

Martin Petersen - The Fixer

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

Time.

Jason: Thank you for joining me. I hope many aspects of your life are progressing. My name is Jason Elder and today our guest has 51 years of intelligence experience. He spent 33 years with the CIA becoming an Asian expert and holding two director positions. He earned several awards during his time, including distinguished career intelligence medal.

He's author of several periodicals, including what I learned in 40 years of doing intelligence analysis for US foreign policymakers. He was known in the office as the Fixer. Please welcome Martin Peterson. Martin, how we doing?

[00:01:00]

Martin: Oh, fine, fine. Jason, nice. Nice talking to you. Nice seeing you.

Jason: . So for my guests, I'm gonna do a little bit of housekeeping here because this is a little different episode, and we're gonna do things slightly different . So, Martin was part of another podcast from Spycast, hosted by Andrew Hammond, there they go over Martin's career in the CIA pretty well.

So I'm gonna put that link to that podcast in our show notes. And if you want to hear more about Martin's career with the cia, I highly suggest Listening to that podcast. But for us, I wanna get into how Martin got the nickname, the Fixer. And because there are parallels between intelligence and law enforcement analysis, I wanna get into [00:02:00] several issues that we are seeing in the law enforcement analysis world and get Martin's take on how he'd fix 'em and get his perspective on each one of those issues.

So Martin, I guess first off, let's just go into how you got the nickname, the

Martin: Fixer. Well, this is actually kind of news to me, and I, I, I, I, Assume you got this from, from Dave. Cariens a very good friend. And I do believe that

in the course of my career I was called on a number of times to take over units or address problems and see if I couldn't turn a situation around.

And so I had a history of that. One of the things that was unique about CIA and intelligence when I started is that there was no real analytic training and. Analysis was the philosophy of closer to journalism. If, if you could if you could write and think college level graduate school kinds of things, and we're just gonna pluck you down on a desk and you can take a look at all the information that's [00:03:00] coming across it and then write it up.

Think about it analytically and, and present it. There is no real analytic trade craft, unlike there is on the operational side and law enforcement side, where you have law enforcement, trade craft procedures, the way you deal with sources, the way you, you spot assess or recruit folks that are willing to, to work for intelligence.

And the training, certainly on the operational side at at CIA was, was over a year basically you learned to do espionage, I assume, on the law enforcement side. I know cause I've worked a little bit at Quantico a very rigorous program there for the FBI and, and for DEA and others and certainly police academies around the country and that sort of thing, have their program as well.

So I got interested in developing young analysts and interesting in how, how we do that. And that led me to write an article on, on managing and, and leading analysts that was published in the in-house studies and intelligence. It's available [00:04:00] online through cia. But this time the directorate and the agency realized that they had a real issue with analytic training.

And this is in the, in the eighties, mid eighties. And so they asked me to step out of a. Senior middle management position and go over and take over analytic training in the Office of Training and education is what it was called at that time. And so I went over there for a year, took a look at their program, worked with some very good, very capable people there.

They had elements of it, but what we were able to do at that point was take it to another level. And so I started down that path of improving analytic training at the agency. From there I moved into a series of management jobs on analysis where the units were fairly weak. And so it was a case not only of Mentoring and developing and, and guiding, but also thinking about a more strategic sense.

What skills do we need to do this kind of analysis? How are we going to hire them and, and, [00:05:00] and whatnot. And I developed quite a reputation for

that. When I was running the office of East Asian Analysis and Latin American analysis my good friend, colleague, we entered on duty the same day and retired one week apart.

John McLaughlin, who was then the deputy director for intelligence later became Deputy director of C I A and then acting director. Called me up and said, Marty, I've got, I've got an issue here. George 10, our director wants to put together a more rigorous program for intelligence analysis training.

I know you love the job you're in, but I'd like you to, to leave that job. Come up here and work with me and see if you can't put together a program. And I said, John, I, I, I I go where I'm asked to go and I salute and I went up and did that. And from that we had basically four major developments in, in analysis that I.

Accomplished all over six months. One, we created the Sherman Kent School for intelligence analysis at cia. Within that, we created the career analyst program to train new analysts. They come in the door so they can hit the ground [00:06:00] running, and that was like a six month program. When I started that, we also changed the career structure and the promotion structure at CIA to allow you to be promoted to senior intelligence rank or senior executive service rank in the federal services, super grades without being a manager.

Mm. Okay. The idea was to reward. Expertise and encourage people that had expertise to stay in that field. So rather than taking good analysts outta the line and making them weak managers, as we often did so they could get promoted, the idea was to cultivate that. The last thing that we did was embed more analysts with operational units, but also with other government agencies.

So CIA started sending some of our good analysts to more of them to state department to work overseas and embassies to work with the Department of Defense. Treasury broaden our understanding of how the rest of the government does analysis and work, and also it brings some of our techniques and [00:07:00] expertise to the benefit of these a larger organizations.

So I guess there was a history of stepping in sometimes fixing analytic units that were weak. Taking 'em to another level, sometimes looking at particular programs and creating new things. It probably account for the nickname. Long answer, but that's the story. No, I like

Jason: it. And it's very familiar to, me and probably my listeners too, is this idea of the only way you can get promoted is if you take a management position.

So I like this idea. Of getting analysts promoted without being necessarily in management positions.

