

Erin Rivera - A Rainman Moment

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.

Thank

Jason: you for joining me. I hope many aspects of your life are progressing. My name is Jason Elder and today our guest has six years of law enforcement analysis experience with almost 20 years of law enforcement experience overall. She started her career in records with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office.

Working her way to being a civilian analyst in Surprise Police Department in Arizona. She's here to talk about communication and advocating for yourself as an analyst. Please welcome Erin Rivera. Erin, how are you doing?

I'm good. How are you?

I am doing well. It was a pleasure meeting you at the IACA conference, [00:01:00] and it was I sat in on your presentation, and as I mentioned in my wrap up video for the conference, , I enjoyed your presentation and, and highlighted what you had to say in your presentation.

Erin: That's awesome. I appreciate your support and thank you for being there for the presentation as well. Yeah,

Jason: yeah. So , how's Arizona? Is that dry heat doing all right?

Erin: It's still hot, that's for sure. It's starting to cool down, but it's still hot. Yeah,

Jason: yeah. So, here in Florida, we're starting out at like 60s.

In the, in the morning instead of like 85, which is nice.

Erin: Yeah, the mornings are good. The evenings are good, but it's that, the in between, the daytime hours that'll kill you.

Jason: Yep, yep. Not leaving the house, so. Right. All right, so I mentioned you started in records, but I wanted to know how you discovered the law enforcement analysis profession.

Erin: Yeah, so like you said, I started with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office. Back in 2004, and [00:02:00] I was in records from 2004 through 2015 when I left. I basically just took an opportunity to work somewhere closer to home, came out to Surprise. I held a records position here when I first started and it was during my Six month evaluation period where my supervisor at the time Norma Chavez, she was asking me, you know, how I felt about being here.

And, you know, was I enjoying it? Did I like it? And I did obviously, but I told her, I said, there's certain parts that I miss and I missed. You know, helping put things together or doing research and linking cases or people to their histories. And so she took that opportunity to tell me, Hey, our analyst is getting ready to retire.

You should go start talking to Cheryl. And so with Norma's support which I thought was pretty cool, right? Cause I'm still on probation and I'm only six months in and. Here, my supervisor is telling me you know, the things that I'm missing can be found within the surprise police department, just under a different umbrella.

So she allowed me to partner up with [00:03:00] the current analyst at the time who was getting ready to retire. And Cheryl took me in, showed me what she did, and, and it was kind of... history from there. I started shadowing her started attending classes through Cal State Fullerton to obtain my certification.

And it was almost exactly to the week of Cheryl's retirement that I finished my Cal State program. So after all that, I had a sit down conversation with our current police chief at the time, and he offered me the PD since 2015.

Back in investigations as the analyst since 2017. Yeah,

Jason: that the surprise jokes can never get old. I'm sure it's old for you all, but I just, every time you said surprise PD and that statement, I just laughed every time.

Erin: No, it, yeah, it's definitely something, you know. People get a chuckle out of it, but it's good.

It's good lighthearted fun. Yeah.

Jason: A couple questions back when you started with records, how did the records job at [00:04:00] Maricopa County even get on

Erin: your radar? So I actually grew up in a law enforcement family. In our family, your public safety of some sort. So both my parents were law enforcement.

My dad just retired after 47 years as a sworn officer for the state of Arizona. And then my mom was a civilian working in law enforcement. So at the time my mom was actually working with the Maricopa County Sheriff's office. And so I graduated in May of 04 and by July of 04, I was processing to become a records technician there at Maricopa County.

So I just kind of, that's where I fell, but that's really all I ever knew, you know, growing up, that was normal to us. We, that was what you did. That's how the world worked. So I just kind of naturally fell back into that role. Yeah,

Jason: and I, I do, I, I've talked to several analysts now that started in records and man, does that sound like a great place to start in terms of building your knowledge with the police department as you go on to be an analyst, because there's, you're [00:05:00] going to be exposed, not only to the data, you're going to just be exposed to the inner workings of the police department.

Yeah,

Erin: it, it definitely teaches you a lot. You know, I held many different responsibilities during that time. I did everything from registering sex offenders, fingerprinting, I did OIC warrants. So we entered, confirmed, quashed, cleared, any kind of warrants, orders or protections, any kind of hot files that went into NCIC.

You name it, and we pretty much did it, right, because you worked for a large agency, so you got to see and touch a little bit of everything, but it definitely helps you understand the bigger picture, and so when you step out of that role, you have a better idea of how things work and where to find things, or you have that big picture mentality where you understand from start to finish how certain things happen, so I totally believe that it gives you a different outreach and

different outlook on where to go and what to look for and how to get yourself there.

Yeah, and.

Jason: Maricopa County, that's pretty large too, right? So they're, they're keeping you busy there as a [00:06:00] records technician. Oh, for

Erin: sure. Yeah. And especially when I worked in OIC warrants. So I did that for several years. I was actually a shift supervisor there as well. And so as the supervisor, my schedule rotated every six months.

So I've worked all hours of the day, all hours of the night. But yeah, there was always something to do, always somewhere to be, and it never slowed down. You know, big and busy and but it helped pass time, obviously, and and it was a good place to work.

Jason: Yeah. As you look back, , is there a story you think of?

Erin:

Yeah, I wouldn't say anything specific. I had such a good time working with all the people that I got to work with. I learned so much. At one point I did get to work with my mom. I lost my mom in 2009 to cancer.

So. Those few years that I did have, you know, working with her, I always cherish those memories, right? So, we worked down the hall from each other, we'd go out to lunch together, so you know, there's just, again, a lot of growth and a lot of opportunities there, but more than anything, probably just the, the opportunity that I had to work with my mom and to [00:07:00] learn and grow with her.

Jason: You had mentioned the transfer to Surprise then, so what went into that decision going from Maricopa County into because you started at Records with Surprise

Erin: as well. Yeah, so with Maricopa County, I was working 5 days a week, so I was working 5 eights but I lived in the Far West Valley, so by the time I left my house, went to work and came home, I was out of the house for 13 hours a day, and it was like a 64 mile round trip commute.

