out. I'm from Florida originally. I thought about moving back to Florida, but because everybody wants to move to Florida, the inflation rate down there is huge. You know, I'm not going to Florida. Can't afford it. You know, so if you understand that and you understand the outcomes, if A happens, what happens?

B is next, then C, then D. And if you're, you're there to buy it. My wife was interesting. She does analytics. She doesn't know it, but she always buys. summer clothes in the wintertime. I said, why do you buy summer clothes in the wintertime? Because that's last year's [00:59:00] clothes, and they need to clear them out because they're cheap.

She knows that. That's, that's analytics. That's pretty, she knows that the company's gonna try to clear the product line out. You know, so, even from a consumer level, if you understand that a car dealership has to get rid of these cars, they only have to sell X amount of cars every month. If you go in on the 30th day of the month, And they've got cars on the lot.

They need to move those cars out because tomorrow's a new month and they have to make their quota. They're more inclined to bargain with you. This is a fascinating business if you apply it. to basically

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

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

John: You too, Jason. Take care. Bye.

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@www.leapodcasts.com. If you have a topic you would like us to cover or have a [01:00:00] suggestion for our next guest, please send us an email at Elliot podcasts@gmail.com.

John: Tell next time analysts keep talking.