When you were developing all these and you were very successful at getting this off the ground, when you look back, what were some things that maybe pushbacks, maybe some things that were hard to , get this program established?

Martin: Well, when, when I was putting it into the operational phrase, [00:08:00] designing it and that sort of thing, it was kind of a bad time budget wise and whatnot at. Cia the Berlin Wall had come down. Communism had collapsed. We were in the peace. Dividend budgets were shrinking, and we weren't hiring all that many people.

Now, while there was a recognition that we needed to do more to develop people and bring them on board, if you're a line manager, I need help now. Mm-hmm. Why should I give someone to you for six months? And then you're gonna give 'em back to me and how do I know this program is going to to work? So there was that kind of pushback within the director of, of intelligence, now the director of analysis at C I A.

And so there had to be a selling job. Mm-hmm. And part of it clearly was to have a champion. And, and the champion in my case for this work was the director, George 10 and the head of intelligence analysis, John McLaughlin, that helped, but there was still a lot of pushback. There was also from [00:09:00] within the training cadre at C cia a desire to.

Basically do familiar kinds of things. And when I created the career analyst program, I wanted it to be as much about about mission ethics, what we're trying to do as it was about specific skill sets, how interceptive communications work or, or how you deal with the State Department and that sort of thing.

I wanted a much bigger picture of what that mission is and the issues within that mission, including how we relate to the operational side, how we relate to other agencies and, and, and whatnot. So it was much more about culturation and that sort of thing as specific skills.

This is what a, what a president's daily brief looks like, and this is how you write that, or, or this is how you issue requirements and that sort of thing. So there's some pushback there as well too. I will say that even though. Money was tight. At the time, money was not an issue simply [00:10:00] because George Tenant and John McLaughlin wanted this to happen.

Mm-hmm. And they said, okay, funds are there. The other thing that I wanted to make sure happened is I wanted the instructors to be first class analyst. Okay. And this was true at CIA at the time. Generally the people that were doing instruction other than in operations were not stars. They were good people.

They were solid people. But I felt that if we were gonna make this program work, we needed to get some of our top people to come in for a year and be instructors and mentor these people and then go back. And so part of the way I had set this thing up is that, Look, if, if you were asked to do this, if you were tapped to come in and do this, then we would help you get you a, a, a really good and attractive position.

On the way back, I wanted this to be seen as a stepping stone, a career broadening thing, something that you could take and then do something else with later and, and broaden it rather than[00:11:00] strictly a, a training kind of assignment. My understanding at the time was, I do not know if this is true, but you probably can tell me, is that the FBI was doing something similar.

The people that were instructing at the academy were, or special agents that had success in the field and, and, and then went on and did other things, went back to the field after that. So it was about creating a different atmosphere, a different appreciation for what. The training and mentoring mission was, and also content.

And I will say that after the first couple of classes I got buy-in nice. I got buy-in from across the directorate. The people that were showing up to work had a much shorter learning curve once they got there, more produc, something else, they had a network across the agency because they had worked with operations, they had worked in, in some rotational assignments as part of this six month business.

They had contacts. They could work the bureaucracy in a way that it would take a couple of years on the job doing it every day to acquire those kinds of [00:12:00] skills. So there were a lot of upsides and I think they were realized fairly quickly, but there was a selling job upfront. Yeah. I like

Jason: the idea already with the selling, as you mentioned it, it wasn't.

As if you were coming in mandating folks, become instructor, you were thinking about how can I have them want to do this and give them opportunities after they did the task that needed to be done to then be able to promote themselves and to move on to bigger and better things.

Martin: And then to sell this.

I told them that, look on day one, hour one, when they come into the building and start this program, the first person they're gonna meet is me. Nice. And, and Classes will be small. Couple of dozen. Okay? And I say, and we're gonna meet , in the lobby of the building. We're gonna stand on the seal. And, and I'm gonna tell 'em why they're here and what the mission is.

And I'm gonna have 'em look at the memorial wall for those officers that lost [00:13:00] their lives. And the Office of Special Surgeons and, and World War ii. Forerunner and look at the memorial wall for those agency officers that lost their lives serving with cia. I'm gonna explain what the mission is and whatnot.

You mentioned the podcast I did for the Spy museum. I also did one with Michael Morrell on his show of Intelligence matters. Mm-hmm. And the last 10 minutes of that broadcast is the speech that I gave to over 100 different classes. And I did that not only when I was setting up this program, but I did it when I became associate Deputy Director for intelligence.

I did it when I became Chief Human Resources officer. I did it when I was deputy Executive Director. And last time I did it, I was acting executive director. I was the number three guy at C I A. That's how important it was to me that they have this orientation and understand what we're trying to do here.

And I do think you really have to convey with a passion why the work is important. The challenge is [00:14:00] there, and the difference that you can make if you do it well. And I think that's no different with law enforcement. You're putting your life on the line if you're a first responder every day, and you want the people that are doing that to appreciate the significance of the work and the challenges that they face in doing it.

And it's, it's the same in the intelligence world.

Jason: We've tried to do this as well where you have analyst teaching analysts. As you're starting this program, you got the first couple of years under your belt, , what were some of the major deficiencies that you all had to overcome for, from these new

Martin: recruits?

Well, one of the big things that happened well, a couple of things. We hired bright people, law enforcement hired bright people. F b I hires very bright

people. But the world they were living in on the outside is not the world that they're coming into. And, and particularly since many of our people who were hiring as analysts came out of strong academic programs.