And so my husband encouraged me, hey, you know, by the time you get home, you're tired, you're done, you know, you don't want anything to do with, you know, traveling or going anywhere else, you know, maybe it's time that you look for something closer to home. My husband's worked for the city of Surprise for several years, he's actually a firefighter here in Surprise as well.

And so he had that inside knowledge of this being a great place to be and the city being you know, a good foundation for me to come over to and you know, so I just kind of had to trust that [00:08:00] and take that step back and regroup and get myself here. But for me it was absolutely the right choice to make.

I wouldn't be where I'm at today without coming here to surprise so I'm, I'm super fortunate and just obviously very blessed to have made it here and, and to have the encouragement and the support that I found

Jason: here. So, so while it is closer to home, it's also a smaller jurisdiction. And so when you come over and start doing records there, is it a shell shock or what do you experience and how are you adjusting to surprise records?

Erin: Oh, yeah, it was total shell shock. I went from doing a whole lot of everything every day to really just doing a really. A smaller portion of repetitive things, right? And so one of my co workers she also came from a larger agency before she came to records here, and she kept telling me, you know, it'll get better you'll, you'll push through.

Don't worry about it. You know, you're just in that shock moment right now. And so I had to kind of rely on her to help me and, and You [00:09:00] know, help me understand that I didn't make a mistake, so to speak. But, you know, I mentioned earlier my supervisor, Norma. She's just a phenomenal person. And so when she saw me struggling to really make that connection with what I was doing she was the first one to support me in branching out and exploring the other options here at the PD.

And so without her, I don't think I would have taken that step to this next part of my career. So yeah, it's a lot smaller or smaller at the time we're growing and we're growing fast. So it's, it's bigger and busier now, but back then, yeah, it was definitely shell shock, but with the support of my coworkers and my supervisor I was able to find my place here at the PD and kind of get my feet planted on what exactly it was I wanted to do.

Jason: So this, this, I think it's a kind of serendipitous in a way that you have this six month eval. And I always find it fascinating that they put you on

probation. Like that is such, that is such not a, like a, not a good term [00:10:00] for A police department employee to have is to be on probation, but I understand the concept, but I do find it interesting that you go in for your six month eval and this opportunity

is there for you and give you an opportunity before she leaves to shadow her a little bit and do the education credits as you mentioned over in California and to get your certificate pretty much by the time she retires so sounds like there was a possibility for a lot of knowledge exchanging as she's on her way out.

Yeah, for

Erin: sure. And, and, you know, when she was in that retirement mode, she started taking more time off. And she, her husband had actually relocated to another state and to, to prep for her move out there as part of the retirement. So when she did take those long weekends or extended steps away, they didn't have to go without, they had somebody who could help fill those gaps.

And so it just helped maintain [00:11:00] efficiency. In that position and for the detectives back there. Yeah. And what was her

Jason: name? Cheryl. Cheryl what? Bent. That doesn't sound familiar to me, but that's okay. All right. So , she steps down and you're coming into the role then what tasks are you doing?

What are you looking to change? What are your maybe initial goals as you as you start this your first gig as an

Erin: analyst? Yeah, so when I first took over, they had Cheryl doing a lot of the statistical reports, a lot of presentations. It was biweekly comp stat meetings in front of command, which obviously is part of the job, but it's not hardly anybody's favorite part of the job, so to speak.

So, you know, I got familiar with that and the more you get in front of command and the more you start speaking about the trends or the patterns and things that are going on, I was able to slowly just start integrating different pieces of intelligence into that as far as, you know, who's driving those.

Activities are where we're going to find certain [00:12:00] vehicles and that type of stuff. So in having those conversations or those comp stat meetings, I was able to kind of just put my own spin on it where we were able to introduce

slowly the concept behind, you know, yes, we can tell you where a pattern or a trend is that, but what are you going to do about it when you get there?

Who exactly are you going to look for? And what activities and patterns? Can we focus on that's actually going to help deter that activity? Right? Anybody can show you a map with the heat spot on it, but it's what you're going to do when you get there. That's going to actually change that type of behavior.

Yeah,

Jason: I think Comstat in order to be practical had to go in that direction because I can't remember who told me. You know this, and I think it might have been Eric Pisa. I'm going to give Eric Pisa credit at the moment, and he said that, , ComStat, when it was first created, it was necessary because folks didn't have access to the data.

And [00:13:00] so you needed this. Central hub this meeting for folks to come together and review the data review the stats. Now the stats are everywhere. Data is everywhere. you shouldn't be waiting for your comp stat meeting to be made aware that you have a problem in your area. And so it. It had, I, because of technology and access to everybody at the department for it to remain practical, it had to morph into more of a tactical, strategic, like, what are we doing about it?

Now that we know what are we doing about it? Let's make sure we're all on the same page. Right?

Erin: Totally.

Jason: So, so then are you still doing Doing constat related stuff today?

Erin: No. So I got a new chief probably about, I would say two years ago now. It doesn't seem like that long. So I could be. A little off on the years that he's been here, but when my current [00:14:00] chief came over, one of the things that he did was he sat down with me to try and understand what it was that I did and how long each part of it took and there was one monthly report that I was doing where it was 38 pages long and it took me.

About 80 hours to actually complete this report and all I was doing was gathering details and stats from other parts of our department and putting them into a presentation. And so it was at that time that he realized, you know, that

we're not necessarily focusing a good amount of time on. On things outside of that report.

So he looked at me and he told me, you're done doing this report. I want you to go back and I want you to help with casework and I want you to be a better resource to your team. So at that point, I just became responsible for translating certain, certain numbers. We still give out certain numbers we have to run monthly.

But as far as the huge bulk of that, that was eliminated. Once our new chief came in and, and saw that. It was [00:15:00] extremely time consuming and that there were other ways that we could actually still obtain that same data.

Jason: Yeah, I feel you there. I always talk about the, there was one report at the Cincinnati Police Department that I tried to automate since the first day I walked in the office and I was never able to do it and it, it didn't quite take me 80 hours, but it took enough time.

Is a clerical task series of tasks that was just annoying every month that I just dreaded doing it each and every month. So I feel you there. And this happens. I think a lot of police departments to it. It takes some new blood for somebody to come along and say. Why are we doing this?