They thought of thinking and writing as basically an academic exercise. And so [00:15:00] they had to learn a new way to write. They had to learn who the audience for their services are what those people needed and how they wanted the information presented. And basically it's not about long things. They haven't got time to read long things.

It's about conveying the essence of what you need to do quickly in a couple of pages or, or, or in a briefing. So, So there's this, this kind of need to shift the way you, you, you, you think from an academic one to an intelligence one, whether it's law enforcement or, or classic espionage as, as we were doing.

So that's one thing we had to go work on. The other thing is that we realized that fairly early on lectures got pretty boring pretty quickly, and so it became important to put exercises in and also that those exercises must duplicate the real world working environment that they're going into.

And particularly this started before nine 11 and with nine 11 we went back. And look at the program pretty hard. And the program at that point ended with [00:16:00] a three day exercise of rolling around a terrorist attack and trying to do analysis and that sort of thing with dummy traffic coming in, bad information coming in, people working as teams and shifts just like they would in on the job in a real way.

And so they got a, got a taste for the flow and the pressures and, and really how hard it is to work these things. And none of these exercises had a school solution. So it, it you, you just kind of went with it where it went. Yeah. And sometimes it worked out really well and sometimes it didn't.

And then you had the after action and. And, and that sort of thing and say, what, what worked well here? What, what didn't work well, and, and went from there. And so we put more exercises into the program and and then we updated things as it went along. So one of the things that developed as a sub analytic discipline after we set up this program, Was the whole notion of a targeting analyst, which works much more closely with operations and less with policy makers.

And so what kind of skills do [00:17:00] they need? How do we teach those skills? And, and again, you, you changed the curriculum. So the curriculum has

changed quite a bit. This thing has been in place, I'm not sure. So the program has shortened in some places it, it, it's gotten a bit longer than others.

I haven't seen it since I left the agency and working for a defense contractor probably 2015. So I can't really tell you what it is today. But the important thing is, It evolves. It evolves as the mission evolves, as the demands of the mission evolve. And if it's gonna work, you've got to keep looking at it.

, but I think some things are essential. I think for one thing ethics, ethics and intelligence and intelligence analysis, I think is, is really critical, just like it is in, in, in law enforcement. Particularly in intelligence where if you think about it in as boldest terms, we're an organization that's basically sanctioned by our government to break the laws of other governments.

And, and that really requires a very [00:18:00] firm grasp of ethics and, and what you can do, what you can't do, how you deal with people and just not 12 triple three and, and the executive orders that govern that. But in, in real situations and, and particularly things, at least on my experience, you spend a lot of your time telling policymakers things they don't really wanna know or don't want to hear.

And, and more often than not, that's a version of not this blunt, but politely. Maybe what you're doing isn't having the result that you would like it to have. Mm-hmm. Because here's what these other guys are doing, and no one likes to have their homework graded. Particularly if you're a cabinet level official by some GS 13 or 14 out there, who thinks they understand the issue better than you do.

Sometimes they do, sometimes they don't. I

Jason: like the idea of adding exercises to training because , in what I've seen at conferences or even in training, it's mostly lecture base and [00:19:00] it's seems mainly about just giving the analysts. An awareness, and they're just there as consumers and not really interacting.

And I often question what are they actually bringing back to the office?

Martin: Exactly. And, and one of the reasons we kept the classes small you know, a dozen, a couple dozen is I wanted it to be more like a seminar. And I think what we did particularly initially, it, it was much more give and take discussion with them.

Here's an issue, here's some way to think about it. What do you think? Let's, let's talk about this. The other element that I think is really important besides exercise is, is war story. I'm a big believer in war story because it teaches approach, it teaches culture. You can talk about successes, you can talk about failures and what went wrong and And it tends to be a more lively conversation.

So here's a particular analytic problem. This is how we dealt [00:20:00] with it, or here's a particularly operational issue and, and how we had to think about it. Or here's a particular technology that, that we needed to revise or adapt to, to get at this from a different way. So I think more stories are, really important.

They tend to stick with people. People remember the stories. They may not remember the lecture. But they'll remember the stories.

Jason: Before I get to my four or five questions for you. Okay. Is there anything else that you want to add about the program?

Martin: No, no. I think I think it's important to have a program.

I think it's important to have a standard approach so everyone's learning the same thing, but it also needs to be reexamined and looked at and updated as circumstances change. So it can't be in cement. It's gotta be a living thing.

Jason: So, , there's four or five, mm-hmm.

Situations that I see in law enforcement and analysis that I'd like to get your take on. Okay. A lot of these came to mind as I read your paper. On what I learned in 40 [00:21:00] years of doing intelligence analysis for us foreign policymakers. And the, and the first one is probably, I'm, I'm not gonna be easy on you.

It's a doozy. Okay. Right. So and you mentioned standards. So the, the idea of standards in law enforcement analysis is a tricky one because Yeah. We have 17,000 plus law enforcement agencies in the US and then you get the state, and then you get the federal level. Just to make it fun, we have two different associations.

We have the International Association of Crime Analysts and we have the International Association of Law Enforcement Intelligence Analysts. So those are. To associations that have their own set of standards. And then of course the analysts themselves, whether they're in , their office, their district, their department, their state universities all have suggestions on standards.