Let's not do this anymore,

Erin: right? Yeah. And our, our chief is very good about forward thinking. He's super supportive and making sure that we're making progress and growth in a forward moving direction. So he's all about trying to figure out what types of resources we need, what we're lacking, how he can get those things for us.

[00:16:00] 1st day here was actually a day that I had to give a comp stat meeting and. I think he literally had worked for our agency for an hour and a half. And after this meeting, he came right up to me and looked me dead in the eyes. And he said, I'm going to get you help. And to me, that was music to my ears, right?

Because I knew that I needed help. And I knew that, you know, certain supervisors knew that I needed help, but to actually hear the chief of police say and acknowledge that it was just. It was so comforting to know that that was already on his radar and that help should be coming soon. And he did exactly what he said.

He was going to do. He's able to get me help. And just this year earlier this year in 2023. so I think it was February. I finally got a partner after almost 7 years

Jason: and even whether you have, comstead or you have any type of weekly monthly meeting where you're reviewing data. It's important for the analysts to do the presentations themselves.

[00:17:00] You know it that the analysts are doing the work they know the data and. And it's important for them. I know some analysts are shy or introverted and may not like to do it, but it is important to go through that process to be up there to present, answer the questions, show that you know

Erin: what you're doing, right?

It totally is. And, you know, with how many things we see, and we read, And we review all that kind of stuff. It all comes full circle. So the better grasp you have on your data or your trends, you're going to be able to see that stuff a lot sooner. And even when you're reviewing calls for service, or, you know, one of the things we also look at here is we call them suspicious activity calls.

That's a goldmine of information. And so if you're looking through that and you see that there's just repeat contacts with certain people in a high crime area that's information that you can start pushing back out. And so you see that increase of calls for service or you see an increase in certain trends, [00:18:00] but how do you help your officers or your detectives really make heads or tails of that?

So, which is naturally, I think with all the things that we look at and we see and that we deal with. Okay. I think the better understanding and the better idea you have of what everything means, it's just easier for you to kind of make heads or tails and, and decide what to do with that information when you find something that's usable.

Yeah.

Jason: All right. Well, this brings us to your analyst badge story then. And for those that may be new to the show, the analyst badge story is the career defining case or project that an analyst works. And so we're getting more into the case support Side of things now, so it's 2022 dealing with narcotics investigations

Erin: yeah, so about a year ago I started doing a lot more work. Once, once the chief, like I said, kind of relieved some of those statistical duties from me, I was

able to really start focusing in on casework. And I'm directly assigned to our neighborhood response unit or NRU unit.

So they do a lot of street crimes or drug related activities. [00:19:00] And so one of the things that we were able to start doing was they, they started adding me into their investigations very early on. And with that, they have me up on the radio channels listening to their surveillance. If they're able to obtain warrants for poll cameras or things like that, I have access to all of that.

And so what they do is when they go out and they're doing their investigations I'm real time helping them identify suspects or vehicles. And allowing them to have that information immediately while they're still out there. And so what that does is that allows them to then decide if they need to make a traffic stop or can they let that vehicle go or do they need to call for a mark unit to try and do a wall off of some sort or do we have enough information where they feel that we can circle back to that.

suspect at a later time. And so it just allowed us to start taking a smarter approach to what these guys were already doing. And because we, they were seeing such instant results and [00:20:00] instant success with that, they really started realizing that, hey, you know, this is something that we need to start doing every time, or we need to do this anytime that we can.

And so when they're out and they're doing their investigations again, I'm giving them all that information as it's coming in, or as I'm making heads or tails of that, so with that, then you start to learn more about their cases, and sometimes you start to know them almost better than they do, so there'll be times where they're giving briefings, and they're going over details, or they're going over their investigation and they might start to mix up locations or suspects, and It allows you that ability to kind of step in and say, Hey, you know, this suspect was actually from this vehicle or this location over here.

It just kind of gives the detectives a 2nd layer of information that they can rely on. And with doing all of that, it shows them not only what you can offer, but the amount of resources that we have, we don't think the same way as sworn officers do. We're going to see the world a little bit different.

And so it's kind of neat to see their perspective and my [00:21:00] perspective come together. And then it's neat to see how you can start utilizing your resources in different ways to help make them successful in whatever it is they're doing. But like I said, we started doing this last year. I think it was around 2022.

And immediately when they were able to stop conducting traffic stops or stop having to go hands on. In every situation, obviously, that's that's safer and smarter policing. So they're going to be all about that, which makes me all about that. If we can offer anything that's going to help them do their job better and safer and smarter.

Why would we not do that? Right? I think it's just kind of a given that if we're going to do anything to help protect them and put them in a better position. We should absolutely be giving them that opportunity. So if

Jason: I'm understanding correctly, so you'll have, let's just take, we'll just take a house for lack of a better, better example here.

So you'll have a house, they're doing surveillance. You obviously have already known where the house is. So you've already [00:22:00] supplied them with a report, details of the address and maybe the, any targets that are in that house. And then as they're doing surveillance and either people or cars come up , to the house, they're relaying that back to you.

And then you're running that information and seeing what else that you can you know, Give back to them that gives them richer details about what they're saying.

Erin: Yeah, so it can be that. So let's say they're watching a house and you know, a vehicle pulls up to make a drug purchase of some sort.

I then start researching that vehicle to find out, hey, Does the registered owner of that vehicle match the description of the person who got out of that vehicle to go make that drug transaction or to go buy that stolen property or whatever the situation might be? If it's an obvious yes, then great.

That's, that's super easy, but sometimes it's not. So sometimes you have to dig a couple layers deeper to find out, you know, Who else [00:23:00] has history with that vehicle? Can you actually identify who came out of that vehicle? So you just start kind of utilizing all of your different resources to see if you can get them a match for who they visually put eyes on in that situation.

There's other times too where they'll be doing surveillance and all of a sudden the target goes mobile. And so during those situations just based off of maybe patterns of life or associate, associates or things like that. You, you try to figure out where could that person be going? Where is a, a potential target going to land?

So then that way, you know, maybe a couple of officers can split off and get ahead of the game and go land at a location to see if our suspect goes there. You really just have to kind of take each investigation piece by piece. But the whole point is to try to identify either what what, you know, traffic can be coming to and from addresses who's associated with different vehicles, things like that.