Another layer to this whole thing [00:22:00] is, In many departments, the analyst role is not written in the standard operating procedure. Absolutely. Right. So an analyst can be very fluid and that can sometimes be a good thing, but their day-to-day role, their goals can change if you get new leadership or new management.

And so there's a lot there that makes it difficult to establish standards in this

Martin: profession. Yes. I think couple other differences too, and I'll, I'll get to those in a moment. I think you really, if, if you're gonna talk about standards, I think you have to ask, the first question is, what is it that you're trying to do?

And I think it's different for those of us that worked in intelligence as analysts and those that work for law enforcement, at least the way I think of it. If, if, if I think of law enforcement it's all about making the case supporting an investigation helping build a, a [00:23:00] a, a database or fact base that will lead to a successful prosecution for, for, for a crime.

That's, that's kind of what law enforcement is all about. On the intelligence side, we're not in that kind of business. We're, we're talking about trying to help decision makers make the best decisions they can with the time and information available, and so it, it is helping them think through issues guiding their decision making process going forward.

I will say that on the intelligence side of analysis, Analysis is only one input into any foreign policy decision. And I would often argue that it's not the most important one because what you've got are politics, you've got other bureaucracies, you've got a weigh in costs and opportunities. And I don't think you've got, you've got some of that.

I, I, I think on the law enforcement side, we, we definitely do. Yeah. Yeah. Basically you're looking at, at, , making a case , and we're on the intelligence side more about [00:24:00] offering advice and, and insights. Now that's said, I think that there are some, some commonality and, and and these are very broad standards, maybe the wrong word, but tenants behaviors approaches, whatever that, that I think we have in common.

. Number one is you gotta keep an open mind. . And, and you've gotta stay away from confirmation bias. And, and analysts, whether in law enforcement or intelligence, take a look at the issue and, and they start to form their theories and, and whatnot. And it's a very human reaction to look at new information coming in and edit it against what you already believe.

And that's a risk. , and I will tell you that one of the reasons for the intelligence failure in Iraq was that everyone was convinced that Saddam had a program for continuing to develop weapons of mass destruction. As each new piece of evidence came in it was interpreted in that light.

And things that didn't fit were. Disregarded on [00:25:00] the law enforcement side, I knowles well, but there's a couple cases f fbi whether you're talking about the Hansen case where they looked at CIA and didn't look internally cuz they were making the case against Hansen the Atlanta Olympic bombing.

Yeah. Is is another case where they made up their mind and then built the case. Mm-hmm. And I think there's some element of that in the Anthrax case as well too. This is not to pick on the fbi. These are very human reaction and it happens on law enforcement and it happens on intelligence as well too.

There may be a greater tendency in that regard on law enforcement, simply because it's all about building the case. Mm-hmm. So once you have your suspect or your target, you tend to do that. So one of the standards needs to be, okay, we need to do that. We need to build a case, we need to, to to know what we, we think, but we need to keep an open mind.

And we particularly need to ask ourselves a very important question. What am I not seeing that I should be seeing if my line of analysis is correct? That implies in law enforcement as well as [00:26:00] intelligence. Mm-hmm. That's, that's one Absolutely. Second thing is you need to follow the evidence, which is again, comes back to confirmation battle.

You know that, that it's easy to disregard pieces that don't fit. If you get enough of them then you really need to be questioning things. The other thing is that sometimes evidence only makes sense. Looking back, and I'll tell you a story from my own career when the. 10 men crisis hit 1989 in China.

I was the deputy chief of East Asia and my boss was the chief and, and a very, very, very good analyst. And we were running around setting our hair on fire, tapping it out, setting it on fire again, as we were trying to support policymakers downtown, deciding what they were gonna do about the China situation and the fact that there were a number of Americans that were in Beijing and, and potentially at risk.

And at one point I went in to see my boss, a guy named Tom, and to show him a set of talking points that we were gonna send up to the director who was gonna go down to national Security Council meeting on this and that sort of thing. And

I walked into the room and there was Tom sitting behind his desk with [00:27:00] stacks of old files, slowly leafing through them.

And I said, Tom, Tom, what are you doing? He says, I'm going through old reporting. To see what makes sense. Now that didn't make sense then. Oh, oh boy. Did a light bulb go on over my head? Okay. Because one of the things that happens with intelligence is you forget all the caveats and, and, and. Questions you may have about earlier analytic conclusions.

And those conclusions, not only do you, you forget the basis of the evidence, but they tend to get firmer over time. And so sometimes it's important to go back and follow the evidence and look at the third thing is you have to be clear about what you know and, and very clear about what you don't know.

And I think that's true on both sides. Fourth, you have to know your audience. Mm-hmm. Case of intelligence analysis. It's, it's what it, it's your consumer. Whether that consumer is a mid-level official State Department or, or Department of Defense, or whether it's the President of the United States or the National Security Council.

You have to understand what [00:28:00] they know and what they don't know. And you have to have an understanding of their own perceptions and policy preferences that they're bringing to looking at what you're doing. Fifth, you need to know where you're on the weakest analytic ground. And, and that's not to say that you're wrong, but just where the evidence is is thinnest and, and intelligence analysis, and I'm sure in law enforcement analysis as well.