Jason: So, are you, are you normally giving your support at the office or are there [00:24:00] times when you're actually on

Erin: sync? So we do both. The majority of what I do here is actually in the office. So I split my responsibilities between I'm really a resource for anybody that needs us. But the majority of the work that I do goes towards our neighborhood response unit as well as our violent crimes unit.

So. Most of it I'm able to accomplish here in office. Earlier this week we had a larger search warrant that took place. But because I was familiar with all the intelligence on the case and I helped from start to finish they actually had me go out to one of the locations to just be an additional resource.

So if they needed information verified or if they wanted more information on an occupant, things like that I was already there and there was no delay in relaying that information back. It was, it was a pretty instant process as far as. This is our suspect or this is an associate that we found at this address that we weren't necessarily expecting.

Tell us everything you can about that person so that we know if there's going to be any relevance for them to be added into our investigation at that time.

Jason: Yeah, and I assume you can be mobile [00:25:00] with a laptop and have access to everything that you need out in the field. Yeah,

Erin: so yeah, the first whole first half of that I was in a van with one of the detectives and I had my laptop up and was running vehicles that came up to one of the locations or providing photos back if they weren't sure of who somebody was.

So, yeah, we definitely have the ability to go mobile or even. Have access to the mobile command band if there's one on scene as

Jason: well. Yeah, now do you, this is probably going to seem like an odd question to ask you, but do you feel that you have a above average memory? Because I'm, I'm just thinking as you're describing this and you're dealing with

not only the, all the tools that are at your disposal, but then all the data that's coming in and then trying to link all this stuff together that you're going to have to.

Keep in touch and remember lots of detailed information of what, just happened, let alone linking it to what you [00:26:00] already had been exposed to.

Erin: Yeah. So it's really weird because if you asked me what I had for breakfast two days ago, I could not tell you, I don't know, but there are certain times where I'm able to recall really weird details about certain situations or certain calls.

And then all of a sudden you'll, you'll remember that. We jokingly call it our rain man moment where you just things pop back in right? And all of a sudden you're like, Oh, man, I saw this or I saw that. Or I I've already looked at this address here. Which that, that does help huge when surveillance goes mobile.

It's actually helped me be able to relay addresses. And they were able to land a target at an address where they had lost the target during surveillance. But because I remembered being in a certain area and having a certain address towards the location that the vehicle was traveling, I said, hey, you know, there's a possibility that this.

Vehicle could be going to this location over here. And then after they lost the target, sure enough, they drove by that address. And that's exactly where the vehicle had gone to.

Jason: Nice. All [00:27:00] right. So, in terms of your process, then does the information just dictate What tools you use, or do you have maybe a general recipe that you use as you're on the surveillance, . So then as you getting it names, you know, okay, I know I'm going to run this name through X, Y and Z program and go through there. So it's more, more or less a checklist as opposed to like letting the data dictate where you go

Erin: next. I think it's a little bit of both.

I really think so. You obviously know you have you have your favorite systems or you have your go to system that you're always going to use. But, you know, like in situations where maybe. Maybe the driver didn't match the registered owner of that vehicle. So it takes you two or three different attempts in a couple different systems to actually find out who's driving that vehicle.

So I would say a lot of it kind of depends on the nature of the investigation or maybe the luck that you're having with some of the resources. Or other times, you know, you run it and you get your hit right away. So [00:28:00] I would say the foundation of what I like to use pretty much stays the same. It's just the difference of maybe the order changes a little bit or it changes.

Sometimes you don't use the system at all. I think it really just depends on the returns that you're getting and, and if that is having any success in, in being able to make that identification in that moment.

Kristen: Hi, this is Kristen Lottman. My public service announcement is to say, get your face out of your phone and your fingers off your keyboard and make that face to face contact because that's how you'll connect with other people.

Danielle: This is Danielle Giroux, and I highly encourage you to lock up your valuables.

Don't hide anything under a jacket or a blanket in your front passenger seat, behind your front passenger seat, or on your rear seat.

Jason: I do want to have a conversation [00:29:00] on communication and advocating for yourself. As I mentioned in the intro, before we get to that, , you've been at NALS there now for going on six years. What are you most proud of?

Erin: I would say the growth. The position that it is today is nothing at all like it was when I first took over. And that, that, there's a lot that goes with that. I think policing has changed a lot in the last six years. But more than anything, you know, hard work and dedication. Has helped me change what it was for what we were doing versus where I knew I wanted to be.

I knew that we could do more than just CompStat, or I knew that we could do more than just bulletins, right? And so, when you take those tiny steps to insert... Your capabilities or to help with the success of the case. I think naturally all of that starts to change and that just becomes the new norm.

So I would say the growth that we've had in our department in this position has been huge. And obviously, you know, up until recently being the only analyst that was me. And [00:30:00] that's really hard for me to say, because I am not a. A me type of person at all but when it comes to being, you know, a one man show or a single man unit, you really have to look back and say, wow, you know, we've, we've come a long way, or we've made some really great progress.

And I'm just, I'm proud of that in general. I'm proud of where we've come and the obstacles that we've had to overcome in order to get here.

Jason: So I think it's because. You have the experience of being the only analyst at a police department, and obviously you already talked about presenting at Comstat and working with detectives and everybody from the detectives all the way up to the chief, you know, communication in this position.

Is is key, and I do feel that that is a struggle for analysts and either verbal or written communication, and it's one of my pet peeves at conferences that I don't think enough time is spent on training folks [00:31:00] to key in on best practices in terms of written and oral communication, so. I so I want to just have a general conversation, get your take on what what you feel about communication.

And then this is going to get also get into advocating for yourself as

Erin: an analyst. Yeah. So communication to me is huge. And if you were at the conference and you intended my presentation. That's probably one of the main things you took away was how important communication is, because communication can mean a lot of things.

It could, it could tell your supervisors what it is we need, or what direction we want to go. But it also helps everybody understand exactly what the mission is and how we're supposed to get there. And so the better you're able to communicate, the better that message gets relayed. Right? Or you're. You reach that finish line a lot faster if everybody's on the same page.