You know, the question always is, well, how confident are you? Mm-hmm. And, and my answer as an analyst certainly would've been, well, I'm, I'm a China expert. I looked at this, I've read all the material. I've been pretty careful at, at putting the pieces together. I've written this carefully. I think I've been very clear in how I caveated.

So yeah, I'm pretty confident that's the answer you would've got if you asked me how confident I am. You get a different answer if you ask me, where do you think we're on the weakest analytic ground? Where we need to be most cautious in our judgments might not be wrong. Mm-hmm. But where are we most vulnerable to air?

And that takes you in a very, very different place. And I, and frankly, that's something that came clear to me only very, [00:29:00] very late in my career. And I wish it would've been clearer a lot sooner. Another thing is we have. To

look at the motive of the people that we're talking to, whether they're sources or other government officials and that sort of thing.

What kind of perspective or bias are they bringing to the information that they're providing us? And lastly, I think this is particularly important on the intelligence side, but I think probably. True on the law enforcement side as well too. You have to understand the other guy's perspective. In my case that was foreign leaders in what they were doing.

I think probably in law enforcement, it's, it's the perps. Mm-hmm. You know, how do they think, how do they see their chances? What is, what is their assessment of the situation? How do they see their options? What's their tolerance for risk? A big part of my job, and I think the job as intelligence analyst is to help my guy understand the other guy, because unless my guy understands the other guy, he cannot make a solid judgment or good [00:30:00] judgments about how the other fellow is going to react to something he does.

Mm-hmm. So I think an intelligence analysis too. Certainly one of the things that I teach is, is the importance of what. The four Ws and the four Ws are what's going on? Why is it going on? What does it mean and what factors are going to shape the future? I think in law enforcement, probably, certainly the first three what's going on?

Why is it going on? And what does it mean are true as well? Perhaps the fourth one, what's gonna shape the future is less is something that law enforcement analysts focus on less than intelligence analysts. But I may be wrong about that. There's a real, why, why are these four Ws important?

Because I think that's the way people think. So if you were to leave your office tonight and go home and run into a traffic jam or backup where you don't normally run into one, what's gonna go through your mind? What's going on here? And, and, and, and why is it going on here? And [00:31:00] what does it mean?

Does it mean I'm, I'm gonna be late for dinner, I won't be able to pick up the kids at daycare. And then lastly, what can I do about it? Can I take a different route or, or call my partner or better half or whatever, and make different dinner plans or, or, or whatnot. I think it's the way people think and there's a real difference between the first two Ws and the last two W.

If you're just doing what's going on and why it's going on, you're doing reporting. You don't start doing analysis until you get to that third. W what does it mean?

Scott: Hi, this is Scott Eicher and I am a retired F FBI agent, and I just wanted to point out that f FBI agents are people too. I always get that, that question of, you know, what you do, what did you do in the F fbi, and can you tell me, or do you have to kill me? Or if I ask questions, are you gonna put, put me on a watch list?

Martin: None of those things occur. We are just detectives and analysts with a different [00:32:00] title. We do the same thing law enforcement does. We have different types of programs. Sometimes we do different things. We work classified cases, but FBI agents are people too. We put on shoes just like you do and wear pants just like you do most of the time.

We are great analysts and detectives just like you guys are, and feel free to come up and ask us questions anytime you want. Hi everyone.

Leigh Ann: This is Dr. Leigh Ann Perry. I have a public service announcement. Don't get so set in your way of thinking that you don't allow yourself the flexibility to grow in your thoughts.

Martin: Be willing to consider other people's viewpoints and critically think through them. Changing your mind is not the end of the world. Keep your mind open enough so that it's at least a possibility.

And there's a real difference between the first two Ws and the last two Ws. If you're just doing what's going on and why it's going on, you're doing reporting. You don't start doing [00:33:00] analysis until you get to that third W what does it mean? And, and I think

Jason: that fits very well with my second point is that, you know, you talked about the confidence level.

Well, I, I feel that sometimes law enforcement analysts fall into the trap of not even getting to the point where they're doing recommendations and suggestions. They are just reporting back what they were asked. We get into the task that we're being asked and it gets, you referenced this a little bit in your article about being, having that product mentality.

Right. Where it's, you know, analysts are creating maps or charts or spreadsheets without maybe even giving much as to like the why or what, , maybe getting into a little bit of what the requesters after, but Right. Essentially reporting and not explaining.

Martin: Yes. As, and I think, I think there's a real difference between a, a product mentality and a service mentality.

Product mentality is about the [00:34:00] product. You, you produce a product you're rewarded for the number of products that you produce. It, it is like washing machines coming down a, an assembly line. I'm, I'm building washing machines. And then once they get off the assembly line, They go out into the warehouse and it's up to somebody else to sell 'em or move 'em or or whatnot.

That's a product mentality. The service mentality is about helping your audience, understanding your audience what they need, and providing a service to them so they can do their job better. And in this day and age, generally the issue is too much information and not enough information. There's a, a very high noise to signal ratio.

Mm-hmm. And what they really need help with as much as anything is making sense of what it is that they've got. And and that requires continued interaction. So service mentality is you don't just do the product and you throw it over the transom and hope somebody picks it up. You're trying to develop a relationship with your audience, with your customer, whether that's a [00:35:00] US government official.

In my case. Or the prosecutors or the law enforcement officials that are working the case that you're working on mm-hmm. You try and understand what their needs are. Now, in many cases, they don't know what they need or they don't know the right question to ask. They know they need help with understanding this cartel or how they move money or how they launder money or how they move a product or how they engage in a criminal conspiracy mm-hmm.

And, and whatnot. But they don't know the specific question. And I think part of the analyst's job is to anticipate those questions and to think about what is it that they should. Be asking. So it's, it's not just human smuggling. Tell me about human smuggling across the Southern United States border.

But, you know, it's, it's okay. Which organizations specifically are involved and are likely to stay involved in this activity over the next six months? What is their methods of operation? [00:36:00] Who are their key players? What

networks do they have? So you anticipate the questions that would help a law enforcement official move against Target or build a case against these criminal activities.

I believe that our value added is, is not arra data, but explaining what that data means. And if you're an analyst and you work on an issue for a long, long time, if you're an expert on a particular criminal organization Russian Mafia for instance, or something like that, then you've got a depth of understanding that someone that's trying to build a case there for the first time probably doesn't have.

And so you need to be a resource for them to help them understand the complexities of, of this issue that they're dealing with. And that takes a, a service mentality, not a product mentality.

just to add

Jason: to that this is where analysts sometimes have to sell themselves and sell their capabilities because they're, you'll get some requesters that like, look, I asked you for X and I [00:37:00] only want X.

Yes. And you don't need to know Y and Z of what you're asking, asking me for. Yeah.

Martin: And that, that's absolutely true. And, and sometimes there's, there's very good reasons for that. The other thing that you've got that we had to less degree, a very important difference between what law enforcement analysts do and and intelligence analysts do is, is you've got lawyers involved and, and so Yeah, I mean, I mean so, so that there's everything from, from privacy issues to, to, mm-hmm.

You know, a chain of evidence to what stands up in court and how it's collected and all this other stuff that law enforcement analysts did. Just a level of complexity there. That's much deeper than what I had to deal with. I did some work for, for Homeland Security and you know, my gosh any product that they put out, particularly if it's going to law enforcement or it's going out on a public website and that sort of thing, it really needs a very, very, very hard look by [00:38:00] lawyers to make sure that they're not crossing some boundary they shouldn't be crossing, or that in doing what they're doing, they're not compromising an ability to prosecute a case.

Down the way. So the, that level of complexity particularly with the law and the lawyers is, is much, much deeper on the law enforcement side than it is on the intelligence. Now we have, we have that on our side too. Don't get me wrong. I mean, I had very good legal team around me as, as well as we were looking at analysis, planning, operations and carrying those things out.

But I, I think it's just more daily, more constant and, and, and much more involved on the law enforcement side.

Jason: Another obstacle that law enforcement analysts have is you'll have some police departments where they only have one analyst. So true. They're not even assigned to be a subject matter expert on one particular topic, which, when, when talking to you and talking to David Karens, I was like, the whole idea is like, okay, you're gonna be the subject matter expert on this.

Mm-hmm. And that's what you eat, sleep, and breathe for the next. [00:39:00] Until I tell you not, you know, right. Foreseeable future. And some of these law enforcement analysts, they get spread pretty thin. Right. And aren't necessarily focusing on any one

Martin: topic. Yeah. No, I think, I think developing expertise is critical to developing credibility.

Which is critical to delivering a service. And it comes down to the role of the analyst is what you're saying, and, and, and, mm-hmm. And what an individual police department or federal agency's definition of analysis is. In many cases, it's, it's closer to being a clerk. Mm-hmm. Running Google searches or or being a reports officer on, in the intelligence side, a reports officer intelligence side basically deals with the first two Ws.

What's going on, why is it going on? They're taking a look at sources, they're looking whether or not they can trust them or vet them and that sort of thing. But they're not doing analysis as an analyst would do it. The very important role. It's critical in, in vetting sources and whatnot, but it's a different kind of job.

And frankly, [00:40:00] if you're just being asked to go get information like a librarian it's not very satisfying and, and it's not very rewarding either from financial point of view, your opportunities to get advanced and, and, and promoted. But I would also think from, from a work point of view so analysts can be real value added.

I think if you're in a fusion center or a regional law enforcement thing and that sort of thing mm-hmm. Where there's multiple analysts, there's a greater opportunity to develop expertise in a particular area and make a greater contribution. But I understand the realities of budgets and, and whatnot.

If you've, if you've got crime on the streets and you, and, and you need to take the bad guys down, you want more guys with badges and guns and you want bureaucrats pushing paper or, or doing analysis. But I think analysis can be a real force. Multiplier. And that's one of the things that I think our director of operations learned very [00:41:00] quickly when we started embedding more analysts in operational units and developing things like targeting analysts to help these very skilled, very capable operational officers, make the best use of their time by saying, okay, this is a good target.

Go after it. Or if you, if you, if you get close to this kind of target, it's gonna give you these kinds of opportunities down the way. So I think of analysis as, as a force multiplier for the guy on the street. Yeah. So I,

Jason: and I think just to add to what you say, said there with the, especially the, the clerk.

Tasks that, yeah, that def I bring this topic up several times on my podcast is that , if we're just the gatekeepers of the database Yeah. Or we're just the person that happens to know how to use the expensive software and we're just pushing buttons when asked to do it, essentially, that's, All we are is administrative [00:42:00] clerks that are reporting on the data and not necessarily doing analytical work.