I totally believe in the fact that I mean, it's intimidating to have to walk into your chief's office [00:32:00] and say, Hey chief, I don't really understand what it is you're asking for. I don't understand what it is you want. Most of us probably break out into a cold sweat at first, right? And your hands are shaking when you have that conversation, but it's important for the chief to know that.

The better you understand what it is he's trying to do, the easier you can help him get there. And so, real early on, one of the things that helped me was I made it a point to tell people, Hey, I'm not questioning you. I'm just trying to understand what your thought process is. I'm trying to understand what you're thinking.

Because if I understand What's on your mind or where you want to go? I can help you get there. I know I can. But if I didn't understand the message correctly or if I didn't really understand what your vision was, we could end at a really different place and then you're coming back and telling me, hey, I think we missed the mark.

I don't really think this is what I was looking for or I think you might have misunderstood me. So, you know, just being able to ask questions or get clarification in anything that you're asked to do, I think is important. And again, it's not [00:33:00] because you need more details or you need to be privy to certain information.

It's really just trying to understand exactly. What the end result is supposed to be so that, you know, how to get that person there.

Jason: Yeah, it's funny because I always get nervous when I have to go to, you know, upper level folks to ask them questions about what I'm, what I'm going to be doing. And, and most of the time I have to bounce it off.

Other analysts or other coworkers just to make sure I'm like, this isn't something I'm supposed to like fully understand, right? Like, this is like, you're not understanding this as well. If I'm not alone, then I'm not afraid type of thing. But, you know, I never want to be in a situation where the, the, the executive says, well, you should know the answer to that question.

Why are you asking me that question? Right? So it does, it certainly does get intimidating going up there, but I think your point is valid. In terms of knowing the end goal,

Erin: right? You know, if you know their end goal, you know, maybe you can also help them think 1 or [00:34:00] 2 steps ahead. Like, if, you know, your command staff is going to a city council meeting tomorrow night, and they're asking for stats, or, you know, certain things have been topics of conversations in the community.

Maybe they don't just want the stats that they asked for. Maybe you have to break it down into 2 and 3 part. Answers for them just in case somebody raises their hand during that meeting and asks that additional question. One of my biggest fears is leaving my command staff ill equipped or unprepared to answer a question.

I mean, obviously I can't give them every single thing that's going to come their way, but if you just give them the basics and help prepare them for the questions that might come up or things that might be asked in response to the answers that we're about to give, Your command staff will be better prepared, right?

And so they look better, then that makes all of us look better. It just, it just works out better in the end for everybody. Help set them up for success, help them be prepared for those conversations that they're having, and in return, that, that [00:35:00] helps them understand that you do have their best interest in mind, or That you do care about them and their reputation or the department's reputation, and I think that kind of opens up those lines of communication a little bit better for the second and third time around when you do have those follow up questions because they start to see, you know, she's not questioning me, she's really just trying to help watch out for my best interests.

Yeah,

Jason: how about some tips on maybe messaging? And what I mean by that is I, I know I struggled as an analyst. Communicating my message. I knew the data. I knew the I knew what I wanted to convey, but I think I struggled with my presentation with some officers, either going into too much detail or maybe not enough detail and not not necessarily being able to connect with them as well as I

Erin: should, I would see in those situations.

Let's say you're in front of a room full of, officers in a squad briefing, [00:36:00] right? Maybe you're getting those really blank stares back, or they're not interacting the way that you thought they would I think it's totally okay to just stop and say, hey, does that make sense? Or does, you know, is what I'm telling you guys, is that useful?

And if they start to say, no, it doesn't make sense, or no, this is not useful. Okay, well, then what can I do that is useful? How can I change What it is, I'm trying to tell you so that you can actually go out and do something with it. There's nothing worse than standing in front of a room full of officers and getting those blank stares, right?

Because you're trying to figure out, is it me? Or is it the message I'm giving? Are they tired? Do they not want to be here? Do they not understand? So I think sometimes you just have to ask and I think they can appreciate that as well, right? Because maybe it's something as simple as they don't understand.

Maybe it's just too much for them to comprehend. Break it down. Ask them, what exactly can I do that would help you do your job better? Or, you know, you're going to be asked to go out and increase patrols in a certain area because we're having an increase of crime. What can I [00:37:00] do for you that would help you do your job better once you get to that area?

How do you want to see it as the responding officer? Because again, if that person knows that you're trying to make it easier for them or help them understand, you're going to get a better response out of that. Yeah, yeah.

Jason: Now, you, but you have, you do have the pedigree as well. So I'm sure your dad had some good advice for you in terms of these situations

Erin: as well.

You know, at the end of the day, one of the things my dad always told me my dad You know, held some leadership positions as well. At one point, he was the chief of police. He's been a director of state agencies. But at the end of the day, there's still people. There's still, that's still a human being, right?

He wants to joke and laugh and have fun with the guys and, and the gals and you know, you want to fit in. You didn't always start as the chief or you didn't always start as a commander. You started as a police officer and you had your fun. You made your bonds. You've worked your way up, but that doesn't change who you are as a person, right?

You still want to be cared for. You still want to be part of the team. You still want [00:38:00] to laugh and have fun when you're at work. So I think really just being able to remember that people are still people at the end of the day. Yes, you've earned your title and yes, you've earned where you're at. But just basic human kindness, right?

Treat people with respect and the way that you would want to be treated. And, and you're going to get so much farther with that person.

Jason: Let's take it up a notch now because, you know, it's one thing to be, you know, communicating, presenting on data, presenting at ComStat meetings. And Conveying your message and in that level, I think it's a whole other level of communication when you're going to your chief, you're going to your boss and you're, you're making the pitch of changing your duties or changing your roles with the police department and advocating what you can do.

To better the overall goal of the police department that that obviously is a whole different ball of wax and certainly take some

Erin: finesse. Yeah. So 1 [00:39:00] of the best conversations I had with the commander 1 time was this commander did not understand why I didn't like doing certain parts of the job or why certain parts were hard for Or than others or why I only enjoyed doing certain things.