Martin: And it's, you're not, you're, transactional. Mm-hmm. And it even, I

Jason: think it's even with software now. The software of these vendors make it very easy just to put it, push a couple of buttons. And , the analysts don't necessarily know the backend, like the mathematical calculations are able to really explain what the program is even doing because they're just going in and hitting, hitting A, B, and C, so to speak,

Martin: or, or the quality of the information that's in there on the sources and, and, mm-hmm.

Whatnot. Mm-hmm. Yeah. You know, artificial intelligence and a lot of other stuff is, is, is really great, but and it can help you sort through data and that sort of thing, but you've gotta do two things. One, you gotta make sure you're paying

attention to the right thing, number one, and that you're asking the right question about that thing.

Mm-hmm. And otherwise it is just a data dump. And I don't think it's [00:43:00] very helpful to drop a six page printout on some detectives or or special agent's desk and say, okay here's, here's the data. Now you go figure out what it means. Yeah. Here's the list

Jason: of burglaries the last six years.

Right?

Martin: Right. So, you know what, let me take a look at it and see if there's a pattern here or mm-hmm. Or or whether there's things here that, that suggest something else may be going on as well.

Jason: , one of the questions I like to ask my guest is return on investment.

Mm-hmm. Because I think what they need to do is, Especially if they're in a situation where it's more clerical or you know, they're not. Mm-hmm. They're being limited. They have to think of like, , what can I do that will help me down the road? What can I study now? even if it's on my free time,

, analysts have to do a better job of identifying the information and topics to study. So in the future, when these. Topics [00:44:00] become the forefront of the department. They're in a better position, knowledge, skills, and ability wise to actually have a bigger piece of the pie.

Martin: Right. And that, and that means developing some expertise in a particular field. Mm-hmm. Or, or area or, or, or whatnot. I mean in my career, you know, it was largely country specific or geographic specific. I was a Asia guy China analyst initially, but we also had specialists in weapons systems in physics, in, in chemistry cuz they're looking at, at, at wmd and they were looking at nuclear programs and they were looking at missile programs and whatnot.

We had a lot of economists that were looking at economic trends in countries key indication of political stability or or competition for economic resources or, or negotiating trade issues or supporting the US negotiators or are on trade and that sort of thing. So, you know, if you're an analyst, you have to know what you're talking about.

Mm-hmm. [00:45:00] And That's when you get a return on investment. There are specialties out there. I know, like computer forensic analysis. I, which I don't understand. I will tell you that I hit my, my technological wall with the electric typewriter and everything. He's been a struggle fencing. So I'm the last guy.

You want offering information on that. But you know, also things like psychology. Mm-hmm. If you're working certain transnational issues mm-hmm. Whether it's, it's heroin trafficking coming out of Southeast Asia or drug or cartel businesses in Latin America or Russian Mafia or, or mm-hmm.

Godly knows what, well, you better know something about Russian culture. Or Asian culture or Latin American culture and how these societies and organizations work. Because unless you understand the organization and how you get ahead in that organization and what that organization values and how they operate then it's pretty hard to understand how you can work against them effectively or as [00:46:00] effectively as you, as you might otherwise.

Yeah, and I think, you know,

Jason: analysts and I fell into this trap when I was an analyst of just essentially having two sources. You have the database, you have the data, and then you have the officer detective that's maybe feeding you information there and it's, I, I did a really bad job of really studying.

The, the targets, if we were working a particular drug drug trafficking organization to really understand what outside those two realms of studying as much as I could out there and developing sources outside of the police department to really get a better idea of understanding what this particular tar set of targets were

Martin: doing.

Yes. Unless, unless you're working a single actor, a uni bomber mm-hmm. Case mm-hmm. Or something like that, or, or, or[00:47:00] mass murder or something like that. It's all about people and organization and how they interact with one another. And so you need to understand the human dynamics you know, link analysis, who talks to whom.

Chains of command that sort of thing are absolutely critical. If you're going to be taking down a, a criminal enterprise. How do they operate? How do they organized? How do they move money? How do they recruit? What do they

reward? And, you know, what do they punish? And you really do need to understand that.

The other thing that I preach a lot is the need to look at the motives of, of confidential informants and whether in my case that was recruited assets or people that are just talking to the United States because they want to talk to the United States. Or in the case of law enforcement, it may be a, a.

An informant or a confidential source or something on the mail, you really gotta get to the motive. And, and every time I got a report across my desk interaction between a case [00:48:00] officer and a source or something, I always ask myself a few questions like, who is it's actually talking here? And, and, and what's their background and what's their level of expertise?

Do they know what they're talking about? Have I seen this guy before or this source of information before? And do they have a, a point of view or a slant to it? I always ask myself, why are they telling me this now? Mm-hmm. Basically who are they talking to? Are they, are they saying this in private, in confidence or are they speaking more broadly at a, a function or a, a speech that was given at a party congress or something like that?

And what are they trying, why, why are they saying what they're saying? I mean, they're clearly, it's, it's, it's to influence, but if so, who are they trying to influence? , and. To do what? And is this something that I would be expecting this person to, to be talking about? And I just, I just let those questions go through my mind.