And so when I was able to break it down, the example that I gave was in every police department. You have police officers at the foundation of what your department is. Everybody's the police officer at the end of the day. But within that police department, you have motors, you have detectives. You have SWAT teams, you have community relations officers, those officers are in those positions because they're good at those things, or they like those things, it drives them in a different direction.

So being able to focus specifically on, you know, motors do traffic enforcement, detectives obviously investigate, community relations, they go out, they talk to people, they build those bonds, everybody brings a different piece of the puzzle that makes everything whole. And so When you're really able to show, you know, as an analyst, [00:40:00] maybe your strength is statistics, or maybe your strength is in Intel, there's really no difference.

You have different people in your department that bring different, you know, strengths and weaknesses, but they complement each other in the end. And so you know, being able to explain what your strengths are and what you're really good at, or, you know, why it would be important to hire. A second or a third or a fourth analyst who can just focus on, you know, these areas where we're lacking or we don't have support at the end of the day.

I think that that helps build a bigger, stronger team and then you're really able to cover all areas of analysis at that point. So again, just really. Really focusing on helping educate that there are different types of analysts and we do very different things. Not everybody's a one stop shop, you know?

Jason: Yeah, I think it does get difficult. , articulating that aspect of it is like, okay, this is this is what I'm really good at. This is what drives me. This is what I really like to do. And then this [00:41:00] stuff over here. I hate like that. Right? That's not that's what I am.

So if we could find someone else to do that, that would be great.

Erin: I mean, there's always going to be parts of the job that's not our favorite, right? But we have to do it. But it really wasn't until I had those breakdowns as examples. Did that commander really realize what it was I was trying to say? It was at that point that they realized, well, you know what?

I, yeah, that makes more sense because I wouldn't ask a motor to go out and attend coffee with a cop. I mean, they could, but you have people who are skillset, different types of communications, and there really is no difference. And so it just kind of took putting that different spin on it for them to understand that there really are.

Different types of analysis and there are benefits to having more than just one person doing those things. Yeah,

Jason: and I can envision in your situation your case support skills as you're sharpening them and [00:42:00] working with these detectives that if, if you're going to be able to do more of that, then some of these other responsibilities something's got to give.

Right. If you want me to do more over here, then I'm going to have to do less over there and. And I think that's that's one way to, address it as well as you're making that pitch that if this is really working and we need to put more energy over what is working, but in order to do that, I'm going to need help over

Erin: here.

Right. And you know, my, my current chief has the investigations background. So he understood that. But not only was it frustrating for me, it was also frustrating for the detectives. They would come and they would ask me for help on things. And I would have to say, Hey, I can help you, but it's going to be a little while because I have to get this report done, or I have to pull these stats over here.

And they're looking at me like, well, you know, they don't care about your stats. They don't care about your report. They want their casework [00:43:00] done. They have a suspect that they're trying to track, or a victim that needs follow up interviews done. And so it was really hard. It was really hard to tell them no when you have, you know, command staff waiting for the things that, that need to be done.

So it sometimes even took them advocating for me as well. You know, hey, we need more of her time. We need more of her skillset. You have to give her free

time. You have to take some of these things away from her because we need her and that I think ultimately helped get us to where we're at as well.

Yeah,

Jason: and I think in the in the prep call, you had mentioned that you have that caregiver role that you have that wanting the wanting to do good. Right. You have this, this thing. So you're when you're in that situation where, you know, you can't be in 2 places at once. It does does get frustrating.

Erin: Oh, very.

Yeah. Very

Jason: frustrating. Okay. Let's move on to some advice now for for our analyst. And I think I want this is actually probably going [00:44:00] to be a little bit longer advice section than I normally have with my guests. But I want to get your perspective on a couple of different avenues for your advice.

Because we talked about, you know. You're keeping track of of details and and what's going on and what I what I normally say is just being a student of the data like knowing the data knowing the players both both what's on the computer and what's out out there in the surveillance world or in the real world and but there's also like just just organizing

your information, you're organizing your thoughts , keeping it all straight. In terms of just, just everything in your mind, , how do you keep it all together? How do you keep it? So it's like you have something that's actually tangible and useful in keeping all this information ready to be in a report or [00:45:00] being able to give an or.

Or we'll report

Erin: on it. So I kind of do, we call it for lack of better terms, sometimes we just refer to it as like an intel packet. So we'll make notes or I'll, you know, jot down different addresses that we come across or different vehicles that roll up on scenes people that you come across, things you see on social media.

And so kind of having it there in that little packet, sometimes you're able to go back to it. On the warrant that we did earlier this, this week, there was an address that this vehicle landed at. And I knew I had seen it before, but I could

not remember where, I could not remember why. And it was driving me absolutely crazy.

Because I knew, I, you know, I look things up on a map, I get a sense of where it's at, what it looks like, that kind of thing. And I knew that I had looked up this address before. And so when the detective came back in, I said, hey, let's... I know, I know we've looked at this address before and I can't remember why.

And so we start brainstorming, we start, you know, looking over old notes or different [00:46:00] messages. And sure enough, we were able to find that he went and spot checked this address back in December. Number for a different lead. And so had it not been for those notes or that packet where I was able to actually go in and kind of keyword search the area that we were in the area of the city I don't think I would have come across it.

I don't think I would have been able to find it again. But with that, what we were able to do is we were able to take the current case. and look at the old lead to see if they had any associations together to see, you know, are we, are we picking up on, on an old case that's now taking a different spin or do we just so happen to be starting a new investigation in the same area?

So I think the packets help keep me organized. And with that, you know, when you're ready to go, you're ready to go. You can print it out, you can turn it into a PDF, whatever it is, and you can hand it over and you can start explaining, you know, this is who should be here. This is who might come into play.

These are all the different vehicles that are registered to this person. Here's their photo. It just helps kind of streamline all that information and keep it together at the same time. Hmm. [00:47:00]

Jason: So what is your advice for the analysts that are the only analysts at police departments? Don't

Erin: quit. It gets, it gets better.

You know, at, when you're the only one, you have every ability in the world to make it what you want to make it. If you don't want to do anything and you just want to stay status quo, that's up to you. But if you want to push the envelope and constantly expand where we're going and what we can do, you're the only person that's going to stop that from happening.

Right. So, you know, give yourself credit, give yourself time to grow. You know, take those breathers when you need to, because you absolutely will get burnt out. It's just a matter of when it's not if but being able to, you know, kind of just stay grounded and stay focused on where it is you want to go and how you want to get there.

You know, I think, I think it's possible. It's not always easy. You'll definitely struggle at times, but with the support of your you know, your officers or your detectives or your deputies or troopers, whoever. [00:48:00] You know, just remember that what helps keep me focused is them. It's the officers and their investigations and what's best for them.

And so, when they go out and when they do good, that makes me feel good. And that kind of relights my passion for what it is that we do. I will never be the police officer that goes out and makes the traffic stop. It's just not in my DNA. I don't have that type of personality. I actually hate conflict.

I start to sweat a little bit when they get into conflict. So I just know that that's not for me. But I know that I can help them be the best possible officer or deputy that they need to be. So, watching them be successful and get those victories is, it makes it all worth it. You know,

Jason: and with these situations where it's only one analyst at the police department, it's normally a situation where it is a smaller police department and the smaller police department means limited resources.

So, I guess it. Maybe talk about some [00:49:00] tips and tricks that you would recommend if you're an analyst in a smaller police department and, you know, you might not have all the latest and greatest tools available

Erin: to you. Yeah, so when we come across those situations, we'll reach out to our fusion centers. So here we have ACTIC you know, if we need certain information RAN that we don't have access to, we can reach out to them.

If we need work product or something that's visual that would be useful for trial or something along those lines, we can reach out to RIMN, which is the Rocky Mountain Information Network. Those are all resources where they're much larger and they have more capabilities, they have more tools, they have more of the things, right?

And so having those relationships and building those networks allows you to reach out and fill those gaps where we don't have those resources. Even if it's

just a simple query into a system that we don't have access to, I know that I can go to my Fusion Center and say, hey, we're doing this [00:50:00] investigation, I need help with X, Y, or Z.

They're going to get me that information and at the end of the day the detective doesn't care how you get the information or the officer doesn't care how you get the information. What matters is that you got it. And so just knowing where to go and who to turn to, to help you fill your gaps. It all comes back to networking and making sure that you have access to the people who do have access.

To what you need.

Jason: All right. And then another question I like to ask my guest is what I call the return on investment question advice. What is something that an analyst can study now? Because maybe five years down the road, it's going to be important.

Erin: This is such a hard question for me because you know, I've been the analyst in this position for six years, and like I just said, it's nothing like it was five years ago, six years ago when I took over.

Five years ago seems like such a long time, and there's so many changes, but you know, preparing yourself, public speaking, that's a huge thing. Six years ago, if you would have told me I would be [00:51:00] traveling To Texas to stand in front of a room full of my peers. I would have told you that you're crazy.

And even that day, I thought I was crazy. I didn't know what I had signed up for. I didn't know why I put myself there, but it ended up being one of the best professional experiences I've had in my 20 year career. So just, you know, focus on the things that push your comfort zone, step out of your comfort zone, help yourself grow.

So whether that means you want to learn more about technology because you're not very familiar with it. or open source investigations. Open source changes every day that we come to work. You might have a tool that works today that's not going to work tomorrow. So I think just learning how to be adaptable, learning how to again, step outside of your comfort zone and really just focus in on the areas that you know that you need the most growth.

Don't be afraid to push yourself to get there. Don't be afraid to force yourself to grow in those areas.

Jason: And then how about an unpopular opinion, maybe a hot take is something that [00:52:00] you see in law enforcement analysis that maybe your, your opinion goes against the grain or maybe it's something that's undervalued.

Erin: So I would say with this my hot topic would be education requirements. I know that our industry is changing a lot. It's getting super competitive and a lot of these job descriptions require a degree or X amount of years of experience and that's not always easy to have when you're just starting out.

Not everybody has the ability to complete an internship, right? Like I said, I was 18 years old when I started in law enforcement, so I had to put myself through school. I was an adult. I was a working adult. I had to figure out a way to make it work. And so sometimes that journey looks different for everybody.

It's my personal opinion that just because you have a degree doesn't mean you can come out and do your job. To the same capability as somebody who doesn't have one. So do I think it's important? Absolutely. Is it something that I want for myself? Absolutely. But I don't think that it should be an eliminating factor for [00:53:00] people who are still able to do the job, but just haven't had the ability to get that degree or that education for themselves yet.

Jason: Yeah. You have an associates and you're currently working on your, on your bachelors and I think this is interesting. This kind of goes back to you mentioning. It's sometimes hard to look five years into the future.

If they know they want to be an analyst, like their end goal is to be an analyst. Well, there's a good place to start is records like if you can get in there at a police department at records and. Cut your teeth there, so to speak, and work your way to either an analyst position at that police department, or then once you, again, we talked about all the thing, different things you're exposed to at a, as a police, at a police department when you're dealing with records.

You know, but that's it's I remember being 20 something and that five year plan isn't necessarily something that I want to , go do something else for a little while, [00:54:00] just so I can come be an analyst someday. So I understand what I'm saying. It's difficult because I don't know if I would follow my own advice right now

Erin: if I, you know If I were to go back 20 years, and you were to tell me that life would have been this hard when trying to work and get an education, I would tell you to focus on your education early.

You know, one of the things that we're pushing on our kids right now is, I want to make your life easy for the first four years of college so that you get it done. I don't want you to be like me. I don't want you to be a working professional. Raising a family, trying to get it's come together. So, you know, it's important to just have grace with yourself and, you know, if that's your ultimate goal, but it takes you a little longer to get there, you're still going to get there.

It doesn't change your ability to do your job. It doesn't change the amount of working knowledge that you have. Some of the best knowledge you can get is that hands on experience that you just talked about, you know. Learning, throughout your different careers or your different assignments in law enforcement.

So again, that's why I don't necessarily think that [00:55:00] a formal education should eliminate somebody. There's people who are perfectly capable and have all the tools necessary. They just don't have that piece of paper or that title that goes with it. So I hope to never have to be in a situation where we as an agency Don't consider somebody just because of a lack of formal education, because I, I believe that the working education can definitely compensate for the formal, college part of it, so to speak.