And then, and in many instances I couldn't answer, but more than one or two of them. But it did make me more cautious about [00:49:00] evaluating sources and I think certainly on the Iraq wmd case, and I was not involved in that. But there was that one source Apley code named Curveball that was largely responsible for the reporting that led to the belief that there was a mobile BW program in Iraq when it, when it wasn't there.

Well the, the guy wanted to stay in the country that he was in, working with the service, and he was telling him stuff that make him seem valuable and, and, and so, you know, you gotta gotta look at the motors on this stuff. Yeah.

Jason: Telling them what he wants to hear. Right. Right. Yeah. .

Well, Mar Martin, this has been fantastic and I can go on for a lot longer than this. I definitely enjoy the perspective on this. So I'm gonna gonna move

towards ending the interview now. And I, and one of the things I do like to ask my guests is, you know, what they do in their free time, the personal interest segment,

and so you obviously being , the. [00:50:00] Asian expert that you are have an interest in Shanghai. Yeah. And you have, and you have wrote a novel that's going to be published at the end of the

Martin: year, right? Right. It's it's a detective story set in Shanghai in 1932 when fighting broke out between the Chinese nationalist and the Japanese, the first precursor skirmishes to to World War ii.

I got a master's in, in Asian studies with a concentration in Chinese history and that sort of thing. And, but I got a chance to, to go there. I fell in love with the history of, of Shanghai from about 1850 to, to 1950 when the communists took over. And so I collected a lot of books. I probably got 200 books on memoirs and, and stuff that relate to Shanghai.

And I like history in general, so I read. Awful lot about not only Asia, but World War II and, and the American Southwest. I grew up in the southwest. I live in Texas, so I'm interested in that. I enjoy traveling. So I, I I [00:51:00] try and take a couple of trips overseas every year when I can.

As long as I can still do it I'll be I'll be 77 in, in the fall. So if I've gotta do it, I, I really need, need to do it. So I like that. I enjoy riding like to watch baseball. I've got a small dog that runs my life. And I'm a widower at this point in my life. And so you know, I, I like to go out and see friends and, and, and do those kinds of things too.

But I also enjoy finally crafted martini in a cigar. So oh yeah, I, at my age, those are two of vices I can still indulge.

Jason: Excellent. Well, I do appreciate the, perspective and your contribution to the intelligence analyst profession in the United States.

So thank you for all that you did in the last 50 plus years of being on this earth. . You're welcome. All right, so our last segment to the show was Words to the World, and this is where I give the guest the last [00:52:00] word. You can promote any idea that you wish. Martin, what are your words to the world?

Martin: Well, I think, I think I've learned about six things in the course of my career, and I can sum them up in about six bullets, and I do a fair amount of

mentoring and talking to college students and that sort of thing, and they're starting their career and. This is what I think life has taught me. So for better or worse for, for whatever use it is I'm gonna go through these.

I, I will start by saying that I think there's only one true measure of success. And it's not how much money you make or the titles that, that. You you receive. It's, it's whether or not you can look back on every assignment you've had and, and honestly say, I left it stronger than I found it. Mm-hmm.

And in some cases, that's taking a problem off the floor and, and getting it up one or two wrongs on a ladder. Sometimes it's, it's taking a well working program and taking it to the next level. The other aspect of that is I think as you look back, and I certainly look back on my life now, and I, I [00:53:00] would like to think that I've touched a number of lives for the better.

So those are my criteria for success. So here, here are the six things that I, I think I've learned in life to all the young. Men and women out there, one, do every job. You're given to the best of your ability and especially the ones you don't want and you don't like. Why? Because supervisors see who delivers.

And people that deliver particularly in difficult situations, are, are things they really don't wanna do. Get opportunities down the way. So be someone that creates opportunities for themselves. Second, look and act professional. Know the culture of the organization you're in. What works at Google won't work at the f b I won't work at United Airline.

If you wanna run the place, look like you can run the play. Three, be a continual learner. I've often said, The skills that got me the job, the next job up were not the skills I needed to succeed in it. Not all the skills I needed to succeed in. You have to be a continual learner. I always had to learn new procedures, learn [00:54:00] people new sources of information, new ways of working, new mine fields to be negotiated.

So be a continual learner. Four, be a student of your organization. Wherever you're working. Know how it works. Know what it rewards, know what it values. Think about what it needs in the future. The challenges it faces. That's a way of thinking. A lot of that is experience. But cultivate that now.

Five, know your strengths and weaknesses. We all do some things better than others. We all have certain things we do less well. Never, never, never, never be afraid to surround yourself with smart people, particularly people that

compensate for your weaknesses and add to your strengths. And lastly, and this is something some people never learn, I think you get hired.

For your paper credentials, but you advance in life and you're paid for in the end. I believe your judgment and your integrity. If I'm a boss and you're working for me, the question is can I trust you? Will you surface problems? Will you be honest in dealing with me and others? Some people never learn [00:55:00] that.

Some people learn it too late. So for what it's worth that's what my 70 some years have taught me. I really enjoyed talking to you, Jason, and I hope your listeners find something of value and what we've had to say. I'm

Jason: sure they will. And so Marty, what I leave every guest with is you've given me just

Martin: enough to talk bad about you later.

Okay, great. But I do

Jason: appreciate you being on this show. Thank you so much. And you be safe. You too. Bye-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 in other episodes found on our website@www.podcasts.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@elliotpodcasts@gmail.com.

Tell next time analysts keep talking.