Jason: Yeah, I feel that someone that. Maybe you have the practical experience, but not the degree and the person that maybe doesn't have the practical experience, but I was working on degree or has the degree , they're struggling with what the other one has.

Right? I remember when I was in college and I was like, okay, I need some kind of practical experience. I was looking for internships. Looking for something that was beyond just reading a book, taking a test and writing papers, and I had the [00:56:00] degrees, but I didn't feel that I had that that practical experience.

And so it feels like you're constantly. Trying to fight that balance between getting your education and also gaining practical, useful experience at the same time. Oh,

Erin: for sure. Yeah. And that's that's why I truly think it's so important to just not get so pigeonholed that we lose focus on the actual ability to perform that job.

You know, it's just it's so sad when you see someone who spends, you know, thousands and thousands of dollars to complete a degree, but then they can't find a job because they don't have the experience. Right? And then vice versa. You

find somebody who, you know, has worked their tail off and they have so much knowledge, but they don't have an education to get that promotion.

You know, it's like you said, there's. Where do you find that common balance? Where do you go to get the best of both worlds? It's really hard. Sometimes.

Jason: All right. This is not really advice. It's just kind of your perspective. It might even been better to ask earlier, but I'm going to ask it [00:57:00] now about your department's RMS.

I got a nice little clever way of asking how you feel about your RMS. Is it an RMS or is it RMS? Let's see. Oh,

Erin: I would definitely say RMSC and if you can find me somebody who doesn't answer RMSC, I want to know what they use because I don't believe them. I think they're lying, but yeah, no, it's, it's messy.

So you've got to make it work sometimes.

Jason: Yeah, I guess is there one particular thing that. Really irks you about your records management system? Yeah, the

Erin: fact that it allows boxes to be left blank, right? So, I think that's kind of my records mentality coming back in. There really shouldn't be anything as a blank box.

Because at some point it's going to mean something to somebody somewhere. So it's, it's super frustrating when we've contacted someone nine times and you can't put a phone number in or you don't attach the driver's license number, even though... You run it every single time you contact that [00:58:00] person.

So I definitely don't like blank boxes.

Jason: Yeah, yeah, I didn't know. Yeah, I guess that is, that's kind of similar to me. I never, I, I always like, hated like open fields to where they could just type whatever they wanted

to. How many different ways are we going to spell Subaru? Right? Yeah, I know that's gotten better over the years, but , it is frustrating

Erin: yeah, no, our CAD system also allows you to over type an address. So you, you can enter it one way. I can enter it another way.

Somebody else can come along and do their way and it doesn't hit the same every time. So that, that's, that's the terrible. Business practice right there. Yeah.

Jason: Okay, well let's finish up with personal interest then. You mentioned a family and you mentioned your husband's a firefighter and you're both in public service.

So I guess what do you, what do you get into when you're not being an

Erin: [00:59:00] analyst? Our kids, our family, that's really what that's really my, that's my safe space. That's where I want to be when I'm not here. So we have. I have two kids that are super active in sports. I have a daughter that plays club volleyball or club softball.

My son plays club volleyball. So between the two of them, we're either out of field or out of court of some sort every weekend. We have an older daughter who works and goes to school as well. So anytime that we get where. The five of us can get together and travel or go out to eat or go see a movie or something like that.

We usually try to take advantage of things like that. So just kind of getting everybody back together and slowing down sometimes is, is what we look forward to. Yeah. Now,

Jason: They all have to be in the public sector? Are they allowed to work in the private sector?

Erin: They are allowed to do whatever their little hearts desire.

My son, we always jokingly tell him that if he doesn't. Become a defense attorney of some sort. It's going to be a waste of a talent because that kid can argue till he's blue in [01:00:00] the

Jason: face. All right. I I think you said this yesterday is , when you get home, that's your fortress there of like your escape from being out there in the world and.

I think there is a lot to be said about that. Like when you're at home, that should be the place of peace and and winding down and relaxing. And so it seems like

that's what . You and your family's been able to develop as you're all. Doing your own separate things out in the outside, you come back and have this space just dedicated for you all.

Yeah,

Erin: for sure. Yeah. I like to come home to a clean house or you know, my, my family again, they pick on me a lot. I think you'll understand is what I'm basically trying to tell you guys. My family's mean to me. They leave my house a mess and then I have to come home and clean it. But they, they give me a hard time because they leave a cup out and I'll put it away.

Or they leave something on the counter and I throw it away. So, it's just, I'm constantly, I constantly strive to make [01:01:00] sure that the house is like a comfortable place for everybody to go to. And somewhere that everybody wants to be at, you know. When we were growing up, you know, home was always our safe place and you could walk in and sit down and the world just became better.

So, you know, that's kind of what I want for my family as well. Yeah,

Jason: see, I'm probably more like you at our house because I work from home, so I'm here all day and so everybody else leaves. And then comes in and leaves stuff all over the place and it drives me nuts. Yeah. And like, it's like, there's a place for that.

It's not there, but . Right. But I can definitely appreciate that, so. All right, well, very good, Erin. Let's finish up with Words to the World then.

The last segment of the show is Words to the World. This is where I give the guest, the last word. You can promote any idea that you wish. What are your

Erin: words to the world? I like to live by the quote of build a longer table, not a higher fence. I totally believe in allowing others to flourish and to [01:02:00] learn and to become the best possible version of them that they can be.

So if you have something to offer, help people, share your experience, share your knowledge, share your talents, whatever it might be. Again, none of us started out in this world Where we are today, somebody had to give us a chance somewhere and they gave us an opportunity to learn. So, if you have the ability to build somebody up and make their life better, take advantage of that.

Just help make the change in the world that we need right now. Very

Jason: good. Well, I leave every guest with you giving me just enough to talk bad about you later. But I do appreciate you being on the show, Erin. Thank you so much and

Erin: you be safe. Thank you. You too. Thanks for having me.

Mindy: Thank you for making it to the end of another episode of Analysts Talk with Jason Elder.

You can show your support by sharing this and other episodes found on our website at www.leapodcasts.com. If you have a topic you would like us to cover or have a suggestion for our next guest, please send us an email at leapodcasts@gmail.com. Till next [01:03:00] time, analysts. Keep talking.